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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 238

SIXTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1993-94

House of Commons

Monday 21 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Transatlantic Air Routes

1. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made towards liberalisation of transatlantic air routes.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): The United Kingdom tabled proposals in December, which would achieve substantial further liberalisation on transatlantic routes, further than anything that we have previously offered. It takes a phased approach offering immediate complete liberalisation of all United Kingdom-United States services, except those involving Heathrow and Gatwick, and offers real commercial opportunities at those two airports. I am disappointed that the United States Government have not been able to respond in a similar manner.

Mr. Clappison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the apparent stalling by the United States Government gives the unfortunate impression that they are more interested in protecting their industries than in demonstrating a genuine commitment to airline liberalisation? Does he agree that it also appears that the United States is afraid of competition from efficient British Airways and is unaware of the great benefits of liberalisation to the travelling public on both sides of the Atlantic?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that further liberalisation would bring great benefits—the benefits of further competition—for passengers on both sides of the Atlantic. I also agree that United Kingdom airlines are very competitive. I can only speculate as to why the talks have been postponed and it has not yet been possible to take them up again, and I do not know whether my hon. Friend is right. I am disappointed that the talks were postponed and I hope that the United States Government will recognise the real values and virtues of our proposals, which are serious, and agree to meet us around the negotiating table again soon to discuss them in greater detail.

Dr. Godman: Where does Glasgow airport stand in that scheme of things? It is a major employer in the area and there is burgeoning demand for transatlantic flights to and from Glasgow. I hope that the Secretary of State is arguing the case for that airport as much as for other airports south of the border.

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of the improvements at Glasgow airport and of the considerable expansion there —not least since the British Airports Authority was privatised, which has greatly increased investment.

Dr. Godman: Now answer the question.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that there have been big improvements since privatisation.

On transatlantic routes and the negotiations—sadly, there are no talks at the moment—the answer is that in December we proposed complete liberalisation of flights from Glasgow airport.

Mr. Channon: Am I to understand that the American Government are refusing to negotiate at the moment? Is that not extremely unsatisfactory and very much against the interests of air travellers? What steps does my right hon. Friend propose to take to break that deadlock?

Mr. MacGregor: It is very disappointing. There would be great benefits if we could reach a successful conclusion to the negotiations. We are in discussions with the United States Government in the hope that we can resume the talks as soon as possible. I have said that I would be prepared to go to Washington if that were likely to benefit the progress of the talks in any way.

Mr. Olner: I hope that the Secretary of State will put great pressure on his American colleagues, because his news will be greeted with great disappointment, especially at Birmingham airport. Our regional airports need that way into transatlantic routes. I hope that he will do all in his power to ensure that the Americans come to the negotiating table and that regional airports are not used as a bargaining chip for the London airports. I would not want him to miss that point.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are doing everything that we can to develop services at regional airports, including Birmingham. Representatives of those airports are on the United Kingdom negotiating team because they know the position and they can be sure that their voice is fully heard. I can, therefore, give the hon. Gentleman the assurances that he seeks.

As I said, I am disappointed, too. I hope that we can resume negotiations. It would weaken our negotiating position simply to give away valuable rights to United States airlines with nothing in return; therefore, we must consider the negotiating package as a whole and not give away parts of it in advance.

Swale Crossings

2. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the maximum traffic flows over the Kingsferry bridge on the A249; what was its design capacity; what are the traffic flows on a typical two-lane motorway; and what steps he is taking to speed up construction of a second crossing of the Swale.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): There are about 26,000 vehicles a day; design capacity figures are no longer readily available. The traffic flows are equivalent to 33,500 vehicles a day. The priority given to the Iwade to Queensborough improvement will depend on the outcome of the road programme review.

Sir Roger Moate: I thank my hon. Friend and his officials for the sterling work that they have done in bringing forward this project, even to the planning stage. Does he understand, however, that as up to 26,000 vehicles a day go over the single lifting bridge, the only means of access to the Isle of Sheppey, and as there was an electrical failure a couple of weeks ago, this is a transport crisis waiting to happen? Will he please try to ensure that the construction of the second crossing is a matter not just of local priority but of national priority?

Mr. Key: It is clear that the vast majority of people who replied to our consultation exercise are in favour of the scheme and wish it to proceed as swiftly as possible. Sheppey is an environmentally sensitive area, but the needs of industry and of the local population are also great. We shall have to consider the scheme in the light of those factors.

Rail Freight

3. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will initiate an urgent review of British Rail's proposals for increased use of the west London line for rail freight.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am asking Railtrack, as one of its first acts on taking over infrastructure provision in April, to examine the case for providing an alternative route for channel tunnel freight trains which avoids central London.

Mr. Soley: I hope that the Minister will take on board —I think that he is beginning to do so—the enormous and growing opposition from residents who live alongside the west London line. That opposition does not affect just my constituency, because the proposal to increase usage of the line to about one train every eight minutes, day and night, is seen as unacceptable in a residential area. If the current minimal use of the line is increased, people should be compensated when trains pass within a few feet of their windows. Concern is growing, however, about local authorities that are not financially equipped to meet that need.

Mr. Freeman: I hope that there is all-party support for the exploitation of the channel tunnel, for both passenger and rail freight trains. I am sure that the hon. Member shares my hope. My Department has recently agreed to consider requests from all local authorities, including those in London, for additional financial provision to contribute towards the erection of noise barriers. I answered another question recently from my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) dealing with compensation issues.

Mr. Dunn: In the context of rail freight, is my right hon. Friend aware of the policy to involve private money in transport schemes, as advocated by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)? Will my right hon. Friend speculate on how many extra freight trains would run as a result of that policy?

Mr. Freeman: Perhaps my hon. Friend refers to the document published today, which I have read with interest. I am bound to say that it is a consultation document, which contains no proposals. Meanwhile, the Government are getting on with introducing private sector capital to the rail infrastructure. [*Laughter.*] The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) laughs, but I can tell him that, within the next few days, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will issue the pre-tender qualification documents to invite private sector finance for the construction of the channel tunnel rail link.

Roads Budget

4. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of his Department's annual budget is currently spent on roads; and what proportion on public transport.

Mr. MacGregor: In the coming financial year, I expect roads to account for just over 50 per cent. of my budget and public transport for about 40 per cent.

Mr. Duncan: I confess that I am somewhat taken aback by that reply, because I was going to put in a special plea for the Oakham bypass in Rutland. Does not my right hon. Friend's reply show that whereas 90 per cent. of journeys are undertaken by road, nearly half of his Department's spending is on public transport? Will he undertake to trumpet that statistic rather widely and use it to confound those critics who try to argue that the Government do not spend enough on public transport?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree. We are spending substantial sums on the road programme and on, I assure my hon. Friend, the bypass programme, which I know is widely welcomed. When we compare our expenditure with that made a long way back, it is clear that we are spending record sums on public transport. The fact that 40 per cent. of my Department's budget goes towards the equivalent of 10 per cent. of total journeys shows how much we are skewing it towards public transport. I assure my hon. Friend that I am determined to demolish the myth that the Government do not spend on public transport. Many statistics, including those on London Underground, prove that.

Mr. Harvey: Given the future balance between spending on roads and on public transport, will the Minister bear in mind the growing evidence of the connection between vehicle emissions and respiratory allergies? That evidence has come particularly from the Office of Science and Technology and the British Lung Foundation. Is he aware that 90 per cent. of the carbon dioxide pumped into the air comes from vehicles? Will he bear in mind that small children are among those most at risk because in urban areas they are at the height of vehicle exhausts? What steps will he take to toughen standards for vehicle emissions in urban areas? Will he put more money into public transport as an alternative to the motor car?

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that 40 per cent. of my Department's budget is spent on public transport. The fact that 90 per cent. of passengers and inland freight goes by road clearly shows how much we are spending on it. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will support me in all the other measures that we are taking, such as insisting on catalytic converters, our drive for further improvement in vehicle emission standards and the programme to improve motorways, trunk roads and local roads. If we can remove congestion, we shall remove a considerable amount of atmospheric pollution. Our traffic-calming measures are also contributing to reducing that problem.

Mr. Matthew Banks: What proportion of my right hon. Friend's budget is being spent, and how much is it costing the taxpayer, to remove protesters from places such as Twyford down where protesters have failed to achieve their aim in the democratic process but now seek through public disorder and, in some instances, violence to achieve their aims? Is it not time that we spent that money on road safety schemes and public transport infrastructure in general, on which it deserves to be spent?

Mr. MacGregor: I take my hon. Friend's point. The cost to the public purse of security measures at Twyford down was £200,000 and the protest against the M11 link at Hackney has also cost a considerable amount. The important point is that there have been prolonged public inquiries into those schemes and others, at which everyone has had the democratic right to have his or her view taken into account and expressed. Decisions must be taken and it is a negation of democracy for a tiny minority of people to hold up what the vast majority wants. Moreover, my hon. Friend is correct to say that the money could otherwise have been spent on environmental issues, such as planting even more trees and shrubs along the roads concerned.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, as a result of the access charges announced by Railtrack last week, every part of the British rail network, including the vastly profitable east coast main line, will need subsidising by the taxpayer? What sort of triumph is that for Tory doctrines? Will he further confirm that, as a result of last week's announcement, the whole railway network will be charged those enormously inflated access charges indefinitely, whereas decisions on subsidy will be taken every year? In the light of that, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that those inflated access charges will make the railway system appear to be far more heavily subsidised than it is and that, in the long term, those access charges represent the biggest threat to our railway network since Beeching?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman must make up his mind whether he wants taxpayers' money put into the railway system to subsidise socially necessary lines. I hope that he will not condemn us for making it clear that we are continuing to do so. Had the hon. Gentleman done his homework, he would be aware that we are having the access charges accurately costed to reflect the cost of running the infrastructure. Until now, that has not been done. The costing will take account of depreciation and the proper return on capital so that we can get investment in the infrastructure.

The hon. Gentleman will know that the change that I announced last week will have no impact on fares or investment. He should look at the whole matter properly, as we are giving the system a proper commercial structure so that decisions can take account of the cost of different parts of the system.

Motorways

5. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of car owners frequently use motorways; and what proportion never use motorways.

Mr. MacGregor: In the summer of 1992, my Department carried out a number of surveys into the use made of motorways in this country. The results indicate that half the number of road users rarely or never use motorways and about 85 per cent. of motorway miles are driven by frequent users.

Mr. Thurnham: When does my right hon. Friend expect to be able to use new technology to recover the cost of motorways from those who use them rather than from motorists in general—not all of whom enjoy the undoubted benefits of motorways?

Mr. MacGregor: As the figures that I quoted show, a surprisingly high proportion of British motorists hardly ever use motorways. We announced our decision in principle to go for motorway tolling so that, at least in part, the cost of motorways would be met by the user. I stress the words "at least in part".

As to technology, I expect to announce later this week the first part of our research and development programme on electronic technology, which I expect to be one of the biggest in the world. We expect interest from more than 300 companies in that research and development.

Mr. Barnes: If there were more buses and trains whose routes were interlinked, might not car owners leave their vehicles at home more often? Would not less money need to be spent on motorways and other roads, so that we could have a decent public transport system?

Mr. MacGregor: It is clear from the choice of individuals to drive on motorways, and of companies to transport freight on them, that many more people want the freedom to use their vehicles, and I must take that into account. The hon. Gentleman must understand that myriad types of journeys are undertaken on motorways every day, which involve joining them and leaving them at different points. It would be impossibly expensive to duplicate that flexibility with a railway infrastructure.

Ministerial Visits

6. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will pay an official visit to south-west Bedfordshire to review the road-building programme.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Sir David Madel: In view of the ever-increasing congestion on the A5, will there be an early start on constructing the Sheep lane roundabout between Heath and Reach and Woburn? Also, can my hon. Friend give a firm date for the commencement of the public inquiry into the north-south Dunstable bypass?

Mr. Key: The Dunstable bypass must await my right hon. Friend's decisions on the road programme review. As to Sheep lane, we are examining the recommendation of the public inquiry inspector that there should be a roundabout at that point, but I cannot say when it will be implemented. I understand the frustration that my hon. Friend frequently expresses on behalf of his constituents, but I ask him to be patient a little longer.

Ms Walley: Does the Minister not realise that the road programme cannot be dealt with in a fragmented way? When will he and the Government get the message that Britain needs a transport policy? That cannot be formulated without a fundamental review of the roads programme. What account will the Minister take of the report, due out soon, on traffic forecasts? What criteria does he use to decide what is included in the roads programme, which he has never properly justified?

Mr. Key: An integrated transport policy means different things to different people, but that is exactly what the Department is producing. Since my right hon. Friend announced the decision last August, we have been undertaking a fundamental review of the prioritisation of the roads programme. The hon. Lady will not have to wait long to discover our conclusions. I announced last December—and I am delighted that it has taken only two or three months for the hon. Lady to notice—that we would review the fundamental methodology of road traffic forecasting.

Red Routes

7. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his future plans for red routes in London.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): The pilot red route scheme in north and east London is to be extended to a 315-mile network throughout London. Detailed plans must be submitted to the traffic director by 24 June, and implementation will begin later in the year.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unfortunate that too many people have tried to suggest that red routes are some sort of urban motorway? Notwithstanding some local difficulties, do they not bring great benefits?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Labour picked up on the idea of red routes, and tried to scare many people who live on such routes into believing that they are some kind of urban motorway. In reality, they have brought tremendous benefits to pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport, as well as to the motoring public generally. They are an extremely good thing.

Lorry Bans (London)

8. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to his proposed changes to the London night-time and weekend lorry ban.

Mr. Norris: I have received representations from hon. Members, Members of the European Parliament, noble Lords, London borough councillors, the London Boroughs Transport Committee, the Freight Transport Association and members of the general public.

Mr. Dowd: I thank the Minister for that response. Can he confirm from the rich catalogue that he has just outlined that the only people in favour of the Government's proposals were the members of the Freight Transport Association, that the people of London have benefited hugely from the imposition of the ban and that, rather than lifting the burden from business, the Government's proposals to water down the ban will impose an extra burden on business, from which it thought that it had mercifully escaped?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on his first point. The vast majority of those who wrote simply asked for information on what was proposed. They were not helped by the deliberate misinformation that was put about by the Labour party, as well as by Members of the European Parliament who stand in the socialist interest and who saw fit deliberately to distort our proposals, to create the false impression that we were in some way watering down the London lorry ban. Conservative Members very much appreciate the advantages that the ban brings. What they do not appreciate is the mountain of paperwork that surrounds the current Greater London council-inspired scheme. That is what will be abolished, not the scheme itself.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the ban will remain in place and that money will be saved by the deregulation to which he referred? What compensation arrangements can be made for people living near the A40 in my constituency and in small roads whose homes are rattled by heavy lorries? Their numbers are increasing. That problem is of great concern to my constituents.

Mr. Norris: First, I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the ban remains. Secondly, on the effect of the ban, it will remain the case that any vehicle that is not on an appropriate journey through central London will be committing an offence. It is that to which the scheme should always have addressed itself, rather than simply accumulating a mountain of paperwork. The savings will be about £400,000 to the scheme operators—funded by the hard-pressed council tax payers—and about £3 million to the business community, which will, of course, flow through in prices. As to the A40, I am afraid that I have to tell my hon. Friend that compensation arrangements do not generally take account of the increased use of an existing road.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister agree that, without a permit scheme, a night-time and weekend lorry ban in London can be enforced only by regular and widespread spot checks, for which the participation of the Metropolitan police is essential? From where will the extra police resources come to do that? Unless he can give an assurance that he has the agreement of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, and the Home Secretary, to deploy extra police to enforce the ban, everyone will know that his claims about keeping it in force are simply hollow boasts, because in practice the scheme will be killed and millions of Londoners will be exposed to unnecessary noise, nuisance and disruption at night?

Mr. Norris: By abolishing the ludicrous paperwork that surrounds the scheme, some £400,000 will be available to the London boroughs transport scheme to increase the amount of on-the-spot enforcement that is carried out. I should ask the hon. Gentleman whether he can think of any other city—indeed, of cities that are controlled by Labour councils—that sees the need for such paperwork. He would think in vain, because not a single council in the whole of the United Kingdom, whether controlled by Labour or by Conservatives, uses that ludicrous typical GLC-Stalinist paperwork basis.

Mr. John Marshall: On behalf of my constituents, I thank my hon. Friend for his support for the Enfield-Barnet lorry ban, the implementation of which will improve the quality of life of my constituents, and the implementation of which was delayed by the opposition of Labour councillors.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Enfield and Barnet have taken advantage of the opportunity that is available to local authorities to introduce lorry bans much more stringent than the scheme on which the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) appears so keen —24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week bans on all vehicles above 7.5 tonnes. They are useful schemes and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks.

Train Speeds

9. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the speed of intercity rail travel in (a) the United Kingdom and (b) France.

Mr. Freeman: Speed of intercity rail travel varies according to route and the types of trains used. The fastest timetabled United Kingdom service is the InterCity 225 on the east coast main line between Doncaster and Grantham, which runs at an average speed of 107 mph; the fastest French service is the TGV Atlantique between Massy and St Pierre, which runs at an average speed of 153 mph.

Mr. Griffiths: What benefits of the British system would the Minister commend to the French?

Mr. Freeman: All British Rail's InterCity services—diesel and electric—are designed to run at fast speeds over 90 mph. If the hon. Gentleman makes inquiries, he will find that France operates a two-tier service—the TGVs, which are excellent, and the rest, which are not.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British Rail has many more services that run above 90 mph than French railways? Does he also agree that we have the most extensive track network in Europe and that more people travel by rail in Britain than in France?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. There seems to be a plot among those on the Opposition Benches to run down the quality of British Rail services—including a reference by the shadow Chancellor in the weekend press to the fact that trains from Waterloo to the channel tunnel terminal will run at 45 mph. That is not true. When the trains start in the summer, they will run through Kent at 90 mph.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister recall claiming proudly that, following the opening of the channel tunnel, the train journey from London to Paris would take just three hours? Will he confirm that if the train travelled through France at the same speed at which it will travel through Kent, the journey would take not three hours but five hours 25 minutes—and those are the figures supplied by British Rail?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman must take account of the fact that trains must negotiate Southern region in the London area. No train could possibly run at 225 kph from the Waterloo terminal to the outskirts of London. I commend the train journey to all hon. Members—I hope that you, Madam Speaker, will be among the first to use the channel tunnel train service—and confirm that the trains will travel at 90 mph.

Wyre Piddle Bypasses

10. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with Hereford and Worcester county council or Wychavon district council about the proposed western and northern Wyre Piddle bypasses.

Mr. Key: No such discussions have been requested. However, I discussed the bypass schemes with my hon. Friend last November.

Mr. Luff: Does my hon. Friend recognise that, against the background of a rather disappointing transport supplementary grant settlement for Hereford and Worcester, there is very real pleasure among the residents of Wyre Piddle—a village which derives its name from the Piddle brook—at my hon. Friend's repeated reassurances that the northern bypass will be eligible for transport supplementary grant? Does he recognise, however, that there is equal disappointment among those same residents and the residents of Pershore in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) that the western bypass, which is a strategic road, is not recognised as such by his Department?

Mr. Key: I am sure that there is not half as much joy in Wyre Piddle as the residents of Puddletown and Piddletrenthide in Dorset would feel if they could get their bypasses. As I explained to my hon. Friend, the northern bypass is on the A4538, which is a road of more than local importance in through-traffic terms. The B4083, which the proposed western bypass would relieve, is a secondary road linking Pershore and Wyre Piddle. I am none the less grateful for the continuing representations on behalf of the inhabitants of those delightful villages and will always be ready to discuss them with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that progress on both the northern and the western Wyre Piddle bypasses —a matter of great concern to my constituents—would be accelerated if the Government adopted the imaginative policies presented today in the Labour party consultation document? Does he further agree that, were the Government not locked in their ideological straitjacket, in which they see things as just private or just public, we should have had progress both on those bypasses and on the channel link, which would not have been 10 years behind schedule as it is today?

Mr. Key: I have read that interesting fairy story. The bad news for the hon. Gentleman is that his party would slash road building of all kinds and the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) would be terribly badly off, as they would be if we had the misfortune of any influence from the Liberal Democrat party.

Railway Privatisation

12. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what benefits he expects to see for passengers as a result of his plans to privatise the railways.

Mr. MacGregor: As a result of the franchising of passenger services, I expect to see better services run more efficiently, better targeted to markets and hence to what passengers want and to which they will respond.

Mr. Martin: To dispel some of the many misconceptions put about by opponents of increased commercialisation in our railways, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be through ticketing and through timetabling under the new arrangements and that those arrangements will be sensible?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I can confirm that. As we have made clear on many occasions, we have given a clear commitment that through ticketing will continue. The regulator will have a statutory duty to promote it. Railtrack will be responsible for producing a working national timetable for the railway and will be required in its licence to make arrangements for the publication of the timetable, if it would not otherwise be published by another party.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Secretary of State knows that discounted tickets are of special concern to passengers and he also knows that it has become painfully clear, under the schemes that have been carried out in other areas, that Ministers have no control whatever over the actions of individual companies after privatisation. Will he stop trying to mislead people who have the misfortune to need British Rail as it is?

Mr. MacGregor: I make it clear again that the operators will be required to participate in common ticketing and revenue allocation arrangements which are based at the outset on BR's current systems. They will therefore be able to offer through ticketing on much the same basis as at present, on a range of ticket and fare types.

Crossrail

13. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what benefits Billericay will derive from crossrail.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend's constituents will either travel to Shenfield to use the line directly, or will otherwise take advantage of reduced congestion on existing services. They will gain benefits in journey time savings and reduced overcrowding.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. He should know that my constituents in Billericay who travel to Liverpool street each day are greatly looking forward to that new service, which I am sure, because it is largely privately funded, will set a new standard in the quality of service for passengers. Does he agree that the tube lines on which they currently make their journeys, especially the Central line, are grossly overcrowded and relatively underfunded? Does he agree that we should seek private capital funding for the tube system to improve that service, too?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend's basic thesis is entirely right. When one has exhausted the investment that the taxpayer can prudently make—an investment which, under the Government, is four times the level of the best years of the Labour Government—and when one has exhausted that which is contributable by the farepayer, the only sensible and prudent course for anyone who is concerned to improve the system is to consider how the private sector can be involved. Of course, it depends on the particular circumstances as to how it can be accomplished. However, I am delighted about my hon. Friend's support for crossrail. It will be a useful and imaginative project which will allow substantial participation by the private sector.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am somewhat equivocal about any means of transportation that gets the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) to the House of Commons quicker. Having said that, crossrail will be of great benefit to the whole of London. When can we expect crossrail to operate?

Mr. Norris: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's question is not connected to the fact that, as I recall, the train runs directly underneath his house. He has a more than passing interest in the scheme. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Bill which is currently before the House will have to complete its proceedings and I cannot anticipate when that may be. When the powers of the Bill are obtained, it will be for the private sector and the promoters to get together to develop a financable scheme. My view is that it will be such an attractive scheme that there should be little delay between the obtaining of the powers and the start of works. If that were the case, we may be looking at the operation of a crossrail scheme in the early days of the next century.

Journey Statistics

14. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of journeys in the United Kingdom are made by road; and what percentage by public transport.

Mr. MacGregor: Some 90 per cent. of passenger and inland freight traffic goes by road.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his interesting reply. Does he agree that many people in London are keen that we should have a good transport system for the public sector and a good rail network, not only for business, but for commuters and the general public? Does he further agree that only Conservatives believe in real choice in respect of public transport and the private use of motor cars, lorries and vans?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. The figures are somewhat different for London. There is not only much more Government subsidy into public transport in London than to roads, but more journeys are made by public transport. As an indication of the Government's contribution to public transport in London, it is worth noting that, at the moment, the capital grant to London Underground amounts to £300 a year per regular tube user and the subsidy for Network SouthEast is more than £400 a year for the average regular user.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

NHS Trusts

26. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what funds will be made available for the National Audit Office to investigate the work of NHS trusts.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The Commission approved the National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1994-95 to 1998-99 in July 1993 and the estimate for 1994-95 in December. Those include provision for the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine, certify and report on the summarised accounts of NHS trusts and other NHS bodies and to visit individual NHS bodies to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Department of Health and the NHS use their resources. Selection of topics for value for money investigation is a matter for the CAG in consultation with the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Chairman for his answer. Will he ensure that the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff examine the forthcoming budgetary provisions and consider the proposals, which are now in the public domain, as they affect Guy's hospital? The proposal, about which the Chairman may have heard, would potentially considerably underuse a new building—Sir Philip Harris house—which has cost £140 million. I have referred the matter to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who has passed it on to the CAG. Will the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission ensure that the Comptroller is directed to look into that matter before a decision is made so that we are not considering waste afterwards, but preventing it in advance?

Sir Peter Hordern: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. However, I will draw the CAG's attention to what the hon. Gentleman has said. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that the CAG and the National Audit Office are carrying out a review of Treasury management of NHS trusts.

National Audit Office

27. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what assessment he has made of the effectiveness in terms of value for money of the National Audit Office.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office corporate plan is considered by the Public Accounts Commission in July each year. It sets out NAO efficiency and performance overall and the impacts of NAO work. In 1992, bodies audited made 173 significant changes as a result of value for money recommendations by the NAO and the Public Accounts Committee resulting in estimated savings of £204 million. National Audit Office financial audit work also led to wider improvements. In 1992, it recommended 208 significant changes in systems and controls which resulted in estimated savings of £34 million.

Mr. Ainsworth: I thank the Chairman for that reply. However, how does that impact on the effectiveness of the NAO when it can report into an organisation, as it did in respect of the Welsh Development Agency, only to discover that the people who were found to be culpable were popping up in other public posts? For example, the discredited chief executive of the WDA subsequently ran the property department of the Further Education Funding Council on £46,000 a year. How can that possibly enhance the efficiency that the Commission is trying to achieve? Should not such reports include recommendations as to whether those people are fit to continue as public servants?

Sir Peter Hordern: That must be a matter for the PAC to recommend in the first place. If the hon. Gentleman has a complaint about any individual, he should refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. The CAG is concerned with the control of public expenditure and departmental expenditure in particular, but not with what happens to personnel.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Will my right hon. Friend ask the National Audit Office to make a cost-benefit analysis of the decision by the trustees of the independent living (1993) fund to exclude from support severely disabled people who are terminally ill?

Sir Peter Hordern: I shall look at that matter and write to my hon. Friend.

Public Money (Checks on Use)

28. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what consideration the Commission is giving to the extent to which the Comptroller and Auditor General can check on the use of public money once it has passed into private hands.

Sir Peter Hordern: The CAG's powers to check the use of public money are governed by statute. Where public money passes into private hands, the CAG's statutory powers are normally restricted to examining the activities and papers of the Department or agency issuing the funds. In some cases, the CAG also has rights to inspect the books and records of bodies receiving those funds, to ensure that the money has been spent as Parliament intended. Those inspection rights can be statutory as a condition of grant, or they can be built into contracts for services provided by the private sector. There can be advantages in doing so. The extension of the CAG's statutory powers is, of course, a matter for the House.

Ms. Lynne: I am grateful for that detailed reply. Does the Chairman agree that it would be better if the Comptroller and Auditor General could follow money through to its end use once it has left the Treasury, bearing in mind allegations about the Pergau dam? That would bring us into line with many other countries.

Sir Peter Hordern: There is a strong case for that. The PAC recommended it some years ago and I understand that the PAC and the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee are now also considering it. It seems rather strange that the Audit Commission can appoint auditors who may follow every penny of public spending through local authorities and that the European Court of Auditors can do the same. I shall draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friends and, when I have done so, I shall write to the hon. Lady.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Annunciators

31. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what financial provision has been made for the installation of annunciators in the offices of hon. Members' staff.

Mr. A. J. Beith (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): A figure of £260,000 has been included in the works services estimates for 1994-95 to start design work for the parliamentary data and video network, which could include the provision of annunciators in the offices of hon. Members' staff. Use of that provision will depend on approval by the House of the report from the Information Committee recommending the final form of the network.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful for that reply. The House might be aware that, a fortnight ago, an annunciator in a room of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) caught fire. That might have been an act of God. Indeed, one hon. Member suggested that it reflects the powers in this place.

On a serious note, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that expenditure on annunciators will be in the context of the new technologies that he described and not of keeping antiques going beyond their useful life, at a risk to hon. Members' staff, hon. Members and, indeed, this building?

Mr. Beith: I believe that that point is fully appreciated by the House authorities. I expect it to be covered in the report which we shall shortly receive.

Smoking

32. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what representations he has received regarding smoking in the Palace of Westminster; and what assessments he has made of the risks to persons and the fabric of the building.

Mr. Beith: In addition to questions from hon. Members, representations have been made by the trade unions. Although no specific assessment of the effects of smoking on individuals has been made, the House authorities are aware of the statutory requirements in that respect and of recent reports on the subject. The Accommodation and Works Committee recently considered a fire action plan, which includes a statement on the fire hazards caused by smoking.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the House should lead and not drag behind in public policy? Is he satisfied that progress will be made if it is left to individual Departments? Should not there be a co-ordinated approach, bearing in mind the fact, for example, that the Refreshment Department has only just implemented a ban to meet statutory requirements in food preparation areas? Is the right hon. Gentleman convinced of the need for co-ordinated action to tackle the problem?

Mr. Beith: Considerable progress is being made. The Refreshment Department is one of those which, relatively recently, announced comprehensive changes of policy, which I hope meet some of the hon. Gentleman's concerns. I will ensure that the Commission is made well aware of his point.

Employment (Women)

33. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking to increase the number of women employed in the House of Commons service.

Mr. Beith: Recruitment to, and promotion in, the House of Commons service is based on ability, qualifications and fitness for the work. There is no discrimination on any other ground.

An equal opportunities officer has been appointed to monitor the operation of the policy. In addition, a number of schemes have been introduced that take account of the needs of those with family responsibilities, such as career break schemes, part-time working, job sharing and holiday play schemes.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his answer. I am sure that he, like me, is aware of the enormous importance of highly skilled and dedicated women to the running of this place, especially those in the background jobs. Does he agree that it is surprising that, as yet, only two Departments are headed by women—the Library and the Refreshment Department? I have observed that other Parliaments—in Australia, for instance—employ women as badge messengers. As a result of training over the generations, women are—if nothing else—very good at running after men to give them messages.

Mr. Beith: It must be obvious to all that women occupy not just important backroom jobs in the House of

Commons, but important front-line jobs. I regard the fact that two Departments are now headed by women, after a long period when none was, as a mark of progress. I shall, however, draw the attention of the appropriate authorities to the hon. Lady's recommendation about messengers.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the employment of women would be greatly facilitated if there were arrangements for child care in the House? He must be aware that the absence of such facilities limits employment opportunities for many women, especially those with young children and especially in view of our strange working hours.

Mr. Beith: I believe that child care provision would facilitate the employment of women in the House; whether my assumption is correct is currently being tested in a survey conducted by the Administration Committee, whose results we await. There are some practical difficulties connected with where such facilities could be housed which the Accommodation and Works Committee has often drawn to our attention. When we receive the results of the survey and the Administration Committee's recommendation, however, we may be able to take the matter further.

Visitor Services

35. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what financial provision has been made in the House of Commons Administration estimate for 1994-95 in respect of services for visitors to the Palace.

Mr. Beith: Financial provision in the financial year 1994-95 for facilities for all types of visitors is contained mainly in the estimate for works services. It includes an initial sum of £250,000 for measures to improve access for the disabled, funds to improve the line of route and the provisional allocation of £50,000 for an additional souvenir kiosk. Other costs are borne on the administration vote, but cannot be separately identified.

Mr. Coombs: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his reply. Is he aware of the pent-up demand among visitors to London, who want to come into the Palace and view this major tourist attraction? Will he use his good offices in the cause of trying to develop a scheme that will enable those visitors to enter the Palace during the summer recess, when it is more or less empty, so that the House and the Palace in general can benefit from the resulting revenue? That revenue could accrue to help with improvements of one kind or another.

Mr. Beith: I have a great deal of sympathy with the general objective of creating more opportunities for visitors. The Library's education division organises school parties during the summer recess and there may be scope for extending that scheme, but responsibility lies with the relevant Committee rather than with the Commission. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the Committee's attention.

Disabled Visitors

36. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what financial provision has been made in the estimate for improvement of facilities for disabled visitors to the House of Commons.

Mr. Beith: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I have just given.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for warning me of the figure involved in his answer to question 35. Does he agree, however, that even following the expenditure of £250,000 facilities for the disabled visitor to the Palace of Westminster will still be extremely poor? Will he ensure that in future years, particularly the next financial year, provision will be much greater?

Mr. Beith: A specialised report on the subject by an architect with noted experience in the field is currently under consideration. When it has been considered by the appropriate Committees, it may help to guide the Commission about the extent of the further facilities that are needed, and can be accommodated, in a building which —unfortunately—was not designed with the interests of disabled people sufficiently in mind.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Overseas Development Administration

29. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what funds will be made available for the National Audit Office to investigate the work of the Overseas Development Administration.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The Commission approved the National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1994-95 to 1998-99 in July 1993 and the estimate for 1994-95 in December. The funds enable the National Audit Office to audit the financial accounts of all Government Departments, including the Overseas Development Administration, and also to deliver about 50 major value for money outputs to Parliament each year. Selection of topics for investigation is based on a systematic review of expenditure and value for money, including the Overseas Development Administration, but the final decision on whether to proceed with an investigation is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General, in consultation with the Public Accounts Committee.

Mrs. Campbell: Can the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that he will be able to investigate fully the link between arms sales and overseas aid in cases such as the Pergau dam project?

Sir Peter Hordern: As the hon. Lady knows, the Comptroller and Auditor General has reported to the Public Accounts Committee, but I understand that the Committee has not yet issued its report. The Pergau dam is also being investigated by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and it is for those Committees to report to the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Voting (Time)

39. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how much time was spent in voting in the House in the last Session.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): There were 402 Divisions last Session, which took on average about 14 minutes, giving an approximate time of some 94 hours spent in Divisions.

Ms Hoey: I thank the Lord President for that piece of mathematics. Is it sensible that, in this day and age, hon. Members spend days in a Session on voting procedures? Is not it time that we all looked at this matter more sensibly and came up with a system more like that which is operated in other parts of Europe, so that we do not spend hours hanging around this place late at night? Would not that allow us to get on with our proper business of running the country?

Mr. Newton: I sense some ingredients of an own-goal and also some squirming by hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench, whose recent practice has extended not only to unnecessary voting by any reasonable standards, but to voting against pensions increases in the interests of taking up time. Although I am certainly amenable to suggestions that might avoid such absurdities, the remedy at the moment is in the hands of others.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many Government Back Benchers greatly value the fact that we are able to buttonhole and corner Ministers while waiting to vote in the Lobby and that we would greatly resent the loss of that opportunity?

Mr. Newton: Speaking as one who in his time has been buttonholed more than once, my hon. Friend's argument might be construed as supporting the hon. Lady, but I agree with him.

Electronic Voting

40. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will carry out a feasibility study into the use of electronic voting in the House of Commons.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Banks: May I point out to the Leader of the House that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) was talking about the time that is spent voting, not the issues on which we are spending the time? Would not voting machines be one way of speeding up the voting procedure? Is not it about time that this place was dragged into the 20th century?

The Chamber is not particularly historic; it dates back only to the 1950s. Should not hon. Members have allocated places and desks where we could sit and write properly? From a personal point of view, one of the advantages of having allocated places would be that I would not have to fight off the buttocks of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) every Tuesday and Thursday?

Mr. Newton: The prospect of moving to electronic voting would not command universal support, as has been made clear, and my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) advanced quite an important argument. I will say that the prospect of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) being replaced by an electronic bleep is quite exciting.

Early-day Motions and Written Questions

42. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will introduce measures to allow hon. Members to table early-day motions and written questions when the House is in recess.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Barnes: One of the few avenues open to Back-Bench Members is tabling parliamentary questions for written answer and early-day motions. It is a useful avenue for those Members who are not Privy Councillors or Members of Parliament who have been here since the year dot. Why cannot that avenue be available during the increasingly long recesses so that we can push the interests of our constituents?

Mr. Newton: Both procedures are associated with the sittings of Parliament. It would be a large step to activate them while Parliament was not sitting. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has put his proposals to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee. If the Procedure Committee made such a proposal, of course we would consider it with care, but it is not something which I would want to do without careful thought and advice.

Legislative Process

44. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what new proposals he has to improve the efficacy of the legislative process.

Mr. Newton: It remains my aim to achieve agreement on a balanced package of measures that can be brought before the House.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Leader of the House worried about the great increase in the number of statutory instruments? They have increased by at least 50 per cent. since 1979. Does not that greatly devalue the role of Back-Bench Members and degrade the quality of our democracy?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it devalues the role of Back-Bench Members of Parliament, given the opportunities that exist to debate statutory instruments in the Standing Committees and the well-established convention —I know that there are some difficulties at present—from which we certainly would not wish to depart, that statutory instruments of sufficient importance are given time on the Floor of the House. I believe that that is a reasonable and sensible approach.

Speaker's Statement

3.31 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a short statement to make. On Wednesday last, the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) drew my attention to a document apparently circulating in this country, which I asked him to send to me. Having examined the document, I have decided to make a brief statement, making it clear that it would be a serious offence against Parliament for those addressed to do what they are urged to do.

The document, emanating from Jammu and Kashmir, is described as:

> "An appeal to our compatriots and their relatives in the UK"

to

> "boycott consumer goods produced by industries located in constituencies of British and European MsP who allow themselves to be used by the ISI and its surrogates in their efforts to destroy our country".

The document lists the names of 16 Members of this House.

To attempt to intimidate a Member in his or her parliamentary conduct by threats of this kind is an undoubted contempt of the House. Fortunately, I have no evidence that any notice has been taken of the document and I trust that this will remain the case. I did, however, judge it appropriate to make this statement so that no one need be in any doubt about the seriousness of the matter.

Points of Order

3.32 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I look for your help and assistance. Possibly, the matter is in your hands. I do not know. We shall debate later today an new clause in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on the subject of homosexuality. There is an amendment in my name—

Madam Speaker: Order. May I stop the hon. Gentleman there. His point of order relates to amendments in Committee, which are not my responsibility as Speaker. My very good Chairman of Ways and Means will be taking over in a moment. He is responsible for those amendments. I ask the hon. Gentleman to hold on until then.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I thank you very much indeed for the consideration that you gave to the document that was the subject of your statement. I am sure that your statement was much appreciated by all hon. Members, particularly those who were listed. Your comments will be heeded, I trust, in this country, in India and elsewhere. May I ask you to consider one further step which I think would be appropriate and important? Will you contact the Indian high commissioner in London to ask him to repudiate and condemn publicly the document and to ask him and his Government to use their good offices to bring the campaign to an end?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I am concerned only with happenings in the House and the protection of Members of the House. However, I am sure that those at the Indian high commission—I know them well—will read our Proceedings and note what has been said.

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill

(New Clauses of which notice was given not later than 9 February relating to capital punishment and the age of consent for sexual acts between men in Great Britain)

Considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.34 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I seek your advice and, perhaps, your assistance. We shall be debating later today a new clause, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire South (Mrs. Currie), on the subject of homosexuality. Also tabled, in my name and in the names of at least 30 of my hon. Friends is a new clause on the subject of corporal punishment. It is fair to say that, in the country as a whole, there is much more support for a debate on corporal punishment than for a debate on the other subject I have just mentioned.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman. The House clearly remitted that we should have a debate on capital punishment, but not a debate on corporal punishment. I am bound by the decision of the House, and the debate will be, as prescribed, on capital punishment.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The business motion that directed the Committee to consider parts of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill specified that any new clause relating to capital punishment should be dealt with. It did not direct the Committee to consider only those new clauses providing for capital punishment.

New clause 2, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), has been selected for debate. I tabled an amendment to my hon. Friend's new clause, and my amendment was supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Sir R. Boyson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) and for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway). My amendment, which has not been selected for debate, does not provide for capital punishment, but it relates to capital punishment in that it says that this is not the right way to deal with the murder of a police officer—

The Chairman: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that I can read. I have given particularly careful consideration to his amendment, but have decided that it is outside the scope of the order of the House determining what matters might be considered in Committee today. The hon. Gentleman may well be able to deploy his argument in debating the merits of the new clause if he catches my eye.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: Is it a new point of order?

Mr. Marlow: How would it be possible for the Committee to remit—as you, Sir, have said—that we should have a debate on corporal punishment rather than one on homosexuality? The country as a whole is far more interested in the former than in the latter.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is a senior Member. He knows that he has influence with his right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench and could get them to remit an appropriate motion. As matters stand today, it is very clear that we must deal with new clause 2 and new clause 4.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I hope that this is a new point of order, and not one with which I have dealt already.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: It is a very quick one.

The Chairman: However quick it may be, it should be on a new subject. *[Interruption.]* Order. However senior the right hon. Gentleman may be, when I have ruled on a point of order the matter is finished. I must ask hon. Members on all sides to accept my ruling. If the right hon. Gentleman's point of order is a new one I shall be delighted to take it, but it appears that it is not.

New clause 2

PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER OF A POLICE OFFICER

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of the murder of a police officer acting in the execution of his duty shall on conviction be sentenced to death.'—*[Mr. John Greenway.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to consider new clause 4—*Punishment for murder*—

'(1) Subject to the following subsections the penalty for murder shall be death.

(2) No person aged under 18 years shall suffer the death penalty.

(3) As soon as practicable following a sentence of death, a special sitting of the Court of Appeal shall be convened to consider whether the circumstances of either

(a) the commission of the offence or

(b) the offender

whether or not such circumstances were adduced in evidence at the trial, are such as would justify the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment in place of the sentence of death.'

Mr. Greenway: It is a little more than three years since I argued during proceedings on the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for the death penalty for the murder of a police officer. Since that debate, it is my understanding that, not forgetting the many atrocities committed against the police and security forces in Northern Ireland, eight police officers in England have been murdered. The most recent of those was only two weeks ago today, when Sergeant Derek Robertson was brutally stabbed to death by armed raiders at a south London post office in an ordinary residential district. Last October, PC Patrick Dunne was shot dead in Clapham as he responded to a routine burglary call. In March last year, Sergeant Bill Forth of Northumbria police was stabbed to death answering a call to a disturbance. Last week, two men were found guilty of his murder.

In June 1992, in my county of North Yorkshire and in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), Special Constable Glen Goodman was brutally murdered by an IRA terrorist. His colleague, PC Sandy Kelly, was left for dead and his life was saved only by the miraculous work of local doctors. Detective Constable Jim Morrison was stabbed to death in central London. Sergeant Alan King was stabbed to death in east London. PC Duncan Clift was murdered in Northumberland and PC Robert Gladwell was killed in a west London hotel brawl.

Whatever view we take of the merits of capital punishment, there are three points on which I hope that all hon. Members will agree. First, we must pay tribute to the courage of those eight officers. Their bravery and that of their families should never be forgotten. Secondly, their courage is typical of that displayed throughout the police service in the United Kingdom. Many other officers have survived brutal and savage assaults in circumstances where their assailants were totally indifferent to their fate. Thirdly, I hope that we can also agree that the chronicle of violence and murder against our police officers is not acceptable. Hon. Members divide over what should be done about it.

Those of us who support the new clause believe that capital punishment for the murder of a police officer would reduce the number of police murders. Life imprisonment as a penalty has clearly not been a sufficient deterrent in those cases that I have outlined. But does it necessarily follow that the death penalty might have prevented those murders? If the life of just one of those eight officers had been spared by fear of the death sentence, would not the sanction have been justified? In the 1979 debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) said:

> "I greatly envy the certainty of those hon. Members ... who seem able to assert that the existence of capital punishment would not have saved even one life."—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1979; Vol. 970, c. 2118.]

We cannot be absolutely certain either way, and I have concluded that the general question about deterrence is impossible to answer definitively one way or the other.

The arguments on both sides are formidable. The death penalty will certainly not encourage murder and, on balance, common sense tells us that it is more likely to discourage it. Sadly, however, police officers were murdered when we had the death sentence. Although the number of such murders has more than doubled since the death sentence was abolished, it must be acknowledged that there is more crime and society is more violent.

It is, nevertheless, an incontrovertible fact that, when this country still had the death penalty, it was extremely rare for criminals engaged in the most serious robberies to be armed with guns or knives, lest, in the heat of the moment, a member of the gang panicked and committed murder. They knew full well what to expect in such circumstances. The threat of the death penalty would have a similar effect on some criminals today.

3.45 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I also pay tribute to the memory of those dedicated officers who were murdered when carrying out their duty, including the police officer recently murdered in New Addington, Croydon.

If one police officer—or more—had been murdered as a result of the IRA atrocities in Birmingham and Guildford and the hon. Gentleman's proposal had been law, the people convicted would have been executed. However, since then they have been found innocent—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no they were not."] Conservative Members may disagree, but the fact remains that the people convicted were released from prison. Does it not trouble the hon. Gentleman that men, and perhaps women, would have been executed for murders for which, in the general opinion of the public, they were not responsible?

Mr. Greenway: I am not entirely sure that the final part of the hon. Gentleman's statement is right. I suspect that, given what happened in both trials involving the Guildford case, the public—

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): What is this: trial by the Conservative party or trial by jury?

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) mentioned the Guildford case. I will deal with his other comment in a moment. He said that the majority of the public seemed to think that the Guildford Four were innocent. However, I am not entirely convinced of that and the fact that the police officers charged with perjury were found not guilty also leads me to that conclusion. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's point about the miscarriage of justice in a moment. He is absolutely right—it is the key point which we must deal with in this debate.

I believe, as I understand do many Conservative Members, that the threat of the death penalty would have an effect on criminals today, as it did in the 1940s and 1950s—and I suspect, until it was discontinued—when criminals did not take guns and knives with them when they took part in crimes.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*—

Mr. Greenway: May I continue, as this is important? I want to establish why we should consider the murder of a police officer separately from other murders. My theory is supported by the recent murders of policemen which I outlined, when the criminals very casually and cold-bloodedly calculated that they could use guns and knives to avoid arrest.

It is as if murderers are asking, "What have I got to lose?" That is the question which hon. Members must answer. Would the death penalty persuade, force or urge some of those violent criminals to think twice? I believe that it would and that is why I shall continue to advocate its availability to the courts.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I think that I am the only Member of the House who has ever appeared in a capital case—I have appeared in 17—and I am grossly against the death penalty. I do not believe that it has the slightest effect on the offender and it has another very bad effect. As the defending counsel, I am put on trial because, if I make a mistake, ask the wrong question or appear in the wrong way, the man may go to the trap. I, therefore, believe that the death penalty is evil and wrong in every way, and I have experience.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. and learned Friend makes his own point, but I am not sure that it was an intervention on my speech.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): The sentence of the death penalty is passed in many states in America and, unfortunately, it is regularly carried out. America is, however, one of the most violent societies in the western world. How does the deterrence effect work there? Why should it be any different here?

Mr. Greenway: America has a gun culture, which, thankfully, we do not have. I have already said that when we had the death penalty, even among the criminal fraternity there was not the gun culture or the knife-carrying culture of today.

I have conceded that the argument of deterrence can be formidable either way. We all have to make our own judgment on the balance of the facts as we see them. It is the current habit among the criminal fraternity to be armed with guns and knives, and to use them in such a cold, calculating way, which has convinced me that the death penalty would have a deterrent effect in some cases.

I know that many hon. Members will oppose the new clause—the hon. Member for Walsall, North has already made that clear—for fear of the possibility of a miscarriage of justice. When we previously debated the issue, the recent acquittal of the Guildford Four pub bombers was very much in our minds. That case persuaded many hon. Members, some of whom had previously supported the death penalty, that we should not take the risk of executing the wrong man. I understand that view and it is a matter about which we must rightly be concerned.

The Runciman royal commission has made important recommendations to improve our criminal justice system specifically to deal with miscarriage of justice. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has given his intention to implement change and he is consulting on what needs to be done. I am sure that he will want to say more about that today.

We must build on the significant improvements made to our criminal justice system in recent years. Nothing could be more important than the need to prevent miscarriages of justice occurring in the first place and to deal more speedily and effectively with appeals. The implementation of such arrangements is crucial to any reintroduction of capital punishment for murder generally.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. On the question of deterrence, would he care to cast his mind back to the hanging of Derek Bentley in 1947? His family is still contesting that sentence, which I regard as an obscenity. If the deterrence theory worked, why were there any more murders of that kind? As the hon. Gentleman has been so generous in giving way, will he also consider the case of PC Blakelock who was murdered on the Broadwater Farm—

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman should resume his seat. An intervention, by tradition, is a single question. We have only three hours for debate.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) mentioned the Blakelock case, which I intend to deal with in a moment, because we have different views on it.

The case of Derek Bentley happened a long time ago. I accept that the murder was committed at the time when we had the death penalty. As I understand it, the case was particularly difficult because the person who committed the murder was under 16 years of age. He, therefore, could not suffer the death penalty, as would be the case under my new clause. I am surprised that anyone could suggest that Derek Bentley was not engaged in a serious crime. I, therefore, do not believe that that case is a valid argument of a miscarriage of justice. It may be fair to suggest that, in those circumstances, someone in Bentley's position either should have not been found guilty of murder by the jury or should not have suffered the death penalty. But such a miscarriage of justice does not undermine the argument in favour of the death sentence.

The implementation of important improvements and reforms in our criminal justice system and how we deal with miscarriages of justice are crucial. The same improvements would help to prevent miscarriages of justice involving the murder of a police officer. Such miscarriages of justice, however, are rare and exceptional. The hon. Member for Erdington mentioned the only two exceptions in modern times. The acquittal of the Tottenham Three—Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite—for the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm riot of 1985 was the second case that he mentioned. Silcott remains in prison convicted of another murder. Opinions vary on whether he was responsible for PC Blakelock's death.

The Committee must face up to this question: if Silcott and his accomplices did not kill PC Blakelock, who did? My impression is that the police remain satisfied that they got their man, but accept that the administration of the case was not all that it should have been.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is the hon. Gentleman trying to persuade the Committee that it would be right to execute people in a case where—I use his words —"opinions vary"? If so, it is a preposterous proposition.

Mr. Greenway: I am not putting that proposition to the Committee. I am saying that I understand that Winston Silcott was acquitted on appeal because there were serious shortcomings in how the police administered the case. Had that evidence been available to the jury during his trial, Silcott might have been acquitted and not found guilty. That issue is separate from whether any of us think that he was responsible for PC Blakelock's death. Having talked to the most senior Metropolitan police officers, my impression is that they are satisfied that they got their man, but recognise that a lot must be done to improve the administration of cases.

Sir Paul Beresford (Croydon, Central): Does my hon. Friend agree that he could apply the same argument the other way round, to the administration of the defence in a murder trial?

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend puts his finger on a point which I thought about mentioning in my speech, but decided that it would be a red herring. I believe that the changes that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is introducing through the Bill will have both those effects. How the defence must conduct its case, as well as how we deal with prosecutions and, eventually, miscarriages of justice, are all important reforms recommended by the Runciman commission.

Some people will argue that, as with the detection and prosecution of all serious crime, the police face enormous pressures to secure a conviction. The police are the first to accept that there has been malpractice in the handling of some cases, and chief officers are determined to stamp that out. Considerable progress has already been made to that end.

However, when a police officer is murdered, it must be right to question what possible benefit there could be to the police service to convict the wrong man. The police have a vested interest in ensuring that the right man is caught and convicted, although that must be done within the proper rules of conduct and evidence. Otherwise, the true killer will remain at large and ready to strike and kill again at any time.

I remind the Committee that, only last week, James Hurley—who was gaoled in 1989 for his part in the murder of PC Frank Mason—attacked a prison officer while escaping from a prison bus. Hurley should never have been given that chance. I am not referring to the adequacy of the security arrangements for Hurley's transfer to Wandsworth or why he was transferred so early in his sentence.

Evil men who show utter contempt for the lives of serving police officers deserve to pay for their horrific crimes by forfeiting their own lives. If we do not reintroduce the death sentence for murders of policemen, what alternatives are there?

4 pm

An amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), which has not been called, has much to commend it. Although my own preference is the death sentence, the next best alternative would be to provide in law for those who murder police officers never to be released from prison. Perhaps the best for which we can realistically hope is that they serve a minimum of 30 years. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to consider that proposal.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): It would cost a fortune.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend points out that such an option would cost a fortune. I made it clear that I am in favour of the death sentence, but I am discussing alternatives.

Much more could be done to improve the protection given to police officers through the standard issue of protective clothing and side-handle batons. I raised both possibilities in an Adjournment debate more than two years ago—which, not surprisingly, was not as well attended as this afternoon's debate. I highlighted a number of recent savage assaults on police officers—at least two of whom owe their lives to the skill of doctors and surgeons.

Although protective clothing and side-handle batons would be welcomed by police officers, would that be enough? If the Committee rejects new clause 2, another consequence would become ever more likely—the routine arming of the police. I reluctantly reached that conclusion when we debated the issue three years ago, and subsequent events have made that prospect virtually inevitable. I understand that that view is being advanced by the Police Federation.

When police officers rush to the scene of the crime—as did Sergeant Robertson just two weeks ago—they have no way of knowing whether the criminals are armed or the immediate danger that confronts them. I have reminded the House of my own experiences as a police officer in London in the 1960s. In such a situation, police officers do their best to protect their colleagues and the public. In doing that, they give the criminal the benefit of the doubt. Tragically, some police officers pay a heavy price for doing so.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does my hon. Friend agree that a number of younger members of the Police Federation feel that the time has come for police officers to be routinely armed? If that were to happen, and police officers used firearms in situations such as that confronted by Sergeant Robertson, could not innocent bystanders also lose their lives?

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. He gives another reason why, on balance, I favour the restoration of capital punishment.

I began by suggesting that the Committee might at least agree that the number of police murders is not acceptable. If it takes that view, doing nothing is not an option. Tonight, the Committee will vote on two important issues of conscience. In the debate on the age of consent for homosexuals, I shall vote in favour of its being reduced to 18 and against a reduction to 16. However, many members of the public question our priorities when—as seems likely—we give in to the homosexual lobby, but do not have the guts and courage to answer the demands of the police service, by giving police the protection that they need and deserve. In my judgment, that must mean the death penalty for the murder of a police officer. I urge the Committee to support new clause 2.

The Chairman: Before I call any other hon. Member, I make the plea that that is a short debate of only three hours. The Chair has a very long list of hon. Members wishing to contribute. Therefore, I ask, please, for short and concise speeches.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): The debate is not about the respect that we have for the police, and for their courage; nor do our views differ on police murders. The fact is that they are vile and we must do what we can to stop them. The debate is about capital punishment. We must decide our view on that. We will all be in support of the police. Having been the leader of an authority that was a police authority, I am naturally well aware of the many situations where the police put themselves in great danger. Our debate is about what is the proper punishment.

I agree entirely with the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) that capital punishment is evil. For me, it is not only morally indefensible, but is irrelevant as a deterrent. It is inexcusable as a punishment in its irrevocability and is insidiously damaging to any society that practises it. As one who has followed from outside the consideration that the House has given to this issue over many years, from the pioneering days of Sydney Silverman, I applaud the sanity of hon. Members in rejecting clauses and amendments of similar effect to this, time after time, over more than 20 years. I count it a privilege to be able to speak and vote against these new clauses.

I take seriously the message that the Chairman has given and shall speak briefly on only two issues. I shall first deal with an issue that has already been discussed—miscarriages of justice. Since the issue was last debated in the House, a considerable number of miscarriages of justice have been revealed. Whether the increase is simply in line with the increase in crime or reflects on occasions

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the pressures that are on the police to find a solution, any miscarriage of justice—we have seen a spate of them—destroys the case for a final solution for the individual concerned.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): The hon. Gentleman is talking about miscarriages of justice, but is not it also a great injustice that, in far too many cases, convicted murderers are released on to the streets and go on to commit another murder? Since 1965, there have been 71 such cases. Surely, if the death penalty had been introduced, those people would be alive.

Mr. Gunnell: The hon. Gentleman seems to be saying that because some people have been released—from subsequent events, it is clear that it would have been far better had they not been—it is reasonable to allow some people who are innocent to be put to death. I cannot accept that argument. I shall give two names from my county area where there have been miscarriages of justice: Stefan Kiszco and Judith Ward. In each case, it is absolutely clear that their convictions were based on confessions. In each case, those confessions were not the truth.

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Bill, I believe that, by ending the right to silence, we are increasing the probability of false confessions and their consequences. Kiszco was kept for a long time without access to a solicitor; we are not insisting on a solicitor having to be present for silence to be cited later.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I have never understood the right to silence, which which was compulsory in both countries until 1892—

Mr. John Greenway: 1898—

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: 1898. It has always seemed to me extraordinary that every person on earth, whoever he was and wherever he lived, could be compelled to give evidence, except the person whose evidence was vital—the accused. I have always regarded the right to silence as both idiotic and wrong.

Mr. Gunnell: I cannot agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman—and in the Standing Committee we argued logically in favour of an alternative way of dealing with the issues.

There is no doubt that the ending of the right to silence will in many cases lead to confessions that may not be accurate. Judith Ward had mental problems. That would mitigate her silence in some circumstances but not in others.

It is ironic that a royal commission set up because of public concern at incorrect verdicts should recommend a procedure to reduce their effects which has been ignored in favour of procedures that diminish the suspect's rights—procedures that some wish today to cap with an irrevocable punishment.

I believe that restoring judicial murder—because that is what capital punishment is—would degrade our national life. If we legalise killing, we are agreeing that the taking of life is necessary in some circumstances. How can we stop people deciding those circumstances for themselves—deciding that what they have done to another person is appropriate given that the state is making similar decisions? How can we expect young people to grow up with an abhorrence of murder if they see murder carried out by the state?

In the years since the last execution took place, the nature of media reporting has changed so much that, although we do not envisage executions ever being shown live on television, every member of the family, every friend and every colleague of the person who is to be executed—and every person nearest to the case—is likely to be pestered and even paid for interviews. Through the media, and the interest that they now show in such events, the nation as a whole would experience the real horror of it all—and that, I believe, would be degrading to the nation.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): At the beginning of his remarks, the hon. Gentleman said that the new clause was all about punishment. Some of us believe that it is both about punishment and about deterrence, and that if one deters, one does not need to punish. However offensive capital punishment may be to the hon. Gentleman, will he not admit in his heart that criminals would be less likely to carry guns and knives if it existed?

Mr. Gunnell: In my heart, I believe that the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) is completely wrong. If the hon. Member considers the statistics from the United States, he will find that those states in which the death penalty has been reintroduced have higher murder rates that those in which it has not been reintroduced. There is no evidence that it is a deterrent. I said that it was irrelevant because I believe, not only in my head but in my heart, that it has no effect as a deterrent and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. There is no reason to think that those who may consider murdering a policeman would take account of a death penalty being in existence. There is no evidence of that from any country where the death penalty is used. What is more—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Gunnell: Many hon. Members want to speak, so I shall conclude. If the precedent of other legislation is a guide, given the difficulties that we would have in returning to a system in which capital punishment is used, and given that I understand that there is only one gallows remaining—in Wandsworth prison—the process would be likely to go out to tender.

After all, we have already provided for private secure units, private prisons, private escorts and private prison ships. No doubt, with no facilities available nationwide, putting it out to tender would be the economic option. Judging by their faces, some hon. Members think that that is unthinkable and that it could not possibly happen. If they believe that, I suggest they consider what the Foreign Secretary said about private prisons in 1987 when he was Home Secretary. They will see how the climate has changed over the past six years.

Capital punishment is an obscenity, it is ineffective and it would be damaging to the well-being of the nation. I hope that many hon. Members will join me in opposing it.

4.15 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): In speaking to my new clause 4, I have no hesitation in beginning where I left off when we previously debated the matter in the House in 1990. At the end of that speech, I said:

"It is high time that we as Members of Parliament came down from our ivory towers, did what the people of Britain want us to do and supported the reintroduction of the death penalty"—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1990; Vol. 183, c. 103.]

My postbag suggests that nothing has changed. In fact, there is more and more support throughout the country for that action. Certainly, my resolve is strengthened. The number of vicious murders has continued to increase. The number of horrific murders, especially of elderly people in their own homes, has continued to increase. The people of Britain want some action to deter murderers and they want to see the House take action. They clearly want the reintroduction of the death penalty.

Every test of public opinion in recent years has clearly demanded the return of the death penalty. According to polls that have been conducted over recent years for national newspapers and for radio stations, a steady 90 per cent. of the large samples interviewed supported the substance of the measure. The strength of feeling in constituencies, not only in Yorkshire, but throughout the country, has not altered and does not alter. There is a strong feeling that the death penalty would act as a deterrent. I firmly believe that it would.

However, I do not believe that Members of Parliament are delegates because we are not. The House and we as Members should reflect public opinion. Certainly, the mass of public opinion at the moment is that people want action, they want change, they want a deterrent to murder and they want the death penalty reintroduced and available to the courts to deal with all murders. The new clause asks for the death penalty not only the murderers of policemen, but for all who commit murder. It has never been clear to me why the House continues to ignore such public opinion. Of course, the measure is a matter of conscience and we shall be debating another one later today.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Would the hon. Lady agree that public opinion tends to vary from case to case and from time to time? At the grand old of 46, I am old enough, as she will be, to recall when there were regular hangings in this country and the majority of public opinion was against the death penalty. That occurred after it was discovered that we hanged Timothy Evans by mistake, after the Craig and Bentley case and after the hanging of Ruth Ellis. I am old enough to remember that. Public opinion can be swayed quite easily by a sufficiently ruthless and unscrupulous campaign. As the hon. Lady rightly said, we are not delegates: we are here to exercise our judgment.

Mrs. Peacock: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. No doubt if he catches your eye, Mr. Morris, he will be able to develop his argument further. However, I am not responding to a knee-jerk campaign. I have held my view for many years and it has never changed. My postbag is not part of a campaign. It comprises letters from people of all ages around the country, many of whom remember when we had capital punishment and who wish it to be reintroduced.

I believe that capital punishment should be available to the courts to deal with all categories of murder. Beating an old lady to death in her own home, as happened in my constituency three or four years ago, or killing a policeman on duty, are equally abhorrent and they are both murder.

In a proven case of murder, it would be the duty of the court to pass the death penalty. However, I know and appreciate that many murders are carried out in domestic circumstances. Many murderers know their victims and many victims know their murderers. New clause 4, with its referral to the Court of Appeal immediately after the passing of the death sentence, would take such details into account.

For that reason, all proven cases following the death sentence should pass immediately to the Court of Appeal; not in one year, two years or three years, but immediately. It would then rest with the guilty person and that person's lawyers to convince the Court of Appeal that the sentence should be commuted to life imprisonment. In that regard, I support my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) and I believe that life imprisonment should mean life imprisonment.

New clause 4 meets the demands of the majority of people in this country—certainly, the demands of the people who have taken the trouble to write to me over the past 10 years. They want the death penalty available for murder.

My new clause also provides a formal safety net to deal with murders in the domestic environment and it provides a further net for those who carry out horrific and sadistic murders. I am often accused of a knee-jerk reaction. The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) suggested in his intervention that this was some kind of short-lived campaign. I have always held the view and I would not be speaking in support of my new clause as part of a knee-jerk campaign. I have always believed that we should have the death penalty.

Some people argue that the absence of capital punishment in this country is a mark of a civilised society. I believe that we are rapidly becoming uncivilised. Some of the things that happen on our streets and in people's homes certainly do not constitute civilised behaviour. Action must be taken to arrest that dangerous trend.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): My hon. Friend said that the final decision would be taken by the Court of Appeal, but does not the final final decision rest with the Home Secretary? Would that not be the most horrendous decision for any person to have to take?

Mrs. Peacock: My hon. Friend is right. Traditionally, the final decision would be taken by the Home Secretary. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is on the Front Bench and is listening to the debate. The final decision would be his. That is the Home Secretary's responsibility and part of his duty in the job and office that he holds.

During the debate, we shall no doubt hear many figures about crime and punishment. Figures can be made to say many things. However, the figures reflect the general increase in the level of crime, particularly vicious crime such as attacks on elderly people in their own homes.

The deterrent effect of capital punishment cannot be proven by statistics. Over the weekend, I was asked how I could know that capital punishment would be a deterrent. I replied with a question: "How do you know that it wouldn't?" If we do not have capital punishment on the statute book, how can we collect statistics to show that it is or is not a deterrent? As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, if we have a deterrent, we probably do not need the punishment. My hon. Friend is right. Many young thugs would think twice about going

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armed for burglary. They would also think twice about carrying a knife to the pub on a Saturday night and using it in the heat of the moment in a punch-up outside.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Does my hon. Friend agree that statistics can show only the number of people who have not been deterred? There is no way in which statistics can show the number who have been deterred. Therefore, it is impossible to know from statistics how many have been deterred, so it is useless to attempt to rely on statistics. Instead, we must rely on common sense.

Mrs. Peacock: My hon. Friend is right. Statistics cannot prove who would be deterred. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale said when he talked about the killing of policemen, it is well known that in the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, criminals would not take a younger new member with them until they had made sure that that individual was not armed, in case he decided to use a weapon in the heat of the moment. They had a policing system of their own because they knew that if somebody was killed there was the death penalty for it.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): My hon. Friend has picked up the central point made by my hon. Friend the Member of Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) about not being able to prove statistics. Will she reflect on why the murder rate in England and Wales is one third of that in Scotland and why it is virtually the lowest in the European Community? There must be many things that we do right in this country.

Mrs. Peacock: I am sure that there are. I cannot say that I have studied the figures for Scotland and compared them with those for England and Wales, but I am sure that if my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Morris, he will develop that argument very well.

In such debates, we always hear a great deal about what should or should not happen to murderers, but very little about the victims, their families and the effect that such a traumatic happening can have on them, often for the rest of their lives, particularly when children are involved. The tragedy of murder and its influence on families is not sufficiently considered. We must consider it more. We have a responsibility and a duty to look carefully at that side of the debate.

The whole country is tired of horrific murders and expects Parliament to take the lead in dealing with the situation. The criminal law as it now stands no longer provides a credible sanction for the most heinous form of wrongdoing. The Committee will surely agree that action must be taken. We cannot resist the majority for ever. The majority in this country want the return of the death penalty, so we should help to provide it by voting for the new clauses.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Already, it is clear that this is an issue in which belief will be rather more significant than evidence or logic. I understand the case that the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) makes on behalf of police officers, but I find it very difficult to justify that case compared with, for example, the position of sub-postmasters or sub-postmistresses in obscure post offices in rural constituencies such as mine. Experience after 1957 suggests that if we try to create categories to which capital punishment applies there will always be cases that fall on the edge of a category and which test the whole notion of capital punishment for a certain group. For example, the words

> "in the execution of his duty"

appear in new clause 2. Those words are capable of more than one judicial interpretation. I therefore believe that our experience of capital punishment should lead us to the firm conclusion that we are either in it completely or out of it completely.

Mr. Shersby: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: I should like to make progress, if I may.

The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) said with conviction that life imprisonment should mean life imprisonment. She must bear in mind that it is not the decision of the legal system whether a convicted murderer is released on licence, but the decision of the Home Secretary of the day in England and Wales or the Secretary of State for Scotland. Those are administrative decisions and they are difficult decisions, but let us be clear that they are made by those who have to answer to the House of Commons. It is clear also that the issue we are discussing is most likely to be joined on the question of the principle. I start with the unshakeable conviction that human life is sacred, that to take human life is immoral and that it is as immoral for the state to take human life as it is for any individual to do so. Such a belief, however, cannot arise through chance or inspiration; it must be the product of influences.

I began my professional practice at the Bar in 1968, after abolition. Unlike the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), I have no direct experience of capital murder cases. However, I have talked to people with such experience—as either counsel or judges—and I have found no enthusiasm for a return to capital punishment among those people. I myself have prosecuted successfully some who would undoubtedly have been hanged, and I have defended unsuccessfully others who would have suffered the same fate. Nothing in my experience, during those years of practice at the Bar, has persuaded me that restoration would be justified.

4.30 pm

The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) made a number of references to public support. I believe that she is right to the extent that there is substantial public support in the abstract, but I doubt very much whether that support would survive the experience of any part of the administration of justice leading to capital punishment. Once people had understood the horrors of the means by which capital punishment was carried out, and had become aware of the strain on jurors and witnesses, I very much doubt whether public opinion would remain as implacably in favour of restoration as it apparently is now.

I can think of no other civilised society that has restored capital punishment. So far, the debate has been notable for the absence of evidence to suggest that any society that has felt it necessary to restore capital punishment has been able to reduce the number of murders by that means.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Following the reintroduction of capital punishment in the United States, there is evidence that the number of murders in Florida has been reduced.

Mr. Campbell: The United States does not reintroduce capital punishment; individual states do so. As much evidence can be produced on one side as on the other. That is the point made by the hon. Member for Ryedale—the deterrence argument is entirely inconclusive.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): No state in the United States has reintroduced capital punishment. What has happened is that, for years and years, people have suffered the degrading experience of not knowing whether they will be executed the next day, the day after that or the day after that; then the authorities started to execute a few of them. That is the inhuman thing that has happened, and is happening, in the United States.

Mr. Campbell: I remember the example of Mr. Caryl Chessman, who spent 14 years on death row. It could be argued that that was caused by a defect in the American system—or, rather, the state system—to which he was subject, in that he was provided with the opportunity for appeal after appeal. The hon. Gentleman is right, however —what could be more inhumane or degrading?

A fundamental issue has not yet been mentioned. Whatever the intrinsic merits of capital punishment, the passage of nearly 30 years since it was last carried out must be a compelling factor against restoration. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] As has been pointed out, after 30 years we have no sets of gallows, and no magistrates whose duty is to stand and supervise. We do not have the administrative arrangements. All of that has been swept away. Is it to be restored?

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): What we have had during those 30 years is a vast increase in the incidence of violent crime. Does the hon. and learned Gentleman not accept that the reintroduction of capital punishment would deter violent criminals?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Member for Ryedale made it clear that the deterrence argument was inconclusive. The onus rests on those who advance that argument, and who want change, to demonstrate that capital punishment is the only way to deal with the upsurge in violent crime. I believe that the fear of apprehension and conviction is a more significant factor in deterring people from the commission of a crime than the particular penalty which may follow.

Running through this debate is always the implication of retribution. I understand the motive for retribution. If any member of my family were to be murdered, I would feel horror, anger and a sense of loss which no doubt would give rise in me to a sense of vengeance. However, our legal system has moved away from self-help and revenge. Prosecution—except in a few instances—is the responsibility of the state. That is because the collective response of the state is more likely to be dispassionate and more likely to be in the interest of us all. The supremacy of the institution is given effect, rather than individual redress.

I return to a point that has not been addressed in the debate, but which I believe to be fundamental. What right does the state have to take revenge on a citizen by taking his life?

Mr. Dicks: Every right.

Mr. Campbell: Well, that must be a question of belief.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. and learned Gentleman suggested that there is no evidence that capital punishment deters. Can he explain why, prior to abolition, the average number of murders in the United Kingdom was approximately 140 a year, and why the current average is 700?

Mr. Campbell: There has been a substantial rise in violent crime, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to relate all of that rise to capital punishment, he will find it hard to bring his evidence home conclusively.

An important consideration is the risk of mistake. The hon. Member for Ryedale developed a curious argument that if we improve our procedures, there will be less risk of miscarriages of justice and therefore we should be willing to accept capital punishment. But the hon. Gentleman forgets that genuine mistakes occur. Identification evidence is notoriously fallible, and genuine mistakes may occur as a result of that. He forgets that mistakes often occur through inefficiency, and because of inadequate forensic examination. He forgets that mistakes are sometimes made as a result of the inadequacy of defence counsel. He forgets that mistakes that occur because of a breach of the rules of evidence or because of the concealment of evidence can be extremely difficult to discover, no matter what provisions the Home Secretary may introduce.

When all that is put against the inconclusive possibility of the reintroduction of capital punishment providing deterrence, the argument falls strongly in favour of those who do not support reintroduction.

Mr. Stephen: Many hon. Members agree that capital punishment should not be restored, but is not the alternative of life imprisonment, which means on average about 12 years, a fraud on the public? Should not a person who otherwise would be executed be sent to prison for life meaning life, subject only to the Court of Appeal being able to let him out if it should transpire that he was wrongly convicted?

Mr. Campbell: If it is a fraud on the public, it is a fraud —dare I say—committed by Home Secretaries and by Secretaries of State for Scotland who make that decision, and not by the courts. The life sentence imposed by a court is for life—*[Interruption.]* As a matter of law, it is for life. A person is released on licence and is liable to be recalled at any time during his life because a life sentence has been imposed on him. He can be recalled for crimes which fall a long way short of further commission of the crime of murder.

Mistakes that lead to capital punishment cannot be put right. The names of Evans, Hanratty and Bentley in their own ways stand as monuments to injustice and to the inherent risk that capital punishment necessarily embraces. A posthumous pardon is no substitute for life and liberty.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that we have not abolished the death penalty? We have taken it out of the courts of law. We have obliged our police officers and others, when going to arrest dangerous persons, to go armed. When they are shooting, mistakes occur and it is often not the person who has committed the murder but a perfectly innocent bystander who is killed.

Mr. Campbell: I have to challenge the proposition with which the hon. Lady opened. I understood the effect of the 1965 Act to be the abolition of capital punishment for

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crimes of murder. It still exists for certain crimes within the armed services, but capital punishment for murder has been abolished.

I return to the point that I made earlier: it is almost 30 years since capital punishment was abolished. One must have regard to that fact as much as to any other in determining whether reintroduction is possible.

I mentioned Evans, Hanratty and Bentley. I could have mentioned more contemporary illustrations such as Preece, Meehan, the Birmingham Six or the Guildford Four, some or, indeed, all of whom might well have suffered the same fate as Timothy Evans. If they had, they would simply have underlined the dangerous finality of the cruel and inhuman punishment which capital punishment represents.

We have to ask ourselves this: are we so confident of ourselves and our judicial system that we are willing to wager the life of any citizen on capital punishment? I do not have that confidence and I do not believe that the Committee should have it either.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on the way in which they spoke to the new clauses. This issue gives rise to deep-seated and passionately held convictions, and I am grateful to my hon. Friends for giving the Committee the opportunity to express its view.

By tradition, the role of the Home Secretary in these debates has been to offer some analysis of the background to the factors that the Committee will wish to take into account, to comment on the effect of the new clauses and to say something about his personal views. I shall attempt to follow that tradition.

The first thing to do is to set the debate in the context of history. At the beginning of the 19th century, capital punishment was available for more than 200 offences, including cutting down trees and consorting with gipsies. During the first half of that century, there was a lengthy and eventually successful campaign to reduce the scope of the death penalty, and by 1861 it was available only for murder, high treason, piracy with violence and the destruction of public arsenals and dockyards. Since then, apart from for treason, there have been no executions other than for murder. In 1908, the death penalty was abolished for children under 16. The minimum age was raised again in 1933, to 18.

The abolition debate continued during the first half of this century. In 1930, a parliamentary Select Committee recommended suspension of the death penalty for a trial period of five years, but no action was taken. In 1948, the House carried a motion to the same effect, which was heavily defeated in another place. The same fate befell a later Bill to abolish the death penalty in 1956.

In 1957, as a response to growing concern about the appropriateness of the death penalty for every murder, the Homicide Act 1957 was passed. This restricted capital punishment to the most heinous categories of murder. That categorisation failed to command confidence. In 1965, Sydney Silverman's private Member's Bill to abolish the death penalty for a trial period of five years was passed; abolition was confirmed by Parliament in 1969.

Since 1965, the House of Commons has returned to this matter on at least 13 occasions. That shows both the strength of feelings held about capital punishment and the irreconcilable nature of the convictions held on both sides of the argument. It is now more than three years since we last debated the issue, and it is right that we should return to it now—particularly in the context of legislation to introduce a number of significant measures to combat crime.

The homicide statistics set the context for our debate and bear in particular on the question of the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent—a factor which will, no doubt, weigh heavily with right hon. and hon. Members this afternoon.

The number of offences initially recorded as homicide in England and Wales has risen steadily since the 1950s, although the rate of increase has slowed considerably in the past decade. In the decade from 1956 to 1965 the average number of homicides a year was 294; from 1966 to 1975, it was 450; from 1976 to 1985, it was 580; and from 1986 to 1992, it was 670. In 1992, the number was 687.

Those figures need some amplification. First, the figures include the offences of manslaughter and infanticide. Many homicides—well over 50 per cent. in 1992—do not result in a conviction for murder, but the number of convictions for murder has also risen steadily, averaging 187 over the 10 years ending in 1991. The recorded figures for crime in general and violent crime have risen much faster than have the number of homicides. Although the number of recorded homicides between 1966 and 1985 was 60 per cent. higher than in the preceding 20 years, the number of serious violent offences was 205 per cent. higher. The total of recorded crimes of all kinds was 220 per cent. higher. That said, I have made it clear on many occasions that I share the widespread scepticism about the value of total recorded crime figures. The level of reporting of particular offences can be influenced by many factors, including the availability of telephones and insurance, and the extent of public confidence in the ability of the police to take effective action in a particular set of circumstances.

The picture in the United States, which has much more recent experience of the death penalty, is not much clearer. In the 10 years between 1967 and 1977, when there were no executions, the homicide rate rose from 6.2 to 8.8 per 100,000 inhabitants. When executions were started again in 1977, it continued to rise, to over 10 per 100,000 in 1980. It fell back to 7.9 in 1984, but has now almost regained its peak at 9.8. In the period during which the homicide rate fell—between 1980 and 1985—there is no evidence that it fell at a greater rate in those states that had the death penalty than in those that did not.

The story is similar elsewhere. Other countries that have abolished the death penalty have, like the United Kingdom, seen lower increases in homicide than in other violent offences. In Canada, the homicide rate has fallen slowly since the abolition of capital punishment in 1976.

4.45 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: Will my hon. Friend forgive me for a moment? I should like to finish this point and then I shall certainly give way to her.

I have given the figures. They are not conclusive either way. I have no doubt in my own mind that the death penalty may act as a deterrent in certain cases. That is why, until and including 1990, I voted consistently in favour of the death penalty for the murder of police or prison officers, or for murder committed with firearms or explosives. I thought that the deterrent effect would be greatest for those categories. Indeed, there is widespread anecdotal evidence, and support among the police, for the view that criminals are today far more willing to go to the scene of crime equipped with a firearm than in decades gone by. I changed my view about bringing back the death penalty in 1991 for reasons other than the argument about deterrence. I shall explain them at the end of my speech.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The point that I should like to make is in response to my right hon. and learned Friend's observation that the level of violent crime has risen faster than homicide. Does he think that much of that is attributable to the incredible improvement in medical science? Many cases which would have been murder in the old days are now saved by the skill of our surgeons.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend may well have a point which, in part, explains the difference. I doubt very much whether it accounts for the whole of that difference, but it may have had a part to play.

I shall proceed next to deal with incapacitation, which has caused great concern to many of my hon. Friends. It cannot be denied that the availability of the death penalty can ensure that convicted murderers, or particular types of murderers, do not kill again. The mandatory life sentence, of course, ensures that a rigorous assessment of risk must be made in every case before release of a murderer can be contemplated and allows, in appropriate cases, for a murderer to be detained for the rest of his life. The death penalty is, nevertheless, the one certain means of providing that assurance completely.

Again, however, the figures need careful attention. It is true— appalling true— that 76 homicides have been committed since the abolition of the death penalty by people previously convicted of homicide. But it does not necessarily follow that those further deaths would have been prevented had the death penalty still been in force. Of those 76 homicides, 51 were committed by people previously convicted of homicide other than murder; the death penalty would not have been available in those cases. Of the remaining 25 cases, seven involved homicide by murderers convicted before 1965, when the death penalty was still in force, but for whom, by definition, it was not regarded as appropriate. Of the 18 homicides committed by people convicted of murder since 1965, it appears that in 14 cases the original murder was not capital murder under the 1957 Act. So if the death penalty had not been abolished in 1965, the number of cases in which it is likely that a life would have been saved by the execution of a murderer would be, at most, four. Of course that is four deaths too many, and the argument of principle— that the death penalty would eliminate the possibility of some murderers killing again— is unanswerable. But the number of cases in which that would apply is far smaller than many suppose.

I should like now to deal with the new clauses. New clause 2, in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale and others of my hon. Friends, provides that the death penalty would apply to persons over the age of 18 convicted of the murder of a police officer. It is easy to understand the view that that category of murder, above all, deserves the most powerful denunciation that society can deliver. An attack on a police officer represents the most direct attack possible on the maintenance of law and order. Whatever our views in this debate, I know that the whole Committee will want to join me and my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale in expressing its deepest and heartfelt sympathy to the family of Sergeant Derek Robertson, the latest police officer victim of murder, and its utter abhorrence at the evil attack that resulted in his death.

Mr. Stephen: Surely the person—whoever it was— who killed Sergeant Robertson should never be released. Surely he should not be able to hope that some future Home Secretary would release him. That is what our constituents expect and deserve. People like the killer of Sergeant Robertson must be dealt with extremely severely.

Mr. Howard: When my hon. Friend raised this point at Question Time recently, I told him that I was considering it. I shall come in a moment to the particular arrangements that we currently make for those who are convicted of the murder of police officers.

We ask our police officers to confront, on our behalf, those who have no compunction about using violence to further their ends or to escape capture. Their place in the front line of the fight against crime makes them particularly vulnerable to attack, and it is right that we should employ all measures available to us to protect them while they carry out their duties on our behalf. I have paid particular attention to this matter since I became Home Secretary.

I firmly believe that there should be a strong deterrent for the murder of police officers. Those responsible serve as a minimum 20 years in prison. Many will serve much longer than that. Some will remain in prison for the rest of their lives. Even if murderers are released—they can have no expectation that they will be—they are liable to recall for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Shersby: Will my right hon. and learned Friend be kind enough to tell the Committee whether weekend newspaper reports to the effect that Anthony Jeffs, who murdered Police Constable Peter Guthrie in 1972, has been recalled to custody are correct? If so, why has that person been recalled?

Mr. Howard: The person to whom my hon. Friend refers has indeed been recalled to custody. I should prefer not to go into the details at this stage, but I shall be in touch with my hon. Friend about the matter.

New clause 4, tabled by my hon. Friend for Batley and Spen, would reintroduce the death penalty for all murderers over the age of 18. In those cases, under the new clause, death would be the mandatory penalty, but as soon as practicable following a sentence of death a special sitting of the Court of Appeal would be convened to consider whether the circumstances of the offence or the offender justified the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment.

The new clause would enact a proposal first discussed by the House of Commons in 1990. By imposing a mandatory sentence of death on all murderers, it avoids the difficulties that can arise from attempting to define degrees of murder in legislation. It then attempts to meet the concerns that led to the Homicide Act 1957 by providing for the decision to be immediately reviewed by the Court of Appeal. The idea of a procedure that avoids the difficult task of setting out in legislation the criteria for distinguishing between murders that are serious enough to

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merit death and those that are not has obvious advantages to many who favour capital punishment, but it has its drawbacks.

In particular, we need to consider the responsibility that the new clause would place on the Court of Appeal. In 1990, the then Home Secretary drew to the attention of the House of Commons the views of the then Lord Chief Justice on such an arrangement. I thought it appropriate, in reconsidering the idea enshrined in the new clause, to consult the current Lord Chief Justice on the matter, and he has given me permission to make his views known in this debate. He shares the view of his predecessor that the Court of Appeal would usually be in a worse position than the trial judge to make the decision that the clause would require, not having heard the evidence or seen the defendant or the witnesses. He also believes that it would, in any case, be wholly inappropriate for the Court of Appeal to decide which death sentences should be carried out. He is strongly of the view that it must be the responsibility of Parliament—and not of the judiciary—to determine which types of murder should be met with death and which should not.

On that last point, it is surely particularly difficult to disagree with the Lord Chief Justice. I do not think that it would be right for Parliament to hand this responsibility over to others. The decision must be ours to make.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if we were to get rid of the term "murder" and use, instead, the term "homicide", we should be able to classify the seriousness of conduct resulting in the death of another person? Does he agree that a person sentenced to life imprisonment—the penalty that would apply in the case of the most serious types of homicide—should remain in prison for life and not be the subject of a fictional term meaning nothing?

Mr. Howard: I have already dealt, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), with the point contained in the second part of my hon. and learned Friend's question. In response to the first part, I have to say that I do not agree that it would be sensible, in effect, to abolish murder and simply have the offence of homicide, within which there could be various characterisations. Murder is a subdivision of homicide. The deliberate taking of a life, which is what the offence of murder involves, is something which society will always want to mark as an offence of special significance, to be treated specially and separately.

Mrs. Peacock: I have been listening carefully to my right hon. and learned Friend. If my understanding is correct, he has said that it would not be right to ask the Court of Appeal to make such a judgment as I am proposing, as it would not have had the benefit of seeing all the evidence and hearing the witnesses. However, at present the Attorney-General can appeal against a lenient sentence and have it changed by the Court of Appeal in very similar circumstances.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to advance that argument, but the analogy that she draws is less than wholly convincing. Her new clause would give the Court of Appeal jurisdiction over not only sentence but categorisation of various types of murder. Those are different questions from those that the Court of Appeal has to address in connection with what has become since 1988 the more conventional matter of appeals against lenient sentences, which are considered on the reference of the Attorney-General.

5 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): To pursue the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), British judges are currently available to act, in their capacity as members of the Privy Council, as a final court of appeal for people charged with murder in a number of former colonies, including several West Indian countries. Do not the same problems arise in those cases? The judges have not seen the defendant and have not been present at the original trial, but they continue to make judgments that may lead to execution.

Mr. Howard: The judges do not make a judgment about which categories of murder merit the death penalty. They may consider appeals against conviction or, in certain circumstances, even appeals against sentence, but the new clause will give the Court of Appeal the task of deciding which categories of the offence of murder merit the death penalty. That is not something which the Privy Council has to decide at the moment. According to the statement of the Lord Chief Justice, it is not a matter on which the Court of Appeal wants to decide. If there were to be such categorisation, Parliament should accept responsibility for it and not the judges. It is not a responsibility which Parliament should seek to hand over to the judges.

Mr. Marlow: I have just read with some care the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). Where does it say anything about categorisation? If the new clause were accepted, the House would be saying to judges that the sentence for murder should be execution. The judges in the Court of Appeal would then be able to decide whether there were special circumstances whereby clemency should be exercised and an alternative sentence imposed. The new clause contains nothing about categorisation.

Mr. Howard: With respect to my hon. Friend, the new clause does not say anything about special circumstances. I do not know whether it was the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen to include such provision in the new clause. She did not say anything along those lines when she introduced the new clause. It does not provide the new approach that the death penalty should, as a rule, be carried out in all cases of murder save where there are special circumstances. In its present form, the new clause would inevitably involve some degree of categorisation and I do not think that that is an appropriate responsibility for Parliament to hand over to the judges.

Mrs. Peacock: I accept what my hon. and learned Friend said, although I do not believe that that is what the new clause said. I should be more than willing, however, to accept his wording of such a clause and vote for that instead.

Mr. Howard: No, no—I was replying to the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I suggested to him that the particular meaning that he was seeking to give to the new clause was not supported by the new clause as drafted. Other different difficulties would arise if a new clause were drafted in the way suggested by him. I would explain those difficulties were they to arise from the wording of the new clause.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I have listened with great interest to the speeches, especially that of my right hon. and learned Friend. It appears that we cannot prove that capital punishment is a deterrent against homicide, murder, manslaughter and infanticide. It must follow that life imprisonment, as it is now constituted, does not act as a deterrent, or cannot be proved to do so. What does act as a deterrent?

Mr. Howard: I said earlier that I thought that, although the statistics were not entirely conclusive, the death penalty would constitute a deterrent, but that is not the end of the matter, as I shall now explain.

In this debate, my views count only as the views of one Member of Parliament and I do not propose to expound them at length. I set out my position in an article published in March 1991, nearly three years ago, in the wake of the Birmingham Six case. Until, and including, 1990, I had voted consistently for the return of capital punishment for the murder of police or prison officers, or for murder committed with firearms or explosives. I thought that the deterrent effect would be greatest in those categories. I justified that position on the basis that a wide-ranging appeal process in capital cases would effectively eliminate the risk of a miscarriage of justice.

Such a procedure, however, was adopted in the Birmingham Six case and it failed to identify any irregularities. It failed to do the job that I thought it would do, a job which I thought was essential if capital punishment was to be restored. That led me to re-examine my position and inform my constituents about it nearly three years ago. The tragic case of Stefan Kiszko, who sadly died just before Christmas, has provided a more recent reinforcement of that view. In 1976, Mr. Kiszko was convicted of the murder of a school girl—a crime to which he had confessed. His conviction was quashed in 1992 after forensic tests proved that he could not have been the murderer. There are cases, particularly where the suspect has for whatever reason confessed, where avenues of appeal are not explored or pursued until new evidence comes to light.

Miscarriages of justice are a blot on a civilised society. For someone to spend years in prison for a crime he or she did not commit is both a terrible thing and one for which release from prison and financial recompense cannot make amends. But even that injustice cannot be compared with the icy comfort of a posthumous pardon. When we consider the plight of those who have been wrongly convicted, we cannot but be relieved that the death penalty was not available. We should not fail to consider the irreparable damage that would have been inflicted on the criminal justice system had innocent people been executed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale referred to the proposal of the Royal Commission on criminal justice that a criminal cases review authority should be established. The Government intend to set up such an organisation and I hope to consult soon on the detail of its constitution, but new machinery can never provide a complete answer. The fault lies not in the machinery but in the fallibility and frailty of human judgment.

I understand the concern felt by right hon. and hon. Members and the public about the rise in crime, and in violent crime in particular. Since I became Home Secretary nearly nine months ago, I have made no secret of my determination to turn that concern into action. That is why the Bill is before the Committee today. That action will be taken, but, for the reasons that I have given, I do not believe that the restoration of capital punishment should be part of it. That is why I shall vote against the two new clauses in the names of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): On moral, as well as on practical and utilitarian grounds, I oppose both new clauses. But whatever disagreements I have with the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) about the new clause, I share his views on the three principles, on which he hoped all hon. Members would agree, involving the murder of police officers.

I understand why a majority of my constituents, and perhaps a majority of people in the country, will answer yes to the question, "Do you favour the death penalty?" They are angry and outraged at the murders and killings in our society. However, I should like the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) to reflect on the fact that, in every debate on the subject that I have witnessed, the value of the debate has become obvious as it has proceeded and as we have moved from general and instantaneous reactions to the particular and the considered. Suddenly, answers that appeared obvious become more complex and conclusions that seemed certain are open to doubt. Such a large majority of Members did not vote against the restoration of the death penalty on each occasion because they were unaware of their constituents' views, but because, on reflection and after considered debate, they could not support those views.

The most powerful argument against restoration—an argument that would be enough in itself—is the risk of killing the innocent and of a miscarriage of justice. I support what the Home Secretary said a few minutes ago and will briefly return to the subject—

Mr. Lord: The hon. Gentleman began by saying that he had no doubt that most of his constituents would probably support the reintroduction of the death penalty. Is he saying that his understanding, and that of the Committee if it refuses to vote for the death penalty, is greater than that of his constituents? Is it not also possible that all such major issues are essentially simple? We make them complicated so that we do not have to face them.

Mr. Blair: With respect, we have to face them and we are doing so this afternoon. I certainly do not believe that my understanding is superior to that of my constituents, but, as the hon. Member for Batley and Spen was fair enough to acknowledge when she moved her new clause, we are representatives, not delegates, and we must act according to our conscience.

The utilitarian argument against the restoration of the death penalty—the argument about miscarriages of justice—is the most powerful, but it is by no means the only practical argument against. Another argument that is sometimes forgotten is illustrated by the nature of the two new clauses under discussion.

The clause tabled by the hon. Member for Batley and Spen is general and that of the hon. Member for Ryedale is particular, in that it applies only to the murder of police officers. The choice illustrates the practical problem that faces everyone, even those who support the death penalty

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in principle. How does one distinguish, on a rational rather than an arbitrary basis, those homicides that should attract the death penalty and those that should not?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To widen the hon. Gentleman's argument, which is correct, if one introduces the death penalty for shooting and killing someone, should not one also apply it for shooting at—but missing—a person? Perhaps one should receive an additional sentence for being a bad shot.

5.15 pm

Mr. Blair: I think that I am uniquely unqualified to comment on that intervention.

Since no one suggests that all murders should result in the death penalty, there must be a basis for distinction. If statute provides that all murders should attract the death penalty, someone—the Home Secretary or the Court of Appeal—has to make the final decision and discretion becomes too wide.

However, if statute defines the categories, there is a substantial risk of arbitrary decisions of a different sort and of murders that are equally heinous attracting different penalties. That is underlined by our history and that of the United States. When I researched the subject, I found it interesting to note that decisions on the constitution made by the US Supreme Court hinged to a considerable degree on the difficulty of establishing a blanket penalty of death for murder—a penalty which would be applied by juries in different cases in different ways.

Until 1965, the debate in Britain also hinged on that subject. For four decades of royal commissions, Select Committees and debates in the House, the debate revolved around attempts to distinguish between various types of homicide. The royal commission of 1953 concluded that

"the outstanding defect of the law of murder is it provides a single punishment for a crime widely varying in culpability".

It went on to discuss various murders in England and Scotland. The Homicide Act 1957 was passed in recognition of that fact, because a general penalty for murder was thought to be unacceptable.

The 1957 Act betrays its era. For example, Ruth Ellis would have hanged even after that Act because she shot her lover. If she had knifed him, she would not have hanged. I think that I am also right in saying that, under the 1957 Act, neither Myra Hindley nor the Yorkshire Ripper would have hanged.

When Parliament debated the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965, no one supported the continuance of the 1957 Act because of the distinctions that it drew and the difficulty of enforcing them, yet those distinctions had been the dominant subject for debate for almost four decades preceding the 1965 Act.

The problem is that the circumstances of murders are infinitely different, but the difference between the death penalty and any other penalty—even life imprisonment—is absolute. Death is death. There is no revoking that sentence once it is carried out—no recall, no commutation and no pardon, except posthumously.

Virtually all the attempts to legislate—even those made by people who accept the principle of the death penalty—have fallen foul of that problem. The hon. Member for Batley and Spen attempts to circumvent it by providing a general application of the death penalty for murder, but allowing the Court of Appeal to decide whether it should be carried out. Quite apart from the formidable logistical problems of reviewing all cases in which there is a conviction for murder, I agree entirely with the Home Secretary that it cannot be right to abdicate to that court the responsibility for deciding whether death is appropriate in each case. The hon. Lady cannot avoid the fact that categorisations would have to be made and that they would be made arbitrarily and would vary from court to court, from time to time, and probably from newspaper coverage to newspaper coverage.

The new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Ryedale applies the death penalty to the murder of police officers. That is a heinous crime, but so are terrorist killings—blowing people up in a pub—and the rape of young girls, followed by their brutal murder. If the death penalty were appropriate to one such crime it would be appropriate to all.

However, the Home Secretary dwelt on the most practical argument against the restoration of the death penalty towards the end of his speech. That argument concerns the risk of a miscarriage of justice if the death penalty is carried out. Although the hon. Member for Batley and Spen involves the Court of Appeal in the process to guard against the possibility of a miscarriage of justice, in virtually all the cases that we have discussed that court had considered and dismissed the appeals of those convicted and their convictions were quashed only when evidence emerged at a much later date. That fact is important. When people are asked about the death penalty they consider it in the abstract. They assume that guilt can be proved absolutely—they assume, as a given, that the person is genuinely guilty. But experience has taught us the fallibility of the process of establishing guilt. The given in the answer is, in fact, not given at all.

The House of Commons Library note has a list of some 32 separate cases where, since 1965, miscarriages of justice have been shown. Besides the well-known Guildford and Birmingham convictions, the case of Stefan Kiszko stands out, because he would unquestionably have been hanged, but he was unquestionably innocent. The power to review would not have saved him.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Throughout the debate I have listened to hon. Members speak about the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Seven—[HON. MEMBERS: "Six."] I beg hon. Members' pardon. Not once have I heard anyone mention the Birmingham 21, those young men and women who died. How I wish from the depths of my heart that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) would speak for those who no longer have a voice. Had the death penalty been available then, that crime might not have been committed.

Mr. Blair: With respect, that is not a worthy intervention. The Opposition speak up for the victims of crime. When the hon. Member for Ryedale moved his new clause, the Home Secretary and I, and all hon. Members, commented on the appalling nature of such crimes. To convict the wrong people in the Birmingham case was not the answer to the problem. The power of review would not have saved them.

With hindsight, we may be able to see the flaws in that case, but I ask the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) to think back and remember the time when those cases were in the news. At that time, people seemed certain about those charged. At that time, the newspaper coverage of those trials was clear. Had the new clauses been in operation then, would the clamour have been one of doubt or of mercy? Would the newspapers have carried editorials pleading for clemency? The noise would have been one way, motivated by an entirely righteous detestation of those crimes. The death penalty would have been demanded and it would have been given. If any court had stood in the way of that, it would have been pilloried. If any Home Secretary had reprieved those people, he would have been pilloried. That is the truth. We cannot ignore that when we consider those cases.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one other offshoot of the faulty decision at the Birmingham trial was that those who carried out the murder of those 21 people have never been detected or convicted and never will be because of the delay?

Mr. Blair: That is true.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman has suggested that Stefan Kiszko would have been hanged if the new clauses had been in operation. Does the hon. Gentleman agree, however, that that would not have happened if the new clause of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr.Greenway) had been in operation? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that perhaps, had the death penalty been an option, the Birmingham trial would have taken more careful account of the details and studied the evidence in more detail?

Mr. Blair: With respect, that is a classic judgment of hindsight. The feature that runs through all those cases is that, at the time, they were not open to doubt. In the Kiszko case, he confessed. The doubt that arose came to light long after the trial.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) did not mean it, but the implication behind his question is that somehow judges or juries are somewhat casual because the death penalty does not exist. He is wrong. They study cases with the greatest of scrutiny. What stands out so powerfully about the cases that I have cited is that people were certain and that "beyond reasonable doubt" meant just that. Doubts, of course, arose later.

Mr. Mullin: Has my hon. Friend noticed that many of those who are strongest in their demands for the death penalty are least concerned about the possibility of mistakes? Judging from the muttering from the Conservative Benches, it is clear that, even in this debate, some Conservative Members have not yet faced up to the fact that the wrong people were convicted in the Birmingham and Guildford cases, as well as in others.

Mr. Blair: I very much hope that all Conservative Members share the abhorrence felt by everyone who believes in justice at the possibility of wrongful conviction and miscarriages of justice.

The proponents of the death penalty can rightly point to the innocent victims who were killed by those who might have been hanged for one murder, but who, after imprisonment, committed further murders. I do not intend to add to what the Home Secretary said about that, but he provided a pretty telling dissection of the notion that many murders fit into that category. What at first blush appeared to be 76 cases was then whittled down to four. I do not discount that number and I accept that four is too many, but they must weigh in the balance. The case that was put is not as clear as it was.

The ultimate argument in favour of the death penalty —it is important that those of us who are opposed to the death penalty should deal with it—is that it may deter some from killing where, otherwise, they might have killed. I should like to put it in a slightly different way from that put by Conservative Members. It could be argued that the death penalty is not about taking life but trying to save it from those who might otherwise have murdered.

The most that can be said when examining the evidence is that it is uncertain. It is true that, since 1965, the number of homicides has risen, but the level of crime and violent crime has also risen dramatically. There is no evidence, statistical or otherwise, that that rise has been attributable to the abolition of the death penalty.

The experience in the United States points in different directions, from different states. The death penalty is regularly used in certain states, yet the murder rate is still very high. The international comparisons yield little. Conservative Members who favour the death penalty should consider the evidence that, in the end, one has to weigh in the scales. There may be certain instances—we do not know and we cannot quantify them—in which people are deterred. I do not exclude that possibility, but we must weigh that against the fact that evidence of deterrence is uncertain, whereas evidence of miscarriages is certain and they have happened, beyond any doubt. When we place against the irrefutable evidence of the potential for miscarriages of justice those other matters, the argument is one way.

Mr. Lord *rose—*

Mr. Blair: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once and that is enough. I must get on.

Mr. Lord: On that specific point.

Mr. Blair: Because of my natural generosity, I will give way.

Mr. Lord: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Nothing could prove more conclusively to the Committee and to anyone who happens to watching or listening the saying

"lies, damned lies and statistics."

Everyone has his own statistics to prove what he wants to prove. In all sincerity, however, does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is pure common sense that criminals going out to rob or to do mischief may think twice before taking a gun or a knife with them if they know that the sentence of capital punishment is available to the courts?

Mr. Blair: No, for the very reasons given by the royal commission more than 40 years ago, when it first considered the matter. It is not that statistics can tell all sorts of different stories; the most powerful feature about the statistics gathered here, in the United States and virtually everywhere is that they tell no story. I do not ignore what the hon. Gentleman has said, but it must be weighed in the scales of what we know has happened for a certainty in our country. The hon. Gentleman must face up to the fact that, according to his proposals, those miscarriages would have meant that innocent people would

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have been killed in circumstances where that should not have happened. In that case, even the utilitarian case for the death penalty is not made out.

The death penalty cannot be justified, even on the grounds claimed by some hon. Members. But it is also wrong in principle. It is a response to evil that is evil itself. It is to act, as a society, not in justice but in anger; not in reason but for revenge. No matter how clothed it is in the legal process and however much it is attended by all the trappings of the law, it cannot disguise its real nature, which is cruel and barbaric. We do not uphold the sanctity of human life by taking it, or underline its precious nature by snuffing it out.

The death penalty does not elevate, inspire or help us attain a better society. We were right to get rid of it almost 30 years ago and we should not, now of all times and after all that has happened within our judicial system, restore it. Let it lie in history where it belongs.

5.30 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): May I take up the point made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) about whether it is right for society to have a death penalty? Since Roman times, and even before, the issue of the death penalty has been debated time and again. Nobody can say that the Roman or Greek societies were uncivilised. Indeed, nor were the school men of medieval times. They all reached the conclusion that people have the right—the state consists of people—to take the lives of those who have taken the lives of others.

The matter can be studied in the Mosaic code, from which one of the greatest civilisations grew. It is to be found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, and I remind hon. Members who are members of the Church of England of the content of the 39 articles. The 37th article gives the state the right to take the life of an individual with the agreement of the people within that state.

Human nature has not so improved in the past 150 years that we can say that we are now so civilised that we have passed that stage. Whether one is a creationist or a fundamentalist, one cannot say that human nature has changed since God breathed on man in the garden of Eden. Human nature remains static.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a minute. Once I have talked my full argument through, it may help him. We both have hair on our faces, so we obviously agree on major issues. I may lead him to the truth bit by bit.

It is arrogant of us to believe that we are now so civilised that we can turn our backs on all the wisdom of the past. I support capital punishment being available because human nature has remained static. I shall now give way to the hon. Gentleman who looks like me, but at the beginning of civilisation.

Mr. Enright: I must look in the mirror as I go out.

Would the right hon. Gentleman care to reflect on a quotation from Christ:

> "It was said to you of old, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, love one another"?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have already shown my friendship with the hon. Gentleman and thus illustrated "love one another". But it also means that the whole of humankind should love one another. It does not mean that we should lay down and let people do what they want or threaten others. There is no loving in that. If bringing back capital punishment would result in greater safety for people in society, we have a right to bring it back. Throughout the ages, religious leaders of all types have ultimately come down on the side of capital punishment.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman also meditate on what Apostle Paul said:

> "If I have committed a crime worthy of death, I refuse not to die"?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: It is a marvellous double negative. I bow to the hon. Gentleman on that. Before we have quotations going backwards and forwards across the Chamber like the Book of Proverbs, let me say that we can all dig up instances but must make our judgment on the general. Throughout history civilised societies, whether or not they have liked the death penalty, have kept it because they considered it a necessity. I follow them because I believe that it is a necessity.

May I deal with the narrow issue of the police? Unless we bring back capital punishment for anyone who kills a policeman, we risk having more arms on the streets. The police will demand more arms and, by the time we have finished, our society will be like an old Yankee film, with small guns and machine guns on the streets. Policemen's wives will ensure that their husbands demand arms because they will want them to come home for their sake and that of their children, and society will grant that. There will be an escalation of weapons in our society because criminals can always get them. I have always said that the only people who cannot obtain weapons are law-abiding citizens.

If hon. Members do not want to vote for capital punishment, they should vote for life imprisonment that does not come to an end after a time but means imprisonment for life. I do not agree with those who oppose capital punishment, but, logically, they must support life imprisonment for anyone who kills a policeman.

We have heard arguments about whether we should bow down to the views of the people. One hon. Member quoted Burke, who said that he was a representative and not a delegate. I remind hon. Members that he then lost the following election. People should not read just the first chapter of a book. Members of Parliament risk distancing themselves from the views of people outside. We are becoming less representative on this matter. If tonight we turn down the option for capital punishment and reduce the age of consent for homosexuality, tomorrow the gap between hon. Members and people in the country will be even greater. I do not say that we should do everything that they want, but we should listen to them.

May I end where I began? Given that every civilised society in history has reached the conclusion that capital punishment is necessary for the preservation of life, who are we, given the present crime rates and the state of the world, to say that we are better than our ancestors? Tonight, I shall vote for the return of capital punishment with a clear conscience, on religious and civil grounds.

Mr. Mallon: I remind hon. Members that we have a free vote on this matter. The reason for the tradition of a free vote on it is that it involves not just legal, political or practical issues, but, as the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, an element of morality. In the few minutes available to me, I shall approach the matter on that basis.

I do so not least because of the legal arguments that were eloquently made by previous speakers, which it would be pointless to repeat.

I have a special interest in this issue and have spoken in debates dealing with it since I first became a Member. My interest stems largely from the fact that I live in an area in which capital punishment is exercised almost every day of the week. In the society in which I live, more than 3,000 people have been killed by those who have abrogated to themselves the right to do that which some hon. Members believe the state should do to others. I find that repulsive. If one takes the number of people who have died in Northern Ireland, on a pro rata basis 18,000 people in England, Scotland and Wales would have been killed over the past few years.

I know the effect that that form of capital punishment has on the families of victims—not least, the family of the young policeman who was killed last weekend—and of those who carry out such acts. I know the effect that it has on that part of the community from which the person who pulled the trigger and his victim came. I know the effect on those charged with enforcing the law and with implementing the legal and judicial system. The effect can never be quantified. There are no statistics, but that effect has eaten into the heart and soul of the community in which I live—and it stems from the abrogation of the right to take the life of another human being.

I know also what it is like to be under sentence of death. Every hon. Member who represents a Northern Ireland constituency has been and is under sentence of death from one terrorist group or another in the north of Ireland. The chilling words of interviews given by loyalist prisoners at the weekend explain why this subject is close to the lives of my hon. Friends and those whom we represent.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The hon. Gentleman was not in the House in 1975, when it debated a motion calling for the restoration of capital punishment for terrorist offences causing death. I clearly remember the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) saying that if the state did not restore capital punishment so that some deterrence existed for those in the south who were murdering in the north, it would not be long before the loyalists of the north would use terrorism to wreak their revenge on people in the south. Is that not precisely what has happened because we did not restore capital punishment for such offences?

Mr. Mallon: The hon. and learned Gentleman is right: I was not present in the House in 1975, for the good reason that I had not been elected. I was present for a subsequent debate on the same issue, when the question was raised of the enormity of having the death penalty in a society in which there is no jury but only one person—the judge—hearing the case. Even someone committed to restoring the death penalty would have second thoughts about that. As a lawyer, the hon. and learned Gentleman should ponder deeply on that. In making his point, I am sure that he would not offer, as others do, an implied, spurious justification for the actions of loyalist terrorist groupings in the north of Ireland.

We are charged to produce legislation that protects the sanctity of human life and the lives of those charged with enforcing the law; all members of society, whoever they may be; and those who removed the sanctity of life from others.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mallon: Not now.

Once we draw a distinction—and this distinction is implied—and say that one person's life has more sanctity than another's, we shall be in a quagmire.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that very point?

Mr. Mallon: I will not.

If we incorporate the taking of life and the killing of people—because that is what capital punishment means—in our legislation, we shall be adopting the values and methods of the terrorist, gangster and gunman and make them the standard by which we live. That would devalue and diminish our system of justice and make the taking of human life part of our judicial system, which would devalue rather than enhance it. It would also devalue and diminish the society that adopts that standard.

5.45 pm

In the United States Supreme Court, Justice Shurgood Marshall said:

> "Death is irrevocable. Life imprisonment is not. Death makes rehabilitation impossible. Life imprisonment does not. In recognising the humanity of our fellow human beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."

He was surely talking about more than just the legislation that determines how criminals are treated. When he spoke of paying ourselves the highest tribute, he was referring also to the effect of capital punishment on society. If we diminish one element of society, we diminish it all. Justice Marshall was eloquently defending the integrity of the legal system, the value of human life, and the highest standards of society—which must derive from both.

I believe that Winston Churchill was drawing the same conclusion when he said many years ago that

> "the grass grows green again on the battlefield, but never on the scaffold."

He was referring to the corrosive effect of the taking of life being part of our legal system, seeping into every part of society and having a stultifying and negative effect. It is not just a legal or political issue; it goes deeper. It concerns the sort of society that we want to sustain ourselves.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mallon: No, because I am short of time.

It is argued that the death penalty is a deterrent. We know the figures for the north of Ireland, and the Home Secretary referred to the figures for the United States. We should also examine carefully the figures for Japan.

One salutary lesson to be learnt from my own country was best put into words by the poet William Butler Yeats:

> "All changed, changed utterly:
> A terrible beauty is born."

He wrote that after the 1916 occupation of Dublin's general post office by a small number of men. That did not

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change all; but the subsequent execution of those men led to the start of the Irish war of independence, and republican violence continues to this very day.

The whole genesis of violent republicanism, of the IRA, of the violence that we have seen through every decade, has stemmed not from the action of the people who took took over the GPO in 1916 but from their execution. From their execution came the motivation of martyrdom, and it created such an element in our lives. We are still paying for it to this very day. Rather than being a deterrent, those executions were the springboard and motivation for a system of violence that has continued to this very day. We have seen it as recently as last weekend. I make that point in global terms, in Irish terms, because it is worth making. Nowhere can I find any other example that best encapsulates the fact that the theory of deterrence simply does not stand up.

I shall finish with a point that was made by the former Member for Castle Point, Sir Bernard Braine, who was then Father of the House and is now in another place. It struck me deeply because of his sincerity. I had listened to him a number of times on this issue. On 24 October 1989, in *The Guardian*, he said:

> "My immediate reaction to Guildford"—

the Guildford Four—

> "was that this puts the kibosh on capital punishment . . . I was in favour of its retention. It took this case to tell me, 'Look. Pause. Reflect. What if they hanged innocent people?'"

Is not that exactly what the Secretary of State was saying in his speech today? I hold that same view. I hold it on the basis from which I started, from a moral point of view, because I believe that a judicially sanctioned execution is an inherently immoral action. It is a barbaric, brutalising and degrading form of punishment which is contrary to the respect and value for human life and for the law.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Not having been in the House during the 1987-92 Parliament, I last had the opportunity to express my views on capital punishment as the Member for Nottingham, North in the early 1980s. Nottingham always took a robust attitude to capital punishment. The side outside the old Shire hall, where, until the mid 19th century, public hangings used to take place, is still marked today.

I was quite clear in my mind why I believed in capital punishment and why I voted for it on that occasion. My preference was for a return to the Homicide Act 1957, which created two categories of capital and non-capital murder. They distinguished between domestic or spontaneous murder and the cold, calculating acts of violence; of murder in the furtherance of theft; murder by shooting or explosion—although I recognise the point that was made by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) in the Ruth Ellis case; murder to prevent arrest; murder of a policeman; and the murder of a prison officer. I believe that if capital punishment were available in those circumstances, there is a possibility that such a crime may be deterred. Before setting out on a burglary or robbery, a villain might think twice before picking up a weapon if he knew that its use could invoke the death sentence.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ottaway: I will not give way, because of time.

It is impossible to prove, but my judgment in 1983 was that that was the case, and it still is. Capital punishment is an instant and awesome end, and any man sentenced to it would willingly commute it to a lesser sentence. For violent, premeditated murder, however, it is surely a just and proper punishment.

After the murder of Sergeant Robertson in Croydon last week, my instincts remain the same. He was a police officer in the performance of his duty going to protect the citizens of Croydon at the New Addington sub post office. He represented the thin blue line between anarchy and a civilised society. He paid the ultimate price for our civilised society. His murderers committed a crime so sudden and abominable that they should suffer a capital penalty. It is in my mind, and the minds of many, a justified sentence.

Yet, with all these instincts urging me on, I much regret that I cannot support the new clause today. Colleagues might ask me why, when I have done so before: what has changed? The answer is quite simply that my confidence in the criminal justice system is shaken. There have been isolated cases in which convictions for murder have been overturned or found unsafe. But in the late 1980s, the trickle turned to a flood: the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Tottenham Three, Stefan Kiszko, Jacqueline Fletcher, Judith Ward, the Darvells, the UDR Four, the Cardiff Three, the Taylor sisters, and the pardon limited to sentence of Derek Bentley from Croydon—an area which seems to attract controversy.

That is not a random list. It is an avalanche of doubt. Sitting on the top of the Old Bailey are the scales of justice, which generations have grown up to trust. The scales are tarnished. Stories of discredited witnesses, tampered evidence and incompetent experts have shaken the criminal justice system to its very roots. In the light of that, I could not send a convicted man to his death until the uncertainty is removed.

There are some out there who will say, "Yes, but we know that they did it." That is not good enough. Whatever the crime, whatever the nature of suspicion, British justice requires that those accused are found guilty beyond all reasonable doubt. Where doubt exists, it is right to free those whose convictions were unsafe.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ottaway: No.

It is now incumbent on the Government to ensure that every step is taken to restore public confidence in the criminal justice system to the point that, in future, I may be able to be free to exercise my judgment without questioning the system itself.

Finally, we hear all too often of those who have been convicted of murder, serve a life sentence, are released after 12 years or so and commit murder again. That must never be allowed to happen. Although you, Mr. Lofthouse, have not thought it appropriate to select the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen), myself and others, I believe that life should mean life. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to review that policy.

Mr. Mullin: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), because I accept that it requires some courage in the Conservative party to announce one's conversion on such an issue. The hon. Gentleman is one of a number of Conservative Members who have changed their views. Some of them have expressed to me privately the view that since the big miscarriages of justice of the mid-1970s, they could not in all conscience continue to vote for the death penalty. The Home Secretary has said tonight that that is his position. I should like to think that that would influence some of his colleagues.

I do not mean to trivialise the debate in any way, but in a sense this subject has now become an internal dispute in the Conservative party. Outside the Conservative party, with the possible exception of one Scottish nationalist, no one else is willing any longer to vote for the death penalty.

Mrs. Peacock: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that many of the hundreds of letters that I have received have not come from Conservative party supporters.

Mr. Mullin: I readily acknowledge that and will address that point—indeed, I did during my intervention in the hon. Lady's speech.

The death penalty, and hanging people in particular, is a peculiarly British obsession. It is about time that we rid ourselves of it. It is not shared by other European countries. In my view, it is a sickness. We have debated the subject endlessly. Even in the few years that I have been a Member of Parliament, it has come up on four or five occasions. I think that the Home Secretary said that it has come up on 13 occasions since the death penalty was abolished. I hope that this will be the last time.

Some Conservative Members are persuaded of the logic of the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Croydon, South and the Home Secretary, but lack the courage to stand up to their own party on the issue. I hope that they will have the courage to come out. *[Interruption.]* I know it to be the case because I have had it explained to me by Conservative Members, one of whom much resented the fact that some of his hon. Friends had been content to vote for the death penalty in the knowledge that it would never get through the House, relying on Conservative Members who, like him, had had the courage to stand up against their party and speak out against the death penalty.

6 pm

Mr. Hawkins: Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment on the members of his own party who would love to vote in favour of the reintroduction of capital punishment but would suffer a witch hunt from other members of the Labour party if they did so?

Mr. Mullin: I have been in the House for nearly seven years and I honestly do not know one Labour Member who falls into that category. If the hon. Gentleman does, perhaps he will take the matter up with the individual concerned.

The bottom line, already referred to in many speeches, is mistakes. We made mistakes when we executed people: Evans, Hanratty and Bentley have been mentioned,and it is now acknowledged that we made a large number of serious mistakes more recently. People profess to care for the reputation of the British legal system. If the British legal system has had a rough time in the past two years, imagine what the effect would have been worldwide if, in the Birmingham Six case, we had taken delivery of six coffins instead of six people who were able to resume what remained of their lives.

There is no doubt that three of the four people involved in the Guildford case would have hanged. There is no doubt that Judith Ward would have hanged; no doubt, too, that most of those concerned with her conviction—and I believe that this was also true in the Guildford case—knew from the outset that she was innocent; and that many others realised shortly afterwards. The Stefan Kiszko case has been mentioned, and the hon. Member for Croydon, South mentioned the Broadwater Farm case—a tragic case involving the death of a police officer to which the new clause would certainly have applied. I predict that the next people to come out of the front door of the Old Bailey will be the three survivors of the four convicted of murdering the newspaper boy, Carl Bridgewater, in 1977. They are certainly innocent and I am confident that, in due course, that case will collapse.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) will forgive me, but he has not been attending to debate. I give way to the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who has.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As probably the only Member of the House who has obtained two royal pardons for wrong convictions of murder, I understand exactly what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and he is correct. It is suggested that the death penalty is a deterrent. Seventy people a year are convicted of murder in England while 7,000 die on the roads. Does that fact deter people from driving?

Mr. Mullin: That is an interesting point, which I intend to address later. Having looked a large number of people in the eye during their final moment, Pierrepoint, the last hangman, concluded in his memoirs that the death penalty did not consitute a deterrent. Those who think that it is a deterrent ought to read his book.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: Forgive me, but I will not.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: I have made it clear to the hon. Gentleman that I do not intend to give way to him.

It is sometimes argued that the more heinous the crime, the more we need the death penalty to deal with it. The trouble is that the more heinous the crime—as with the various IRA atrocities in the mid-1970s—the greater the hysteria that accompanies it. And the greater the hysteria, the more likely it is that we will make mistakes.

I noted the Home Secretary's remarks with particular interest. He is not a man who is soft on the law and order issue. But he is the man whose signature would have to appear on the death warrant in the event of our reintroducing capital punishment. Chuter Ede, the Labour Home Secretary whose signature appeared on the death warrant of Timothy Evans, had to live the rest of his life with the knowledge that he had sent an innocent man to the gallows. I might add that, when it became clear that that was what had happened, he turned into an abolitionist overnight. It is very easy to talk in general terms and to bay

[Mr. Mullin]

for blood, but when it comes to particular cases and particular individuals with particular responsibilities, it is altogether different.

I note with interest that today's newspapers quote a number of prison governors as saying that they would resign if called upon to supervise the reintroduction of the death penalty. Moreover, a number of chief constables—one of them the chief constable of the West Midlands police—have said that it is inevitable that innocent people would be hanged. No one knows that better than the West Midlands police.

It is easy to say that one is against the death penalty because mistakes are made. I want to make it clear that I am against it under all circumstances. Above all, I am against it because of the hideous barbarity involved. When one sentences someone to death judicially, one sets a clock ticking. One announces that, at eight o'clock in the morning on such and such a day, one or two months' hence—and sometimes the clock is turned back to nought and started again—one will send that person to his death. That person, all his relatives and friends and everyone associated with him have to live in the knowledge that that clock is ticking, day after day, week after week, month after month.

Mr. Nigel Evans: What about the victims?

Mr. Mullin: I shall deal with that point, too.

The American system has been mentioned. In America, those sentenced to death have to live an average of 10 to 15 years in those circumstances while the legal system plays with their lives. They have death camps in Florida and Texas containing hundreds of people who wait up to 15 years. A man in California was brought into the gas chamber and out again three times during the last hour of his life. As Amnesty International remarked at the time, that was torture to the Nth degree. The death penalty has not made the blindest bit of difference in the United States. The murder rate continues to increase and guns and drugs are involved. Killing people is not the answer; one must address the causes—the guns and drugs.

The fundamental reason for opposing the death penalty under all circumstances is the hideous barbarity associated with it. A media circus inevitably develops. It developed in the 1950s and early 1960s—I remember it well—and it would be worse today. Media interest affects the relatives of the person concerned and of the victims. I do not want to see that day return—and I know that prison governors, judges and many senior policemen whom I know share my view.

Public opinion is often mentioned, as though we are all in this for votes—as though what we are about is ensuring that we get a few cheap votes.

Mrs. Peacock: No.

Mr. Mullin: I accept that that is not the hon. Lady's position. Public opinion is notoriously volatile. Everything depends on when a poll is taken. If it is taken the day after a particularly heinous murder, it will produce an answer saying that most people are in favour of the death penalty; if it is taken the day after the Birmingham Six or the Guildford Four have been released, it will produce the opposite result.

An hon. Member asked, "What about the victims?" Among the hundreds of letters that I have received was a moving letter from a man whose daughter had been murdered—I wish that I had it with me so that I could read it to the Committee—and who gave the reasons why he would not support the death penalty despite the tragedy that he had suffered.

I note with satisfaction that the death penalty is attracting support from a diminishing number of Conservative Members. It will get a diminished number of votes tonight, and I hope that we shall lay it to rest once and for all.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Since the previous debate, 1,412 people have been murdered in England and Wales. Do we care? Does it matter if the murders go on? Ought we to be doing something more about it? For two and a half hours, we have moralised, we have agonised, we have quoted and we have given all sorts of reasons why it is dangerous, difficult and harsh to make the kind of judgment that is necessary before anybody is hanged. However, 1,412 people have died. The question must be this: are we deterring enough people from murder with the penalty of life imprisonment that we currently impose or is there something more that we ought to be doing to try to save innocent lives?

I have heard all the experience put forward by my hon. and learned Friends. I have been at the Bar for 32 years. In the early days of my practice, we still had capital punishment and I was agonised by the question whether it deterred anybody. I used to ask all the heavy villains: "Did it deter you? Did it stop you taking guns and weapons when you burgled anyone's house?" The heavy villains used to tell me that it did and that they were deterred.

When I moved the motion for the restoration of capital punishment in the House in December 1975, the leader of the IRA threatened that if we passed it he would take the life of three British soldiers for every member of the IRA who was hanged. Did he do that because capital punishment was not a deterrent? He did that because he knew perfectly well that if the House agreed to the restoration of capital punishment, it would deter IRA members. *[Interruption.]*

During all the years that I have been in the House, the view of the great public, the people whom we represent, has never changed. It has always been that the restoration of capital punishment would save the lives of innocent people. When we debate the subject, we receive more and more letters and we get more and more support from our constituents who ask us for goodness' sake to bring back capital punishment. They say that too many people are dying because too many killers are not deterred. Are they all wrong? I hear all the views of the experts, but who are the better experts on the motivation of ordinary people than the people whom we represent? They have as much right to give their opinions about what ordinary people would be deterred from. If the deterrence of a sentence does not work, if the threat of the consequences does not work, why on earth are we punishing people for any criminal offence at all? Common sense indicates that if one raises the penalty to death, some people—not everyone, but a few people—will hesitate and decide not to kill. And the person they will hesitate about and decide not to kill is an innocent person who will live.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn *rose*——

Sir Ivan Lawrence: My hon. and learned Friend has made many interventions. Perhaps I may be allowed a moment to make my comments.

I do not know whether my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was right to say that only four of the 76 prisoners released from prison since the abolition of capital punishment have killed again and yet would have been hanged. I doubt it. There is something wrong with the analysis of the figures. I do not suppose for a moment that it was only four. Even if the number of those convicted again for murder and murder only was 16, it shows that capital punishment would have saved that number of innocent lives.

The issue for us tonight is deterrence. We may all feel horrified at the idea of capital punishment, but we must not be so fearful if it is going to save lives. That is the test. People say that there is no evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent. I have said that, to me, it was sufficient evidence that heavy villians were deterred, that the terrorist leaders were deterred and that ordinary people would feel deterred. We have heard some nonsense spoken about the figures in the United States. Research conducted in Chicago university, at Yale university and at Harvard university has shown that the restoration of capital punishment has deterred. In Texas, in Florida, in Louisiana and in Georgia there has been a resultant fall in the murder rate. Since the Supreme Court in the United States said that it was perfectly proper for states to provide for capital punishment, some 23 states that have reactivated it have seen a decline in the murder rate while only 10 of those states that have reinstituted capital punishment have not seen a decline. At a rate of two to one, that seems to be strong statistical evidence of the trend that capital punishment deters some people.

6.15 pm

But the whole point about all the statistics is that they do not address the one issue that matters. The statistics will show whether there has been a decline in the murder rate or not, but they will not show the number of people who had a gun in their hand or were about to take a gun in their hand and decided not to because they would have suffered the penalty of death if they had killed.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am not able to give way because there are too many hon. Members who want to speak and I do not want to stop them.

In Japan, in the United States and in other civilised countries throughout the world, people have accepted that capital punishment is a deterrent. In 50 countries, there has even been an extension of capital punishment beyond the bounds of murder because the people in those countries believe that it has a deterrent effect.

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Sir Ivan Lawrence: There is no doubt that life imprisonment, which we have been imposing as a substitute, has not worked. In the five years up to the abolition of capital punishment, there were 209 murders a year. There have been 670 a year since abolition—twice as many. I also take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) that, but for the brilliance of the medical profession, there would have been many more murders.

In 1972, 2,000 crimes were committed with guns and weapons. Today, 13,500 such crimes are committed—a sixfold increase because there is no deterrent of capital punishment to frighten people away from using guns when they go out. In 24 years before 1965, 14 police officers were killed. In the past 30 years, 54 police officers have been killed—a fourfold increase. If nothing else is clear, it is clear that life imprisonment does not deter.

One problem is that we agonise, we care, we hate the idea of signing any document that signs away a person's life. Nevertheless, if it means that we are able to save lives——

Mr. Alex Carlile: What about miscarriages of justice?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am coming to that. If it means that we shall save innocent lives, all that agonising must cease because our duty is to save lives.

Most of the debate has concerned the miscarriages of justice. Some cases were no doubt miscarriages of justice, some only may have been, and yet those convicted have been released. However, a number of things have happened since most of those miscarriages of justice took place. No police officer can falsify a confession any longer because interviews are tape recorded. *[Interruption.]* The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 gives the judge power to say that he is not satisfied with the way in which the evidence has been adduced and that he will not admit it. Judges now have to break down for the juries the various parts of a piece of evidence that they have heard which throws any doubt at all on an identification. We may now use DNA, which identifies whether somebody is or is not the person who wore the cap—the murderer. As a result of ESDA—the electro-static document analysis procedure —one can discover whether police officers may have falsified a confession, which was the basic reason why so many of those cases resulted in miscarriages of justice and acquittals.

Those very substantial changes make it much less likely than ever before that a jury will convict of murder if it has the slightest doubt. If there were a death penalty, plenty of juries that now convict of murder would not convict of murder if there were an element of doubt. With relation to the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six or any other number of people and miscarriages of justice, I must make the rather obvious point that if we had had capital punishment perhaps there would have been no bombings in Guildford or Birmingham or some of the other terrible offences that have been committed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) has tabled a proposal which bears close analysis. The proposal was not introduced in 1990, for I remember mentioning it in 1975. It should not be beyond the wit of man to have a tribunal which, after sentence of death has been passed, looks at all the circumstances of the offender and of the offence, including evidence that would not have been admissible in a court of law, to see whether there is any reason why the man or woman should not die. The question must be whether there is any reasonable reason why a person should not die.

Let us consider what such a tribunal would have discovered. Such a tribunal would have heard that Timothy Evans had the mental age of a 12-year-old child and that person would not have been hanged. Such a tribunal— *[Interruption.]* It is because Opposition Members do not

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

listen when people explain things on this side of the argument that, year after year, they accept the old rubbish and innocent people continue to be killed as a result.

Hanratty could have run the defence of diminished responsibility. Of course, he could not have run both that and an alibi at the trial. However, a tribunal could have decided that he should not be hanged because, if he had run the defence of diminished responsibility, it would have succeeded. We could examine the list of miscarriages of justice and discover that no one for whom anything could have been said, even a reasonably short time after the trial, would have been hanged. The people who would hang would be those for whom nothing could be said in their favour. Those people are the undoubted and vilest of killers. It would be a deterrent, even though, as a result of the tribunal, some would not die, because people would not know in advance whether things would be said that would save their lives.

The House must think again. We shall go on thinking, year after year, because that is what the people outside who sent us to this place expect of us. They know that so long as the killing and murdering continue and precious little attempt is made to introduce a deterrent sentence, society is indeed sick. We must return to a situation in which society once again has respect for the rule of law. It had more respect for the rule of law when there was a perimeter beyond which people could not go because they knew that if they took someone's life, they would die.

I thank my colleagues who have tabled the new clauses. They will have my support because, for all our tears, at the end of the day I believe that capital punishment would save innocent lives.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): It is always good to follow the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). He was certainly on good form today. But if he is arguing that all the technological developments to which he referred could guarantee no miscarriages of justice, his argument is at best untenable and at worst ridiculous.

The suggestion that there would have been no Birmingham or Guildford pub bombings and no terrorism if the death penalty had been in existence is a defiance of history and a defiance of the situation in many countries where there is both terrorism and a death penalty. The hon. and learned Gentleman set out so many so-called safeguards and exceptions that we would end up without the deterrence which he suggested is required. For that reason, I entirely disagree with his argument.

I must declare an interest as I am an adviser to the Police Federation. The Police Federation would endorse the view of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), but I do not. I speak on behalf of my constituents. It is my experience that, while the majority of police officers no doubt support the Police Federation's view, many take an alternative view. In many ways, the views of police officers reflect the differences of opinion on the issue among the general population.

As we have seen with the Home Secretary today, many people have in recent years taken a different view of the death penalty—and quite rightly so. People are beginning to understand that the person who may end up as the innocent victim of a miscarriage of justice might be their son, daughter, husband, wife or relative. That innocent person might be hanged. That is why today a right-wing Conservative Home Secretary will join Opposition Members and many Conservative Members in saying that the risk of a mistake in respect of the death penalty is too great. The risk of a miscarriage of justice is too great.

Mr. Stephen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. O'Brien: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I will not give way as I am under a strict injunction from Mr. Morris to be brief.

Let me remind the Committee of those people who would be dead if the death penalty had not been abolished. Let us think about the number of people who would otherwise be dead. Those people include Hugh Callaghan, Patrick Hill, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power, John Walker, Engin Raghip, Mark Braithwaite, Jacqueline Fletcher, Judith Ward, Paul Darvell, Wayne Darvell, Neil Latimer, Noel Bell, Winston Allen, James Hegan, Stephen Miller, Tony Paris, Yusef Abdullahi, Michelle and Lisa Taylor, Kiranjit Aluwhalia and, of course, Stefan Kiszko, who unfortunately died, but who at least had some time before his death during which he was able to enjoy the freedom that he should have had throughout his life.

Many people are worried about convictions achieved on the basis of admissions and false scientific evidence. We cannot accept a position where we must apologise to a corpse or to the family of a person who has been unjustly hanged. That is not an acceptable way to proceed.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. O'Brien: I have already said that I will not give way.

Anyone who favours hanging must be prepared to see innocent people hanged. We cannot guarantee that our system is satisfactorily safe. The idea that there could be extra safeguards, either by way of a special tribunal or the Court of Appeal, is not acceptable.

Besides reducing the idea of deterrence by creating many exceptions, there would not be a proper safeguard. In respect of many cases, the Court of Appeal had heard those cases and rejected the appeals. It took 16 years to discover that Stefan Kiszko had not committed the murder for which he was convicted. Surely we are not proposing that we should wait 16 years to allow scientific evidence to present itself to ascertain innocence. That is not acceptable.

Conservative Members who favour capital punishment despite the risks of miscarriage of justice do so on the basis of a deterrent factor which outweighs the risks of a miscarriage of justice. I have had experience of representing people who have been accused of murder. I doubt whether there is deterrence in hanging. Even if there is, such miscarriages of justice that we have seen considerably outweigh the deterrence of hanging.

The vast majority of murder cases are domestic murders or murders that were committed in the heat of passion. In those circumstances, the rational thought that would go into an analysis of hanging would not deter crime. In a sense, the life sentence for murder is a deterrent. We know that murders have not increased at the rate at which other offences have increased. The argument that life imprisonment is not a deterrent is not acceptable or tenable; otherwise, when we abolished hanging, murder would have increased disproportionately to other crime. It has not. It has increased at a slower rate than that of other crime. On that basis, hanging was not the unique deterrent that others have suggested. Therefore, one has to fall back on the idea that the risk of a miscarriage of justice is much too great and that it far outweighs the deterrent argument, which itself is very questionable.

6.30 pm

Let no one suggest that Opposition Members who oppose hanging are less concerned about, the murder of police officers. The senior officer who was the wife of the officer who was murdered some years ago and whose killer returned to custody last week is based in my constituency, and she is obviously concerned, as I am, about the outcome of the case. I am also very concerned about, and send my condolences to, the family of Sergeant Derek Robertson.

The murder of an individual is always appalling, but the killing of a police officer is an assault on the state and on a person who puts his life on the line for the community. That should merit a greater punishment—a longer prison sentence—but not a distinct type of punishment—not a death penalty—to separate it from all others. Surely the killing of one police officer does not merit a different punishment from that for the killing of 21 people in the Birmingham pub bombings. That is not a legitimate or tenable distinction. Unless we have a way of distinguishing cases that would result in the death penalty and killings which would not, we cannot allow the death penalty to be resuscitated. Will some people be found more guilty beyond reasonable doubt than others? Again, that is not acceptable. We cannot argue that if Bentley should be hanged the terrorists who blew up the Birmingham pub should not.

Is not it ironic that legislation that came about following a royal commission that was set up in the wake of a series of mistakes in our criminal justice system should be used to attempt to restore a death penalty which would simply compound the very mistakes, the very miscarriages of justice and the very undermining of our criminal justice system that that royal commission made recommendations to stop?

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You heard the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Bren) say that Mr. Anthony Paris would have been executed under the old system. I wanted to intervene to point out that I was Mr. Paris's solicitor——

The Chairman: Order. What has that to do with the Chair?

Mr. Evans: The appeal process had not been completed and he was found not guilty in the course of the Court of Appeal hearing; he never would have suffered that penalty.

The Chairman: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Shersby: I also happen to be an adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales, and I have a different list from that of the the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), who has made a most remarkable speech. My list is the roll of honour of police officers who have lost their lives doing their duty, protecting the men and women of this country and keeping the Queen's peace.

I speak on behalf of my constituents in Uxbridge, on behalf of the vast majority of members of the Police Federation whose views were expressed at their annual conference, and in support of new clause 2, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), because nothing will shake my belief that the existence of capital punishment is the only penalty that will deter criminals—my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) has described them—from carrying guns and knives with which they shoot, stab, slash and kill men and women such as those on the Police Federation's roll of honour.

Since capital punishment was abolished in this country, 70 police officers have lost their lives. In the past five years that I have been a parliamentary adviser, five officers have died defending the men and women of this country and keeping the Queen's peace. It is time that we did what my hon. and learned Friend suggested, and that is to take courage to restore the penalty and make certain that the killing of innocent men and women comes to an end.

In the past three years, the Conservative Government have taken through the Lobby members of the Cabinet in support of capital punishment for treason and piracy. Those capital offences remain on the statute book. Therefore, why do my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the Cabinet think that the death penalty is a deterrent for treason and for acts of piracy but not, apparently, for the murder of a police officer?

Why did the Home Secretary release Witney five years before the end of his sentence for killing three police officers in Notting Hill—Christopher Head, David Wombwell and Geoffrey Fox—in 1966? Why was Anthony Jeffs released after killing PC Guthrie in 1972?

Such matters concern my constituents in Uxbridge and every decent policeman and policewoman in this country. They should concern every member of the House of Commons as it reaches its decision—

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first new clause relating to capital punishment, THE CHAIRMAN *put the question already proposed from the Chair, pursuant to order [11 February].*

The Committee divided: Ayes 186, Noes 383.

Division No. 134] **[6.37 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus

Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and
Mr. Michael Stern.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*

Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael

Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald

Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Elletson, Harold
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*

Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael

Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary

Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Wicks, Malcolm
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. John McAllion.

Question accordingly negatived.

THE CHAIRMAN *then put the Question necessary to dispose of another new clause relating to capital punishment which had been selected by him.*

New Clause 4

PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER

'(1) Subject to the following subsections the penalty for murder shall be death.

(2) No person aged under 18 years shall suffer the death penalty.

(3) As soon as practicable following a sentence of death, a special sitting of the Court of Appeal shall be convened to consider whether the circumstances of either

(a) the commission of the offence or

(b) the offender

whether or not such circumstances were adduced in evidence at the trial, are such as would justify the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment in place of the sentence of death.'.—*[Mrs. Peacock.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 159, Noes 403.

Division No. 135] **[6.52 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Conway, Derek

Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger

Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hunter, Andrew
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leigh, Edward
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James

Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Phil Gallie and
Mr. Michael Shersby.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael

Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham

Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek

Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell

Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Legg, Barry
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pickles, Eric
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn.
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Wicks, Malcolm
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. John McAllion.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 3

AMENDMENT OF LAW RELATING TO SEXUAL ACTS BETWEEN MEN

'.—(1) In section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 (amendment of law relating to homosexual acts in private), for "twenty-one" in both places where it occurs there is substituted "sixteen".

(2) in section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (homosexual offences), for "twenty-one" in each place where it occurs there is substituted "sixteen".

(3) This section shall come into force on the date this Act is passed.'.—*[Mrs. Currie.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following: New clause 5—*Age at which homosexual acts are lawful*—

'.—(1) In section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 (amendment of law relating to homosexual acts in private), for "twenty-one" in both places where it occurs there is substituted "eighteen".

(2) In section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (homosexual offences), for "twenty-one" in each place where it occurs there is substituted "eighteen".

(3) This section shall come into force on the date this Act is passed.'

New clause 6—*Amendment of the law relating to sexual acts between men*—

'. (1) In section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 (amendment of the law relating to homosexual acts in private) for "twenty-one" in both places where it occurs is substituted "seventeen".

(2) In section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (homosexual offences) for "twenty-one" in each place where it occurs there is substituted "seventeen".

(3) No proceedings shall be instituted except by or with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions against any man for an offence under sections 12, 13, 15 or 16 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 or for aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring or commanding its commission whether either of the men was at the time of its commission under the age of twenty-one.

(4) This section shall come into force on the date on which this Act is passed.'

Mrs. Currie: The purpose of the new clause is to make the age of consent the same for everyone. I understand that it will be the subject of the first of a series of Divisions.

This is an historic debate. It is the first time in over a quarter of a century that the age of consent for

[Mrs. Currie]

homosexuals has been discussed by the House of Commons. The taboo of silence that has denied the sexuality of young gay men has been decisively broken. Tonight's free vote establishes the question as a matter of conscience—as it should be—and the huge number of hon. Members who will support the new clause will demonstrate that it is not an issue for gay men alone, and no longer a minority issue, but one of human rights, which touches us all.

Homosexuality in this country is subject to enforced discrimination, which is now out of date, indefensible and way out of line with the rest of the civilised world. The age at which gay sex is permitted in Britain, at 21, is the highest in the world, other than in places like Byelorussia and Serbia, where it is still totally illegal. Most nations have the same age of consent for straight and for gay sexual activity—and have done for years, even centuries—with no problems at all. They do not bother to make any distinction, even when the age is lower than it is here.

We need only cross the channel to see that this is the case. In France, Greece, Poland, Sweden and Denmark the common age is 15; in Italy, it is 14; in Malta, Spain and Holland, it is 12. Those are prime destinations, it should be pointed out, for the 33 million Brits who go abroad every year on holiday or business. Germany has announced that it will equalise the age of consent at 16; the Republic of Ireland did so last year, at 17. None of these nations is troubled, as we appear almost uniquely to be, by the notion that a common age of consent causes peculiar difficulties. The fact is that it does not.

The United Kingdom is likely to have to change its law before much longer, for a case has been brought before the European Court of Human Rights on equality grounds, with an excellent chance of success. The Government have already been told that they have a case to answer, and they must give their response before the end of March. The European Court of Human Rights, which we helped to set up in 1953, is likely to rule in favour of equality, as it has done in similar cases in respect of other countries, which have complied. Surely it is better for us to change our law in the House of Commons, on a free vote, than to be forced to conform, possibly in an election year.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that this issue, of all issues, is one of principle and that the Committee ought not to take a decision on grounds of expediency or comparisons? Should not the House of Commons protect the young men of the nation?

Mrs. Currie: Of course, it is a matter of principle. If my hon. Friend bears with me, I shall deal with his point in a moment.

This is an all-party new clause, and other hon. Members will put forward their points of view. As a lifelong Tory, I can only say that I believe that the state should be kept out of the personal lives of the men and women of this country. Everyone is entitled to his or her privacy. What my neighbours get up to in private is their business and not mine, and it is not for the state to interfere. If we are to have a nation at ease with itself and a nation at the heart of Europe, the unpleasant homophobic nature of current legislation must be changed—and the sooner, the better.

I may be told that public opinion is not with us. If there is one thing that is very clear it is that the polls are confusing and that we should not rely on them. The poll in yesterday's *Sunday Times* showed that many people still want to ban homosexuality altogether; others want equality, but at a different, higher, age. Since the age of consent for the rest of us has been 16 since 1885, that is somewhat unrealistic. It is interesting that once respondents know a gay man, attitudes change dramatically and bigotry disappears. We in this Chamber all know at least one gay man—possibly more. In any case, we are here to lead public opinion as well as to follow it.

In a poll last year, 83 per cent. of the public stated that they were in favour of capital punishment. That did not stop a huge majority of hon. Members voting the other way a few moments ago. Our constituents send us here with our brains intact, and we should be using them.

7.15 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My hon. Friend and I are both positive Europeans, but I do not see what the situation elsewhere in Europe has to do with this debate. I do not think that her analogy with what goes on in other countries is relevant. Does she agree—if not, perhaps she will explain why—that there is no equality between homosexuality and heterosexuality?

Mrs. Currie: I was merely pointing out that in countries where there has been a common age of consent for a long time, none of the problems that we are told will arise if we have a common age has arisen.

Mr. Brazier: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Currie: No. I must move on, as this is a very short debate in which many hon. Members want to take part.

In this country there are also people who dislike, even abhor, homosexuality. They are entitled to campaign for those opinions. We have all been bombarded with St. Paul and Leviticus, and we have been accused of joining the forces of Satan. Such views are held with passionate sincerity—of course they are—but the people who hold them are not entitled to insist that their prejudices be written into British law. Oscar Wilde pointed out that one cannot make men moral by law; that all one can do is criminalise their preferences. We have no right to do that.

We can argue long and hard about principle——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): My hon. Friend cannot be saying seriously that we should allow anybody to indulge any preference. I do not think that she can mean genuinely what she has just said. Surely she recognises that there are many activities—for example, child abuse—which individuals find pleasing but which the rest of society does not recognise as valid. *[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Currie: I think that my hon. Friend's remark has been treated with the contempt it deserves.

The law is not only prejudicial and discriminatory; it is painfully effective. Hon. Members on my side of the debate cannot argue that the law is ignored. On the contrary, it is widely, if erratically, employed. Between 1988 and 1991, there were more than 2,000 arrests for offences involving consensual sex with men under 21 years of age. Even in 1992, as the research of the House of Commons Library shows, men were still being committed to prison for consensual acts with other men. The fear of being arrested and questioned, and perhaps cautioned or charged, is real and ever present.

Last year, three young men—Will Parry, Hugo Greenhalgh and Ralph Wilde—announced that they were to take their case, on equality grounds, to the European Court. Two of them—Hugo and Will, who are lovers—spoke openly on television. I understand that they were promptly reported to the police by a self-appointed guardian of public morality, Mr. Stephen Green. The police may have been deeply embarrassed about the whole affair, but because the complaint had been made it had to be investigated. The young men found themselves in Rochester Row police station for several hours, and they were subjected to the most intimate and intrusive personal questioning. Eventually, they were released, and no prosecution has been brought.

Had such an episode occurred to a heterosexual couple, we should all have been appalled. We ought to be just as disgusted that in 1994 this can still happen to gay men.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Does the hon. Lady agree that it is totally unacceptable that the Committee should take the view that young men ought to be protected longer than young women? If young women, with the age of consent set at 16, are suitably protected, there is no reason whatever why the same age should not apply to men, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

Mrs. Currie: I agree entirely. Time permitting, I shall deal with that matter in greater detail.

Who can doubt the intimidatory effect of incidents of the sort that I have just mentioned? Intimidation and deterrence are, after all, the purpose of this law. The result is extremely damaging. It inhibits young men from seeking help, whether through counselling, health advice or sex education. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which supports the new clause, tells us that young gay men are noticeable by their absence from the citizens advice bureaux. They are too scared to come forward and ask for help. That applies even if they have been subjected to muggings or theft. Giving evidence against an assailant would involve identifying themselves as breaking the criminal law, so they do not come forward. Thus, the law has the opposite effect to what many hon. Members want.

We are all genuinely worried about protecting vulnerable youngsters. It is a concern shared by all hon. Members. But a law that keeps people silent and means that they are unable to lodge a complaint is not a protective shield. It is an enforcer of their silence. It is a gag, and it is likely to leave them that much more open to abuse, pressure, harassment, blackmail and extortion.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, I shall not.

It is not as if the law enforcement agencies are looking for work. We should be wary of burdening them at a time when genuine crime is causing so much worry. In my view as a Tory, our police force, magistrates, courts and judges should be well enough occupied pursuing the real thugs and thieves who are creating misery and mayhem throughout the land.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Currie: I cannot resist my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She is seeking to persuade hon. Members to vote to legalise the buggery of adolescent males. Does she think that that is what our constituents have sent us here to do?

Mrs. Currie: I merely repeat that I do not consider the private sexual practices of other people, including the hon. Gentleman, to be any business of the law. The debate in recent weeks has taught me that one person's sexual perversion is another person's preferred sexual practice. We should all be careful about pronouncing on what goes on next door.

I shall now turn to the subject of health education. It exasperates me that the moment that anyone mentions gay sex, AIDS comes up in the next breath. When we see a heterosexual couple, we do not instantly think of gonorrhoea; we see people trying to form a long-term relationship, caring about each other and falling in love. Nevertheless, as a former Health Minister, I have a particular concern. How can we advise young gay men about the dangers of AIDS, how can we talk to them straight about safer sex, when what they are doing is supposed to be strictly against the law? When the campaign against AIDS began in 1986, Ministers had to take a deep breath and tell health care workers to ignore the law, and to reach out to men at risk in whichever way they could. That was highly unsatisfactory and hostile to any type of progress.

The Government tell us that they want to reduce the level of sexually transmitted disease—so do we all. The British Medical Association, whose council recently voted overwhelmingly to support the new clause, considers:

> "criminalisation of homosexual activity may inhibit health education and healthcare."

It continues:

> "There is no convincing medical reason against reducing the age of consent for male homosexuals to 16 years, and to do so may yield positive health benefits."

The World Health Organisation said:

> "People who hide their sexual orientation for fear of discrimination or alienation . . . are placed in situations that are not conducive to safe sexual practices."

On 22 January, *The Lancet* stated:

> "All young people need safer sex education but the needs of young homosexual men are not being met. This worrying disparity may arise both directly and indirectly from the current legislation."

A survey in 1992 for the North West Thames regional health authority of the HIV prevention initiatives in the United Kingdom, most of which are paid for by the Government, showed that most agencies conducted no work for young gay and bisexual men; when asked why not, half the agencies reported that it was due to the possible illegality of the work.

Mr. Brazier: Has my hon. Friend seen the figures from America, where different states have a range of approaches to the age of consent and gay rights? Does she know that in those states and cities, such as San Francisco, where the laws are most liberal, the incidence not only of AIDS but of hepatitis A, hepatitis B and gay bowel syndrome is vastly higher than in those states that have tight laws on homosexuality?

Mrs. Currie: I am after not gay rights but equal rights for everyone. If my hon. Friend considers my argument for one moment, he may agree that, if we are to improve health

[Mrs. Currie]

education for young people, it is deeply unhelpful when the law makes them criminals first. We must make progress on the matter.

My arguments do not apply only to sex education. According to the Government's "The Health of the Nation" White Paper, Ministers also wish to reduce the incidence of suicide and attempted suicide, which in Britain is among the highest in the world. The best way to achieve the two objectives of a fall in the rate of HIV and AIDS and in the rate of suicide is to have open, intelligent, well-trained, well-informed talk, advice and support. The worst way is to turn our young people into criminals in the way that we do. When colleagues say that changing the age of consent will give the wrong signals, I hope that they will also recognise that young men and those trying to help them receive the wrong signals from the law as it stands. Those against the new clause cannot have it both ways —either the law is ineffective, in which case it serves no purpose but to institutionalise ignorance and it should be swept away, or it works and it hurts, in which case it is dangerous and unfair.

We have already heard it said tonight that there is a difference in maturity between boys and girls. As a former teacher, it seems to me that differences exist at 11 and 13 years of age, but they have largely disappeared by the time young people reach 15 and 16. That was the conclusion of the Wolfenden report back in 1957. It said:

> "Our medical witnesses were unanimously of the view that the main sexual pattern is laid down in the early years of life and the majority of them held that it was usually fixed in main outline by the age of 16. Many held that it was fixed much earlier."

If there were any truth in the idea that boys are not as mature as girls in their later teens, that would be an argument for a higher age of consent for all boys, not just for some of them. There is not a country in the world that takes that line. It is nonsense and, in any case, it is the weakest possible ground for invoking the criminal law against the young people involved.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On the issue of equality before the law, does the hon. Lady realise that it is neither natural nor normal to carry out homosexual activity? That is why there has to be protection for young boys. It is a different matter if they participate in that which is normal and natural, but if they are guided into activities that are neither normal nor natural, protection is required.

Mrs. Currie: I recognise that my hon. Friend has deeply held and sincere views on the matter and I respect them, but in the past much the same thing has been said about practices such as divorce and contraception, and we do not now make laws banning them. I am not going to persuade my hon. Friend and, with respect, he is probably not going to persuade me.

We are debating not physical maturity but the ability, in law, of a person to understand, and to give or withhold consent. The age at which children in this country are held to tell the difference between right and wrong is 10. Recently, children of 11 years of age were convicted of murder on the ground that they knew what they were doing. The age at which a boy can be held to be guilty of rape was recently reduced from 14 to 10. In law, a young man is old enough at 16 to decide to sleep with his girlfriend and even to marry her, yet, if he is the other way inclined, he is judged to be absolutely incapable of making up his own mind. Frankly, I think that that is nuts. There is no logical or biological argument for discrimination.

Lady Olga Maitland (*Sutton* and Cheam): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: I shall be delighted to.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does the hon. Lady agree that we are really talking about emotional maturity? A 16-year-old boy may be troubled by his growing sexuality and be unsettled and frightened of girls. He may not be doing well at school and could be strongly pressured by the militant gay lobby. Therefore, he should be protected.

Mrs. Currie: With respect to my hon. Friend, in those circumstances the worst possible thing that we can do is to make the boy a criminal, but that is what we do. There are better ways to protect our young people.

7.30 pm

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I am conscious of the fact that we have only a short time and that many hon. Members wish to speak.

I wish to tackle one other chestnut that I heard on the radio today. Someone claimed that changing the law would result in rapacious, middle-aged homosexuals hanging around school gates, waiting to seduce young boys. A part of me says that that probably tells us a lot about the peculiar attitudes of middle-aged people rather than about the behaviour of the young. No one seems equally bothered about rapacious, middle-aged heterosexuals chasing young girls. This is still an extraordinarily macho society.

I wonder whether anyone ever talks to young people. Most of them are inevitably and naturally seeking relationships with people of their own age. One year is the average age gap between partners at their first sexual experience. The idea that teenagers might be hugely and secretly attracted—for preference—to some wrinkled old biddy, old enough to be a parent or grandparent, is preposterous and offensive to most people.

Mrs. Peacock: I thank the hon. Lady for giving way *[Interruption.]*—I must tell the House that I am not yet a grandmother. As a mother, how did the hon. Lady study her family and the boys who grew up in it? Does she have any idea of the immaturity of 16-year-old boys? If she does not, some of us do.

Mrs. Currie: I repeat the answer that I gave earlier. Of course, young people are immature, but that is not an argument for making them criminals. It is an argument for talking to them, setting them a good example and respecting their sexuality, especially when they tell us that they know their own minds and wish to be left alone. It seems to me that that is what we should do.

The serious point is this: British courts and juries have at last begun to accept that in sexual encounters consent means consent and no should mean no. Refusal then has the power to turn any unwanted act from a flirtation to a criminal offence and that should apply not only to 16-year-old boys and girls but to anyone, male or female, at any age. Only then can we seriously claim to be shielding the vulnerable or the uncertain, whether gay or straight, with the protection of a sensible and balanced law.

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): It is legal for 16-year-old boys to enter into a relationship that could result in their fathering a child, but does the hon. Lady agree that that requires greater maturity and has longer and more serious consequences than entering into a homosexual relationship, if they are so inclined?

Mrs. Currie: I suppose that I agree that all growing up requires more maturity than any of us has at the time. The most foolish thing that we can do is to turn people into criminals at that age. There is no logical, biological or medical basis for treating some young boys differently in law to others and it does not make any sense.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: I am about to finish my speech, so if my hon. Friend will forgive me, I shall not give way.

The image of gay men is at last changing. They are men whom we know, work with and whose work we admire. They are business men, civil servants, artists, actors, soldiers, judges, bishops, priests, peers and Members of Parliament. We all know someone who is gay, even if he has not yet declared himself. It is time to take the dark shadow and turn it into a human being; it is time to seize our homophobic instincts and chuck them on the scrap heap of history where they belong. In a free society the onus to prove that restricting freedom is in the nation's interests is on those who would discriminate. That is impossible to prove. Equality is the only worthwhile and sustainable position. No compromises will satisfy those people whom they affect. There is no such thing as partial equality; people are either equal or they are not.

Tonight, we have the opportunity to be proud of the House and to bring our country into the modern world. We have the chance to remove discrimination and to challenge the injustice facing our fellow citizens; we have the choice of voting for equal rights under the law and for the same law for everyone. The time has come.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I must make another appeal. Even more hon. Members wish to contribute to this debate, so short speeches please.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I shall do my best to respond positively to your appeal, Mr. Morris, in the interests of the Committee and in defiance of my record.

I support new clause 3, moved by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), and I pay tribute to the way in which she has worked to ensure this debate. I hope that she will have the reward of achieving a necessary reform to the law.

I support the new clause, which provides for an age of consent for sexual relations common to both men and women, on three main grounds. First, it is equitable to treat both sexes the same. Secondly, it is rational to legislate for equal treatment, in terms of both sexual orientation and enforcement of the law. Thirdly, it is wise to decriminalise consensual sexual activity above the age of 16 at a time when the fearful disease AIDS has to be fought with all the information, counselling and promotion of greater safety in sexual relationships that we can muster or bring to bear as a consequence of our activities in the House.

I shall develop each of those arguments, but I must first emphasise an essential general principle: all that I say and all that is said by everyone who favours reform, whatever age and the amendment that they prefer, refers to consensual sexual relations. The essential purpose of supporting change in the law is to remove the threat of prosecution and punishment for engaging in sexual activity, which to them is natural, from homosexual males above the age of 16. The purpose is emphatically not to provide any opportunity or excuse to anyone—heterosexual or homosexual—who seeks to impose his or her sexual will on anyone else.

I arrived at the decision that I should support the new clause and the common age of consent of 16 in two stages. It became obvious to me, as it did to many hon. Members, that the age of consent, which was fixed at 21 in 1967, has long failed to deal with the realities of sexual orientation and civil liberties. There are significant difficulties in enforcing the law credibly and injustices and dangers inherent in continuing a system that criminalises male homosexuals before the age of 21.

Having reached that conclusion, I was faced with the question, "What is the most appropriate legal age of consent if it is not 21?" The compromise of 18 automatically suggested itself. It is the age of majority and the age at which young men seem most able to decide for themselves about their sexual orientation. In short, it is not only the legal age of majority, but the biological age of maturity. It seemed to me to be a view that was sensible as an alternative to the current legal provision, liberal in terms of the accommodation of personal convictions and sexual orientation and realistic in terms of an individual's right to privacy.

Then, just when I was comfortable with that, the facts began to intervene. I had made the assumption that young men and young women were somehow more able to determine their sexuality at 16 if they were heterosexual. Because of that, I assumed that the heterosexual age of consent could reasonably remain lower than the homosexual age of consent. On reflection, however, it became difficult for me to convince myself that there was a difference in the capacity to decide among 16-year-olds.

If I and the majority of other heterosexual men knew our sexual orientation by the age of 16, why should not homosexuals be equally sure of their sexual orientation? The evidence has long existed to prove that people are sure, as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said. The Wolfenden report, published 37 years ago, concluded:

> "The main sexual pattern is laid down in the early years of life and . . . usually fixed by the age of 16."

More recently, the Royal College of Psychiatrists reported its long-held view:

> "there is no developmental reason to treat young men and young women differently"

in the law relating to the age of consent. Project Sigma, jointly financed by the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council, proffered strong evidence that homosexual orientation was fixed and well understood by homosexuals by their mid teens. The British Medical Association holds the same view.

That evidence and other reliable, responsible material persuaded me that it would be wrong to continue to discriminate in the law between men who are homosexual and those who are heterosexual. It would also be wrong to continue to discriminate in the law between young men who are homosexual and young women who are heterosexual.

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

As a father, I must say that I was equally exercised about the prospect of my daughter and son engaging in heterosexual relations at 16. No father could think otherwise. Frankly, I just hope that had it been the case that either of my children had proved to be of homosexual orientation, I could have shown them the love and understanding, as their parent, as several parents already do to their children in similar circumstances. I was not offered that test, for which I frankly give thanks. Faced with that prospect, however, as children grow up, who could conclude that we should discriminate in the law between different kinds of young people of different sexes on the basis of sexual orientation when we know that heterosexual relationships carry at least as much danger, as much menace and as much threat to young people's moral values as homosexual relationships?

Mr. Lord: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why he gives thanks that his children are not homosexual?

Mr. Kinnock: For the very reason that is understood by all heterosexuals: homosexuals in our society and in others are a minority. They are regarded as an isolated group. They do not have children. Moreover, in our society, even at the age of 16, they are regarded as criminals if they engage in sexual activity. That is a fair accumulation of reasons for not wanting one's children to be homosexual. We do not, however, have any control over it. That is at the essence of the new clause.

The supposition that somehow homosexuals are made or converted from heterosexuality is not sustained by medical evidence or by any unprejudiced examination of the facts or experience of normal life.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: I shall do so in a moment, but I want to respond to the appeal of Mr. Morris.

As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said, other comparable democracies have based their laws on judgments about discrimination. In Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland the common age of consent is 16. Germany is about to legislate for just such a change. I do not refer to those other countries to offer a simple argument for emulation, but to draw attention to the fact that a common age of consent at 16 has not damaged those societies or corrupted their youth. There is absolutely no rational reason to believe that a change to a common age of consent at 16 would introduce decadence or corruption into our society.

7.45 pm

Whatever the age of consent in any society, it must be capable of enforcement. In our democracy, that means that it must offer justice and practicality. Neither of those conditions is properly satisfied now. The fact that males between the ages of 16 and 21 break the law if they have homosexual relations, and homosexuals over the age of 21 break the law if they have relations with anyone under the age of 21, poses obvious difficulties in deciding culpability. Those difficulties would be intensified if the age of consent were reduced to 18, since it is clear from all sexual relationships that most encounters among young people are with contemporaries or near-contemporaries.

The confusions in the present system, which result in formal or informal decisions not to prosecute homosexuals, are just one reason for the consensus in favour of reform of the age of consent from 21. It would be best for us to ensure that those confusions are not deepened and made even more complex by fixing an age that is not practical or, in reality, enforceable with fairness.

Mr. Butterfill: I agree with much that the right hon. Gentleman has said. On the issue of criminality, I do not recall any girl under 16 being prosecuted for engaging in a sexual relationship. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it should not be the young person who becomes the criminal in this process, but the older person who has sexual relations with him?

Mr. Kinnock: I must reply to that briefly, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that any amount of evidence proves that homosexuals are not made or corrupted by their elders. They are not converted to homosexuality by having sexual encounters with older people who are also homosexuals.

What we need to do, and for which I shall continue to argue, is to extend the protection of decriminalisation to young men of 16 and above who are homosexuals. They are denied that now. I know that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and many other hon. Members want to ensure that young men as well as young women are afforded as much protection as the House can offer. That is why they should have the protection of legality and should not be criminalised into disguising their relations and sexuality.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: In all other circumstances I would be glad to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but time does not permit that.

It is clear on the basis of their experience in this matter of criminalisation that the police forces do not feel sufficiently exercised by homosexual activity to adopt policies that oppose a change in the law. Some senior officers have, of course, registered their view that a common age of consent would have the advantage of equity. For them and for others in the police service, the main focus of concern is the opportunity for blackmail and bullying and the reluctance of homosexuals to co-operate with police inquiries. Many of those problems result from criminalising homosexuality and police officers know it. That criminalisation of homosexuality provided the conclusive argument in persuading me to support the change in the law to a common age of consent at 16.

The very fact of criminality inhibits young men from reporting crimes against them. It is also a factor in the emotional misery and isolation endured by young homosexual men. But apart from those psychological pressures, which sometimes end in the terrible tragedies of suicide and attempted suicide, the Health Education Authority, Barnardo's and Project Sigma are just three of the knowledgeable bodies that inform us that the present criminality of homosexual relationships can limit health promotion activities among the social group most vulnerable to HIV infection and AIDS: young homosexual men.

Last month the council of the British Medical Association published a report on the age of consent for homosexual men which is bound to impress all but the most prejudiced minds. In concluding that the age of consent for homosexual men should be lowered to 16, the BMA council said that homosexual young men might not receive appropriate advice if the criminal status of homosexual relationships remains because, they fear, seeking professional advice from doctors, teachers and so on would be to admit committing a crime. Secondly, it said:

> "Support groups or youth organisations for homosexual men aged 16-20, where they exist at all, tend to keep a low profile and avoid drawing attention to themselves"

because they do not want to be accused of encouraging criminality. Thirdly,

> "'official' homosexual community organisations and clubs operate a clear over-21 policy to comply with the present law. This means that younger men are denied access to the advice which such organisations can provide and are less exposed to the social climate within the organised homosexual community, which strongly supports 'safer sex'."

Finally, the BMA Council said:

> "They feel stigmatised and regarded as not part of the broader society due to to the criminalisation of their sexual behaviour."

Those are frequently young people who are locked out. They are faced with appalling trauma, criminalised to the point where they are fearful of reporting offences against themselves, and inhibited from discussing their sexuality with others and gaining the appropriate counselling and advice. Surely we need to change the law to facilitate a change in their approach to protecting themselves and in the protection that we would seek to afford them.

Mr. Gorst: I have not yet decided how I shall vote and the right hon. Gentleman's answer to my question may be decisive. I agree with all that he has said about reducing the age of consent to 16, but one point has not been answered: in our society, should we be so far ahead of public opinion that the public feel that we have gone too far?

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for how he puts his point. Everyone who has been elected to the House knows that, in some cases, we follow public opinion. But in others, it is our duty to step slightly ahead, although not so far as to make ourselves invisible to the public. If, in 1967, our predecessors in the House had waited for a consensus of public opinion before supporting a change in the law, we would still have total criminalisation of homosexual behaviour.

I am certain that, like me, the hon. Gentleman regards the change that came about 26 or 27 years ago to have been an advantage for our society. In the quarter of a century that has passed, we have come to realise, as the Wolfenden report did a long time before 1967, that people determine their sexual orientation before reaching the age of 16. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me and take the further step of admitting that it is wrong that the behaviour of people following the orientation that is natural to them should be criminalised. I ask the House to do no more in 1994 than it was wise enough to do in 1967, bearing in mind our greater understanding of mores, habits and orientations in our society.

If passed, the new clause would help to protect young men. It would provide them with a basic legal framework for making vital decisions about themselves without the danger of criminality. We all know in our hearts that morality is not learnt from criminal law. No one will adopt a homosexual way of life just because he is free to do so at the age of 16, rather than 21 or 18. But if we do not make that change, lives will continue to be broken by continuing criminal prosecutions, fear and the underwriting of prejudice by criminal sanctions.

Let us tell young people that a heterosexual life, in the sense that it is what most of us live and want to live, is the norm; that it is and will remain the basic human relationship upon which the family is founded. But let us also tell young homosexuals that we still have regard for them and want them to live in a society that accepts their nature and will give them the same chance as others for personal happiness. We shall not tolerate discrimination against them and they need not feel fear and outlawed. Let us tell them that they can participate as fully as anyone else in the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship

The new clause is about all that. It is also about encouraging respect for those who are different—one of the basic tests of our democracy. It is about tolerance, equality before the law, and the free, secure and pluralistic society which we want to build, whatever else divides us in the House. I hope that the new clause will enjoy the support of the Committee.

Sir Anthony Durant (Reading, West): I support new clause 5, which seeks to lower the age of consent to 18.

May I point out that there are only three activities left that are restricted to the age of 21: first, holding a licence for a heavy goods vehicle; secondly, engaging in homosexual acts between males; and, thirdly and most interesting to hon. Members, being elected as a Member of Parliament. Those are the only three activities that still disbar people under the age of 21.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Anthony Durant: Already?

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I remind my hon. Friend that there are many other such activities, including going to an X-certificate picture without one's parents?

Sir Anthony Durant: I know something about the film industry and believe that one can do that at the age of 18, but I shall not argue with my hon. and learned Friend.

The argument seems to range between the ages of 16 and 18. Some people would like to leave the law as it stands, but I do not support that view. Much of the argument on this subject is simply based on opinion. Many young people are still sexually uncertain and often disturbed between the ages of 16 and 18.

In a talk-in programme on the radio yesterday, an interesting man said that when he was at university he shared a house in which everyone was homosexual except him. He did not become homosexual, but said that he felt under pressure—*[Interruption.]* I merely pass on that information for the Committee's consideration.

The organisation known as Relate, which used to be known as the Marriage Guidance Council, was quoted in *The Guardian* of 14 January.

> "Sixteen is rather young, as during early and middle adolescence sexual orientation is not always settled and there is often a lot of confusion. Eighteen therefore is a more appropriate age . . . So many young people embark on sexual relationships far too early and get hurt."

Those were the words of Relate's director, and we should consider that valid point.

8 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Did the hon. Gentleman feel certain in his own sexual orientation at the age of 16? If so, and assuming that it was a heterosexual orientation, does he not think that a young man of 16 could feel certain that, in his sexual orientation, he was gay?

Sir Anthony Durant: I do not agree. I believe that youngsters in that age group are confused about their sexuality.

Mr. Banks: Was the hon. Gentleman?

Sir Anthony Durant: I do not remember that I was. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Gentleman should remember that I am a pensioner.

If the age of consent is reduced to 16, we shall have to amend section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, which concerns teaching the subject of homosexuality in schools.

The Home Office Policy Advisory Committee document, "Report on Age of Consent in Relation to Sexual Offences", stated:

> "between the ages of 16 and 18 girls are more mature than boys in their approach to sexual relationships and that, insofar as it is possible to generalise, boys have caught up with the girls in the process of maturing by the age of 18 . . . This last line of argument could suggest that boys under 18 should be protected from heterosexual intercourse as well as homosexual relations. However, we feel that it is far easier for them to cope with the usual complexities"—

and those complexities exists, as we heard from the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—

> "of youthful heterosexual relationships, which are accepted by parents, friends and society, than the greater complexity of homosexual relationships with all the difficulties and pressures involved."

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend omitted to mention that that report was published in 1981—13 years ago, at a time when it seemed impossible to budge the age of consent even below 21. Is it not more appropriate today, at a time of AIDS and of recognition that there should be sex education for young people, to consider whether criminalisation of any kind is useful?

Sir Anthony Durant: I accept my hon. Friend's point that the report is old, but it remains of importance and I am prepared still to consider the advisory committee's findings. It made valid points that I pray in aid because they support my own view.

There is concern among many people about older men approaching young boys. I know that has never been proved one way or the other, but it is part of our duty as Members of Parliament to protect the young and, whether or not we have evidence of such a thing happening, there is a chance that such situations do arise.

Ms Eagle: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Anthony Durant: I must continue, because the Chair gave an edict about getting on with it, and I have decided to get on with it.

An interesting article by the Archbishop of York appeared in *The Independent* on 18 February:

> "For young people the absence of clear boundaries can be particularly damaging. One of the interesting results from the Wellcome survey of sexual attitudes is the number who felt that they had had sexual experience far too young . . . Those who are persuaded that there are no distinctions to be drawn between homosexuality and hetrosexuality will find no difficulty in reducing the age of consent to 16. As one who holds that there is a distinction, rooted not only in those biological differences but in the belief that there are proper and improper uses for the human body, I would not want a signal to be sent to young people that sexual choices are of no concern to anybody but themselves. Nor do I want to maintain unreasonable laws that are largely ignored and which sometimes, in the hands of the vindictive or the unscrupulous lead to tragic convictions. I hope Parliament will reduce the age of consent to 18, thus signalling that homosexuality in young men is neither to be treated as uncontroversial nor to be penalised beyond the age of maturity. A reduction of three years will provide an opportunity to assess the social consequences."

That is why I am keen that we should consider reducing the age of consent to 18, to move some way towards the change for which some people are pressing, but also to the age of male maturity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) kept quoting Europe at me, but I do not take much notice of that. We are still a sovereign state and this Parliament must take the decision—not people sitting in Brussels or anywhere else. I believe that 18 is the right age, and I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support new clause.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of new clause 6, which proposes that the age of consent for gay relationships should be 17. Tonight's debate is limited to relationships between men, but an identical new clause is proposed that would make 17 the age of consent for heterosexual relationships.

One important consideration is already reflected in criminal law. There should be no prosecution or criminalisation of young people under the age of 21—and the law has parallels—who are part of a relationship. The criminal is the person who, with age and authority, enters into a relationship with a considerably younger person. That should be the sole criminal offence retained on the statute book, with one addition. Sex with youngsters of either sex below a certain age should be an absolute offence. In that way, we would protect youngsters below the age of 14, 13 or whatever it might be. I take the view that the age of majority also ought to be 17, but we cannot debate and vote on that today.

Out of fairness, it would be appropriate and otherwise unjust to specify a different age in any case for different parts of the United Kingdom. I am conscious that a different legal situation obtains in Northern Ireland.

If any new clause is passed, it will be returned by the Government in a redrafted form. We would be presented with the Government's version of the decision of the Committee.

Mrs. Currie *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady indicates otherwise, but my understanding is that the Government would want a technically more perfect option.

Mrs. Currie: We all took a great deal of careful advice, and I was assured that the clauses are in order. It may happen—and I hope that it will—that the Government will take note of the views expressed by the Committee, because there might have to ge a good deal of other messing around. Tonight's debate, however, concerns the age of consent.

Mr. Hughes: If the new clause is in order, the hon. Lady is right. I share her view, and I hope that we will return to deal with the rest of the muddle. We should take the Bill as an opportunity to sort out other aspects.

Right hon. and hon. Members are clear that they speak only from their own position in this debate. I must be clear not to misrepresent others. My party's view is that the age of consent should be reduced to 16, equally for both sexes.

I agree entirely with the principle of equality. My only concern—I address my comments to colleagues who may yet be undecided, as I have been for a long time, about how to vote on these options—is whether 16 is too young. The hon. Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) addressed that issue. The task for us, therefore, is to try to resolve the matters that are not capable of proof, only judgment. We cannot tonight have a convincing answer that says that one conclusion is inevitable, or that the argument is only on one side.

It seems to me that there are three considerations that we should weigh. The first is equality; the second is protection of the young and vulnerable; the third is criminality. I shall speak briefly first on the subject of equality. The question that we are all asking ourselves is whether the circumstances and situations are similar for young men who want a relationship with another young man, and for young men and women who want relationships with each other. Are they similar, if not identical? One could argue the question either way. The most telling argument, however, is that some young people who, at the moment, are criminalised by the law and who, even if the law were changed to 18, would still be in a different position in relation to the criminal law, know that they will still be treated like second-class citizens. If a group in our society can show with justification that the law treats them differently, we must address that. The more important point is that if we retain on the statute book something that discriminates because of orientation between one person and another, we are making a statement about the inequality as citizens of that group for all their activities at whatever age.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. Another hon. Member asked first. Let me finish this point.

It seems to me that there is an absolutely overwhelming requirement to be just to people for whom the law at the moment is unjust.

Mr. Butterfill: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I should like to press him on the question of criminality, on which I pressed the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). I am slightly puzzled. Can he give an example where a young person in a relationship involving an older person has been prosecuted? I agree entirely that it would be wrong for the young person to be prosecuted.

Mr Hughes: It may be my own inadequacy, but I am not entirely clear about the hon. Gentleman's question. I intend in a moment to deal with criminality. I hope that I will answer the question. I apologise in advance if I do not answer it entirely.

Another thing that follows from equality. If we come to the conclusion that we need to treat heterosexual and homosexual people in relationships equally, it follows that, as a society, we should allow settled couples to register as being settled couples. The state should allow that. If we believe in stability of relationships, as opposed to changing relationships, we should address that question at some stage, whether for tax purposes, immigration or whatever.

Mr. Devlin: Marriage.

Mr. Hughes: No. Of course, there is a separate argument about marriage. The answer to both questions is that marriage is something that is specifically taken and inherited from a position of Christian faith. It applies also in other faith doctrines. In many countries, a civic ceremony, entirely separate from the religious ceremony, recognises partnership. Some countries do just that, too. I do not want to be distracted by this, but I shall make the point that we must not be naive or dishonest about pretending that there are no other issues on the agenda. The important point is to decide the matters that are subject to equality.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

8.15 pm

Mr. Hughes: No, because I have been asked, as we all have, to be as brief as possible.

I hope that hon. Members will come to the conclusion, as the right hon. Member for Islwyn did, that equality is a principle which is not only difficult to oppose but one that must be supported. Of course, that would mean, as of tonight, a law at 16, because for heterosexual relationships that is what it is.

My second point is about protection of the vulnerable. We clearly have a duty in the House to protect young people as they grow up. There must be an absolute age, below which any sexual relationship with a youngster is one to which that youngster cannot give consent. Anyone who engages in a relationship with that youngster must be punished, and punished hard. There is then an age when people are growing up. It is impossible to police a protection mechanism to keep young people from each other. It is practically impossible, unenforceable and, I would argue, unworkable, to prevent 15, 16 and 17-year-olds from having relationships between each other, or between one age and another of close age. We should not try to do that. We certainly should not criminalise those who are having a relationship with someone of their own near age range as part of their experimental period of growing up.

We should, of course, seek to ensure that young people —the point has been made in interventions—are not the victims of significantly older people who go looking for young people, not because they want a permanent relationship but simply for their own personal gratification. Young people need that protection when they are growing up. That applies also to young women, who are equally in need of protection against the older person seeking to seduce them for personal pleasure.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Dail discussed this issue in the teeth of formidable opposition in Dublin and elsewhere. They reached the conclusion, led by Ms Geoghegan Quinn, that there should be a common age

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

of consent of 17 years. Does he think that a common age of consent of 17 years would be an acceptable compromise?

Mr. Hughes: I share the view that the Irish Parliament came to recently. The opinion poll that was published yesterday in *The Sunday Times* showed that 42 per cent. of people think that the heterosexual age of consent should be raised. We delude ourselves because we are hooked on the wrong phrase. It is not an "age of consent", but an age of protection. It is an age during which we protect young people. After that, we say that it is up to them to protect themselves, that education must be their protection, and the law should not intervene.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman is talking about protection of young people. Will he address for a moment what I call the speed limit syndrome? By that, I mean that when a speed limit is 30 mph, it is most unlikely that there will be prosecutions of anyone going up to 40 mph—perhaps there would be beyond that. Therefore, if the age of consent for homosexual acts should be 16, is not it possible that there would be no prosecutions above the age of 14? Therefore, we have by default allowed the age of consent to go down to 14, which is not what we want in the House.

Mr. Hughes: I understand that point entirely. I can address it personally as someone who trained as a barrister and prosecuted for the Metropolitan police and the Thames Valley police, and also defended people. There was always a practical realisation that, under the present law, it was a completely arbitrary system. Some people were picked up and prosecuted, others were not. We would have to ensure that the law is enforced, so far as it could be, in a uniform way. I accept entirely that if the Committee votes tonight for 16, that is what we will require to be the age below which those who exploit young people should, without equivocation, be prosecuted. I argue for what I hope is the more intelligent outcome—the growing-up period during which one prosecutes not the young person doing the experimenting but the older person doing the exploiting. That is a fundamental principle: one prosecutes the adult who knows better.

Let me make one point about the Church of which I am a member, and respond to the quotation from the Archbishop of York. This is not a debate about what the Church teaches or about the Christian ethic. It is not a debate about the one verse in which Christ could be said to have said anything on the subject. There is a difference between personal morality and public law. The Church does not have a common view.

Moreover, the view taken by eminent members of the Church—that 18 is the right age, or that it should be the common age across the sexes—is not a view which they necessarily regard as a final resting place. There is no obvious accurate conclusion. The Church seeks to give wisdom and judgment. I hope, therefore, that the House will not conclude that there is one clear Christian view. This is a difficult area of ethical teaching and everyone must decide today what the law should be, not what morality or the Church should teach.

Sir Anthony Durant: At no time when I quoted the Archbishop of York did I in any way suggest that he represented the Church. He represented his own views.

Mr. Hughes: I am making the point that there is not a common Church view—only individual views within the Church. The Church should anyway take the view that it was more important for it to concentrate on love, fidelity and monogamy than on the details of this issue.

Why do I favour 17 rather than 16 or 18? It is because some of us are nervous that 16 is too young. More important, we must take into account the fact that, in England and Wales, someone of 16 still has to go to school —he or she cannot leave until after their 16th birthday. At age 16, therefore, one is still under authority. It seems to me that the time at which to give young people the full rights of adults is the time at which they can make full choices about schooling, education, work, training and so on. That is when they reach the age of other entitlements.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): They can make love in the school holidays.

Mr. Hughes: Of course, and I have made it clear that there should not be any criminality attached to such activity at that age.

Mr. Tony Banks: Behind the bike sheds?

Mr. Hughes: Behind the bicycle sheds or anywhere else. There may be a consensus in the House about the relevant age being the age soonest after which youngsters are no longer compulsorily at school. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) reminded us that in Ireland the age is 17.

The choice before us is between 16 and 18, or, if both are defeated, 17. I believe that the Committee will reach a view in favour of 16 or 18 and that the 17 option is unlikely to remain available. We must, therefore, choose between 16 and 18 even if we prefer something else. I hope that, as a result of tonight's vote, we shall choose equality at 16, but return—I ask the Home Secretary to make sure that we do—to the question whether that equality should be at 16 or 17. I believe that there may be widespread support, from gay people included, for a re-examination of that issue. We can then have a debate not about criminality but about the right way to order without discrimination private activity in Britain today.

Mr. Howard: In what I hope will be a relatively brief speech, I propose to seek to set the debate in historical context and to give some personal views.

I should make it clear at the outset that the Government regard this as an issue which should be decided by a free vote. They will respect the wishes of the House. I should also make it clear, however, that the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill is not a sexual offences Bill and the Government have no intention of embarking on any wide-ranging programme of sexual offences reform within it.

The present law relating to homosexual conduct between adult males in private owes its origin to the report of the committee chaired by Sir John Wolfenden, which was asked to examine these matters in 1954. The committee reported in 1957. Among its central conclusions, to be found at paragraph 71 of the report, was that

> "a boy is incapable at the age of 16 of forming a mature judgement about actions of a kind which might have the effect of setting him apart from the rest of society."

Wolfenden proposed that the relevant age should be 21, and the Sexual Offences act 1967 translated that proposal into law.

When the Home Office Policy Advisory Committee referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) revisited Wolfenden's arguments a quarter of a century later, it did not depart significantly from its predecessor's analysis of the key issues. In answer to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), I do not think that that analysis is necessarily devalued by the fact that the report was published in 1981. That committee received a similar variety of expert evidence on the psychological and sexual maturity of young men between the ages of 16 and 21. It was also able to reflect on the experience gained by the police and prosecuting authorities of the Sexual Offences Act 1967.

The committee could not reach a unanimous view. But the majority of its members concluded, like Wolfenden, that the key question was to determine an age at which most young men could be said to be mature enough to take a decision on these matters for themselves. The committee's conclusion, which was informed by the public consultation which preceded its report, was that the age of consent should be reduced to 18. Although current medical opinion seems more rather than less certain that sexual orientation is fixed in both sexes by 16 in most cases, there will still be some young men for whom homosexual experience after that age will have profoundly influential and potentially disturbing effects.

It is also still unquestionably the case that most parents hope and expect their sons to follow a heterosexual lifestyle and hope that in due course they will build a family life of their own. The committee put it in the following way at paragraph 38:

> "The majority of parents would surely wish their children to grow up with the desire and possibility of marriage and children, and anything which puts this expectation at risk would be deplored."

I believe that those arguments still hold good. It is still true that in following a homosexual way of life a young man sets himself apart from the majority. From a certain age, he should be free to take that decision and no persecution or discrimination should flow from his decision, but he should not be misled into thinking that his decision will have no effect on his dealings with society at large. At the very least, he deserves time in which to make up his mind.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. and learned Friend confident that a young man as confused as the one whom he is portraying will be greatly assisted by having what he is experimenting with deemed to be criminal? Does he not accept that the way in which society at present handles the whole question of homosexuality creates so many barriers and pressures that the young man would well understand that he was entering into a minefield, without the sanctions or otherwise of criminal law?

Mr. Howard: I do not agree with the second part of my hon. Friend's question. This is one of those matters on which a young man needs time. In answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, that young man is likely to be assisted by that extra time.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that we must also consider the parents of that young man? The vast majority of parents are concerned about the protection of such young men. That is why the law was set as it was, and the consideration is still relevant today.

Mr. Howard: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that the views of parents need to be taken into account. He put that question as a parent and I speak as a parent, as did the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who made an especial point about that in his speech.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I understand, although I no longer agree with, the Secretary of State's assumptions about maturity at age 18 as compared with 16, which would apply to almost any decision that a young person makes. The Home Secretary's whole argument seems to be based on two assumptions. Will he confirm that those assumptions are, first, that between the ages of 16 and 18, young men are converted to homosexuality rather than discovering that they are homosexual and, secondly, that that conversion can be stopped by the threat of criminal action? Will he confirm that, because it underlies everything that he has said, as he will realise when he re-reads his speech.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept that the argument that I put to the Committee rests on that assumption at all. I have said that there are likely to be, not all, but a number of young men between the ages of 16 and 18 who do not have a settled sexual orientation and who may benefit from the extra time which may be available if a new clause other than the one which the hon. Gentleman supports is passed by the Committee. That is the essential point that I am making and it is rather different from the assertion that lay behind the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

8.30 pm

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): If we want young men to grow up happy, secure and stable, and if the picture the Home Secretary paints is something that some young men go through between 16 and 18, how does it help them by making it a criminal act?

Mr. Howard: One of the functions of the criminal law in that area, which I suspect everyone in the House accepts, because everyone is arguing that there should be a minimum age, is to protect the young and the vulnerable. That point was made earlier from the Opposition benches. It was a phrase used by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). That is an important factor and one to which the House must give full weight in considering the matter.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): My right hon. and learned Friend made the point that a person's sexual activities were an aspect of their dealings with society at large. Does he accept that the age of consent is a civil rights issue? Does he agree that unless it can be demonstrated that to bring the age of consent for male homosexuals into line with the age of consent for heterosexuals and for female homosexuals would do some distinctive damage to society, we ought to do it? Does he agree that no evidence has been produced which justifies discrimination against male homosexuals?

Mr. Howard: That is precisely what is under discussion and precisely the point that I have been addressing in the remarks that I have made and in the interventions that I have answered. The point that I have put merits careful consideration and in my judgment, as I shall make clear in a moment, is a compelling argument for not reducing the age of consent to 16.

There are two further arguments——

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I have been listening to what the Home Secretary has said about the maturity of 16-year-old boys and I do not understand why he is making a distinction between those who are homosexual and those who are heterosexual. Is he not arguing that there should be a difference in the ages of consent for men and for women and that the age of consent for all boys should be 18 rather than 16? I do not understand the distinction that he is drawing between the two orientations.

Mr. Howard: I shall try to explain. It is based, as I have sought to explain, on the factor recognised by the Wolfenden committee and by the Policy Advisory Committee which later considered the matter on behalf of the Home Office. The point that led them to the view that it was appropriate to have a different age of consent for men than for women was not simply that one may mature later than the other, but because of the consequences of homosexual activities. That is the point at issue and the point which Opposition Members seem to find difficult to understand.

Ms Abbott *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall put it again in the words of the Wolfenden committee. *[Interruption.]* It is an important point which merits consideration whatever view one takes of it. The committee said:

> "a boy is incapable at the age of 16 of forming a mature judgment about actions of a kind which might have the effect of setting him apart from the rest of society."

The consequences of such a decision go to the heart of the issue and it is that consequence which led the Wolfenden committee and the Policy Advisory Committee to reach the conclusions in their reports.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): If the age of consent becomes 18 and, in the Home Secretary's words, young men may be unsure of where they stand between the ages of 16 and 18, how on earth will they find out what they are unless they experiment? But if they experiment, he will send them to prison. Prison is hardly the place to get people out of homosexuality. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Howard: I am afraid that the hon. Lady— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The House must settle down. I must draw to the attention of people in the Gallery that there must be no clapping or demonstrations whatever.

Mr. Howard: I am afraid that the hon. Lady has totally misunderstood the point made by the Wolfenden Committee and by the Policy Advisory Committee. It is a serious point and one which merits being taken seriously by the Committee.

Mrs. Currie: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Howard: No, not at the moment. There are two further arguments. I want to deal in particular with the two points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South.

Two further arguments have been put with especial frequency in the discussions leading up to the debate and I want to deal with them. They both concern equality, although to my mind the analysis offered by Wofenden and by the Policy Advisory Committee, which I have just discussed, offers a more robust basis for what the criminal law can and should do in the area than an over-simple reliance on parity, either as between the sexes or as between countries.

Equality of treatment under the law between homosexuals and heterosexuals does not in my view represent an end in itself. Whatever the scientific evidence about the age at which sexual orientation is fixed, it would be wrong to ignore the instinctive and deeply-held concern of many people that a decision to have homosexual sex is quite different from a decision to have heterosexual sex. Both Wolfenden and the Policy Advisory Committee recognised the general desirability of avoiding unnecessary discrepancies in the law's treatment of men and women, but both eventually supported recommendations that acknowledged that such discrepancies were still justified. In my view, therefore, we shall not offend against any fundamental political or civil right if we continue to reflect in the criminal law a public understanding of the difference between homosexual activity and heterosexual activity.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): If the Home Secretary is being quite honest about that, why does he not address the point about female sexual orientation in respect of which there is no age limit? The Home Secretary's argument is destroyed when no protection is offered so far as women are concerned.

Mr. Howard: It does not destroy my argument. I said at the outset that the Bill is not a vehicle for the wholesale reform of our law relating to sexual offences. We are dealing with a particular set of new clauses which relate to one question before the Committee and that is the question that I am addressing.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. and learned Friend realise that he is in danger of making a circular argument? If he is saying that young men who might be gay should wait because they face so many difficulties, and he then says that he intends to maintain and vote for those difficulties, he has a problem.

With regard to equality, if people in this country and Members of this House in years gone by had not voted for equal rights, neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor I would be Members.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend distorts—unwittingly, I am sure—my argument. I did not say that it was important to have a separate age of consent so that people should have time to consider the difficulties which they might face. That was the argument made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. It is not a question of legal impediments or other difficulties of that kind. It is a question of confirming themselves in a way of life which, in the words of the Wolfenden committee, will set them apart from the rest of society. That serious point was not addressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South in her question to me.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Howard: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I must conclude.

Mr. Banks: I have two quick points. First, the Wolfenden report was written 30 or 40 years ago and things change. Secondly, and more importantly, the Wolfenden report says that those young people would be set apart from society. Does that not say something about the discrimination that society holds against young gay men? It is a problem of society, not of those young men.

Mr. Howard: No, I do not believe that it does. Again, I refer the hon. Gentleman to a point made by the Policy Advisory Committee, which found an echo in the remarks of the right hon. Member for Islwyn. The Policy Advisory Committee concluded that the majority of parents would surely wish their children to grow up with the desire and possibility of marriage and children. It is a fact that the way of life that we are currently discussing involves an abandonment of those possibilities which sets those people who choose it apart and which requires the criminal law to give all the protection that it can to the young and vulnerable before they are confirmed in that orientation and before they take that decision.

As I said earlier, once that decision has been taken, once society has fixed the relevant minimum age, those people should be free to pursue their lives in private without discrimination of any kind. However, it is a legitimate and important function of the criminal law to protect the young and the vulnerable before that orientation is fixed and determined.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I said that I would not give way any more and I now intend to conclude.

There is a second element of equality on which some reliance has been made. It has been suggested that we in this country should change our age of consent because it has been changed in other countries. That is a rather extraordinary argument, particularly as there is no consensus in other countries about what that age should be. If we are unusual in Europe in respect of our age of consent for homosexuals and we are satisfied that there is good reason for us to do so, we are entitled to maintain that position. That is an issue which we can and should decide for ourselves.

I have sought to describe the main features of the expert consideration of this issue by the Wolfenden committee and the Policy Advisory Committee. Having said that, the essence of this debate is that it concerns a subject which defies decision by expert committee. Each of us must vote according to conscience and the merits of the arguments as we see them.

For my part, I believe that reducing the age of consent from 21 to 18 strikes the right balance. On the one hand, we should not criminalise private actions freely entered into by consenting mature adults. On the other hand, we need to protect vulnerable young men from activities that their lack of maturity might cause them to regret. I believe that those arguments are the key considerations in this debate. They do not rely on abstract considerations of equality, but address directly the fears and aspirations of our constituents. I shall accordingly vote against new clauses 3 and 6, but in favour of new clause 5.

8.45 pm

Mr. Blair: I shall support new clause 3 moved by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I congratulate her and my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) on the way in which they have spoken to the clause.

Let us be clear about the issue before us tonight. It is not at what age we wish young people to have sex. It is whether the criminal law should discriminate between heterosexual and homosexual sex. It is therefore an issue not of age, but of equality. By supporting equality, no one is advocating or urging gay sex at 16 any more than those who would maintain the age of consent for heterosexual sex advocate that girls or boys of 16 should have sex. It is simply a question whether there are grounds for discrimination.

At present, the law discriminates. There is no doubt about the personal misery that such discrimination brings: to young people frightened to admit their own sexuality and of the fear of imprisonment, and to any man who is homosexual and who knows that the criminal law treats that in a different and more incriminating way.

The argument—and the only argument—advanced to justify that discrimination and its attendant tragedy is that it is necessary for the protection of young people. Without it, it is said, young men unsure of their sexuality may be preyed upon by older homosexuals and induced to become homosexual when they otherwise would not. I will attempt to deal with that argument tonight.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I hope that the Committee will not be misled by the fact that heterosexual activity is normal and homosexual activity, putting your penis into another man's arsehole, is a perverse——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We can well do without talk like that.

Mr. Blair: I do not think that I will answer that intervention.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. For those of us who wish to speak in the debate, may I ask whether it would be in order to describe what it is that we are debating—the actual act? [HON. MEMBERS: "We all know."] We may all know, but would it be in order? Would it be in order to describe an unnatural act so that we can be absolutely certain that there is no doubt outside this Chamber about what we are debating?

The First Deputy Chairman: It is a matter of the words and language that are used. Long interventions do not help.

Mr. Blair: I was trying to deal with the argument put forward by the Home Secretary earlier. I have great difficulty with the very premise of that argument. I do not believe that sexuality is determined by persuasion. The overwhelming evidence—scientific or indeed merely experience of life—suggests that being homosexual is not something that people catch, are taught or persuaded into, but something that they are.

It is not against the nature of gay people to be gay; it is in fact their nature. It is what they are; it is different, but that is not a ground for discrimination. The vast bulk of evidence suggests that, at 16, boys and girls, particularly

[Mr. Blair]

nowadays, are aware of their sexuality and that, what is more, that sexuality is normally developed with those of their own age, not with predatory elders.

However, let us assume for the purposes of argument that there is a small minority that fits into the category that has been described. How would use of the criminal law assist such a situation? How would that deal with vulnerable young people of whatever sex? For those who are confused about their sexuality, how does the criminal law help to resolve that confusion? Indeed, it merely complicates it. It deters many from seeking the information, advice and help that they need.

If we are in any doubt about that, let us listen to organisations that deal day in and day out with the problems of young people, such as Save the Children Fund, and the National Children's Bureau. They say that the real danger is not young, sexually uncertain men being preyed upon by older men, but young boys and men who are gay but, are afraid to seek the advice and help that they may desperately need. That is the evidence that was given by the British Medical Association, which backs up that view on the ground of better health education.

We talk about predatory older men. That happens—if it does happen—not just with young men but with young girls, yet no one would advance that as a reason for raising the age of consent. Moreover, where such predatory conduct takes place—let us assume for the purposes of the argument that it does—it takes place in circumstances that we all know: in parts of our inner cities and around some railway stations late at night, where young boys and girls sell sex for money and shelter. Surely the question that we should ask is why those young people are in those circumstances when it is not the criminal law but a roof over their heads, a decent family and home and a chance of a job that will help them.

The point that has been made about other countries is not that we should follow what happens in other countries, or the fact that the majority of other countries in Europe do not discriminate should mean that we necessarily blindly follow their path; it is, first, that many of those countries are among the most conservative, usually, in such matters, which makes their decision on equality all the more telling, and, secondly, and most important, that there is no evidence to suggest that any of the adverse consequences forecast as attending a move to equality here have happened in those countries—none, not a single shred of evidence, not anywhere.

On practical grounds, and even accepting that there is a small percentage of cases in which there is a fear of predatory conduct, can it be said that the fear that, without the sanction of criminal law, there might be an unquantifiable number of young men who will engage in homosexual relations who otherwise would not is a reason for perpetrating discrimination against all homosexual men when we know that the vast majority of young people are not in that situation, when, if anything, the protection that they need is the removal of the stigma attached to their sexuality, when independent organisations that deal with young people want it removed, and when equality is the norm in neighbouring countries without any of the adverse consequences claimed for it?

That is why the real objection is not reason but prejudice. It was shown by the point of order that was made earlier. In the end, all the concern, however ostensibly objective—let us assume that some of it is genuinely motivated—is traceable to that very subjective prejudice. Let us be clear that people are entitled to think that homosexuality is wrong, but they are not entitled to use the criminal law to force that view upon others. That is where the real practitioners of political correctness lie—not in those who merely seek equality of treatment but in those who insist that the law must discriminate in favour of their view of the conduct of others. That is why, also, the so-called compromise of 18 is misguided. What is the rationale behind maintaining the stigma but at a different age? It is an issue not of age but of equality.

I inform hon. Members who may have genuine doubts about which way to vote that, because it is an issue of equality, and because it concerns the equal rights of our citizens, this is an issue not just for those who are gay but for all of us who are concerned about the type of society in which we live. Recent newspaper discussion has suggested —I understand it—that moves to equalise the ages of consent might fall foul of the recent controversy that is well known to us. That is precisely what should not happen. It is precisely at this moment that we should have the courage to change.

Yes, there is a powerful mood in this country that the social fabric has been torn, that standards of behaviour have fallen, and that our system of values has become confused and disoriented. Yes, it is the case that any strong society needs good and decent principles to sustain and motivate it. But it should be a society that makes sense of the passage of time, that learns from and evaluates its progress, that has confidence to build its own future, not takes refuge in the prejudices of the past because it is afraid to change them. A society of genuine standards and principles allows individuals the freedom to develop to the full. A society of prejudice and discrimination can merely make them conform.

That is the choice. We should seek the best of the old and the best of the new. Some change is good; some change is bad. We should distinguish between the two. I deplore, as we all do, for example, the greater lawlessness in society, the increased violence, and the abusive behaviour of today. I should like to return to a better time when those issues were less. But I have no desire to return to a time when women were inhibited from going to work, when sex could not be openly discussed and debated, when young people were not taught at school how life is given and created, and when gay men hid their sexuality in fear.

Some change is indeed progress. Let us recognise it when it happens. After all, 100 years ago there was no universal suffrage for men, and no votes for women. Fifty years ago there were no laws against racial intolerance. Each change was fought for, but resisted by prejudice wrapped in a coat of reason.

It is not that, over time, our basic values should change —of course not—but it is through experience and thought that our understanding of what those values should encompass has been enlarged. Indeed, I go further: the most basic civilised value is the notion of respect for other people. That is what creates and sustains any decent society. That is why crime is wrong; that is why violent and abusive behaviour is wrong; that is why racial abuse is wrong. It is also why it is wrong to treat a man as inferior because his sexuality is different.

A society that has learned, over time, racial and sexual equality can surely come to terms with equality of sexuality. That is the moral case for change tonight. It is our chance to welcome people—I do not care whether there are 50,000, 500,000 or or 5 million; it matters not a damn —into full membership of our society, on equal terms. It is our chance to do good, and we should take it.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Far and away the weakest aspect of the speech of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was the fact that, in 10 or 15 minutes, he managed to beg the essential question that we are debating. He isolated two categories: the older, convinced and committed homosexual—whatever the nature of his condition, genetically or otherwise—and the youngster of 16, 18 or 21 who is, likewise, a committed, finally developed and fully oriented homosexual.

We are not concerned, however, with those whose sexual orientation is crystallised and fully formed; we are concerned precisely with the "in between" group, between the ages of 16 and 18, for whom the Home Secretary pleaded. He pleaded for a little more time for them, precisely because they have not reached the stage of crystallisation in which the hon. Member for Sedgefield wanted to protect them—and defend them from penalisation.

9 pm

Even if we take that very small, determinate group—which is not really the proper focus of tonight's debate —in isolation, as the hon. Gentleman did, I very much doubt whether he can demonstrate satisfactorily that the law as it stands, which makes involvement in a homosexual act consensually in the age range of 16 to 21 an offence, impinges seriously and oppressively on that group. A written answer on 17 January made it clear in 1990, 1991 and 1992 there were respectively nine, 10 and 12 prosecutions for homosexual offences between those aged 21 and over and those under 21.

It simply is not credible that young men in the relevant age group—here I refer particularly to the great mass who may be uncertain about their sexual orientation and are not crystallised and fully formed in the category that the hon. Gentleman sought to defend—cannot, because of the law as it stands, consult their parents, if they so wish; or nurses, doctors, teachers or social workers. It is incredible that the law should be held to inhibit them from doing so and that they should believe that those individuals may report them to the police and invoke prosecutions. The number of prosecutions can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The evidence is even stronger. On 11 February, the Home Secretary was asked on how many occasions over the past decade any male under the age of 21 years had been prosecuted, or prosecuted and convicted, for the offence of buggery. The answer was practically none.

Mr. Alison: My hon. and learned Friend supports the argument that I am trying to sustain. The hon. Member for Sedgefield and others who have spoken, including my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), have entirely failed to convince us that the law is an oppressive, tyrannical, vicious instrument, rather than—as my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) suggested, following the Archbishop of York—a helpful, short-term, protective guideline which helps exactly the people with whom the hon. Member for Sedgefield did not deal. I refer to the mas of undetermined, seeking, evolving, immature youngsters between 16 and 18 who have not made up their minds. They are not deterred by the law from seeking advice about their health and development.

Mrs. Currie: I thank my right hon. Friend for his courtesy at lunchtime, when we discussed the matter outside the House.

If it is true—I do not believe it is—that the law is so ineffective, why should we bother to have a law? If the law does not cause all the difficulties, why not just sweep it away? If we are trying to protect young people, why should we turn them into criminals?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend does not fundamentally appreciate the sublety and nature of the law. The law stands on the statute book, but the Crown Prosecution Service has the difficult but critically important task of deciding in what circumstances it is going to prosecute and apply the law.

In that area, one gets the best of both worlds from the point of view of the youngster who is seeking guidance and direction at an early stage in his sexual development and maturity. The framework of law is there, but it is at the discretion of the Crown Prosecution Service whether to invoke it. The evidence is that it rarely invokes it.

Mr. Gorst: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: I must get on, as my time is constrained.

The law is rarely invoked in such a way as to make it difficult for a youngster who has problems of sexual health between the ages 16 and 18 to consult people who can give helpful advice.

I come back to the group that the hon. Member for Sedgefield entirely ignored. That is those who are evolving in their sexual orientation and have not finally made up their minds exactly what they are or how they are. Those people need the protection of the law and, at the same time, the discretion and the advice of a lot of sensible people. What would be done for that vulnerable group by removing the constraint of law which at present applies to them? My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South must demonstrate some positive advantage to outweigh the significantly hazardous disadvantages which may accrue.

I draw the Committee's attention to three significant disadvantages. The first may be the removal of a desirable pointer or guideline of the sort which the Home Secretary properly stated is one of the functions of law. It is there as a guideline which may rarely be thrown into action by the Crown Prosecution Service, but it is there. Why remove it, if there is some suggestion that it might help in guiding people?

The second is that there is no doubt that there is a hazard that youngsters might be exposed to the appalling hazard of AIDS. We should at least focus on that possibility.

I leave the Committee with a couple of significant statistics. The average age for first anal intercourse among homosexuals—I use a more discreet euphemism than was used by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn)—is 20·9 years. That form of intercourse is profoundly relevant to the possibility of acquiring AIDS. That mean age is so close to the prescribed age in law of 21 as to suggest that it is not without its relationship to the existing age boundaries. If the boundary is moved down to 16, there is a risk that the

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average age for that AIDS-inducing form of sexual intercourse may move down into the more vulnerable age group.

The second factor that is relevant to health is that, according to the Public Health Laboratory included Service, over 75 per cent. of all AIDS cases come from male homosexuals. The AIDS dimension cannot be overlooked if we are removing a protective barrier for vulnerable youngsters.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): My right hon. Friend raises a good point, but he should be aware that there are 3,000 young men between the ages of 16 and 21 who are HIV positive—the figures come from Government-sponsored reports—and that there are 300 young men between those ages who have fully blown AIDS. Most of those are going to die because they are so afraid of being prosecuted.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend has failed to listen to the evidence that I have given of the criminal statistics, aided and abetted by his intervention. There simply are not enough criminal prosecutions every year to suggest that most youngsters are even aware of the existence of the law on homosexuality. The Crown Prosecution Service hardly ever brings prosecutions and it cannot be said that youngsters are inhibited from seeking health advice.

I have in my hand a pamphlet published by the Health Education Authority entitled "The Best Sex Guide". It lists a range of sexual options apart from penetrative sex, which is the most hazardous in terms of AIDS. The guide includes sexual options which technically come within the definition of gross indecency and, therefore, are potentially criminal. The guide does not even bother to say, "If you indulge in this you may be breaking the law." The pamphlet is distributed among teenagers. The authority simply does not believe that the law has any inhibiting effect. So it is pointless to say that the law is an inhibiting factor.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Alison: No, I must get on. It is not fair on other right hon. and hon. Members.

As for the argument that youngsters do not seek advice because they might land in the hands of the police, the pamphlet from the Health Education Authority lists at least four centres committed to confidentiality which people can contact if they want health advice. No reference to the police is likely to result. It is spurious to suggest that youngsters in the relevant age groups cannot seek health advice because they fear prosecution by the police.

My last point is to refer to an important quotation by the right hon. Member for—the most difficult part of my speech is going to be pronouncing his constituency—

Mr. Kinnock: Islwyn. It is easy.

Mr. Alison: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, for whom I have always had the greatest admiration, enhanced this evening by the fact that he picked out one paragraph of the guidance from the British Medical Association. I want to quote that paragraph again so that it goes on the record twice. It can be seen to have a different perspective and significance according to which way one looks at it. The guidance said:

> "Official homosexual community organisations and clubs operate a clear over-21 policy to comply with the present law. This means that younger men are denied access to advice which such organisations can provide and are less exposed to the social climate within the organised homosexual community which strongly supports 'safer sex'".

If we remove the 21 limit, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) proposes, and reduce it to 16, the incentive for what are described as

> "official homosexual community organisations and clubs"

to retain an over-21 membership policy will be entirely removed. They will drop their membership age limit to 16. They will draw into that particular vortex exactly those whose sexual orientation is not properly determined and is open to alteration and redirection in the context of a highly organised, self-conscious community. If it does introduce young men to safer sex of a homosexual kind, it will have the effect of predetermining them perhaps to lose precisely that option of family life and normal parenthood which is what they should have held open for them.

Therefore, I hope that the Committee will ignore the limited and exclusive advice in human rights terms advanced by the hon. Member for Sedgefield, which relates purely to those who are already predetermined and committed to a particular orientation, whatever their age. I hope that the Committee will focus on the needs of those who are bobbing about in an uncertain sea of sexual development between the ages of 16 and 18 and who need every support and protection that they can get, precisely as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary advised us to do.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I should like to begin by asking your permission, Mr. Lofthouse, to depart from a tradition in this Chamber by sipping occasionally from the glass behind me, which contains nothing more exotic, and nothing more pure, than London tap water. I make that request lest, at some future date, the House of Commons considers the introduction of an upper age limit for consenting males roaring themselves hoarse at football matches on Saturday afternoons. I damaged my vocal chords while attempting, albeit futilely, to exhort Dundee United to a place in the quarter finals of the Scottish cup. I am afraid that, two days later, I am still paying the price.

9.15 pm

Like all other hon. Members who have spoken, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), not just for her speech this afternoon but for the sterling work that she has done over a considerable time on this and other issues relating to gay and lesbian equality. when we are dealing with the question of the introduction of an equal age of consent, the fundamental issue is, first and foremost, one of equality, but it is also one of human rights or, as has already been said, of civil rights. We must bear in mind that the European Court of Human Rights is considering a case arising from the British Government's being in contravention of articles 8 and 14 of the European convention on human rights. As the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South said, it is appropriate that we should decide tonight to bring the law into line with the convention rather than wait to be forced to do so in two or three years' time.

The question whether there should be an equal age of consent is not just one of equality, although that is important. It is quite wrong and quite unsustainable that we should criminalise and stigmatise young gay men for doing what their heterosexual friends do quite legally. For almost all purposes, the age of majority is now 16.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watson: Not at this stage.

In Scotland, 16-year-olds have even more rights. A 16-year-old may choose to set up a business or marry or join the armed forces, but if he is gay he cannot legally have a sexual relationship of his choosing. In 1994, that is nonsense.

An equal age of consent would protect young gay men in a variety of ways. First, as has been said, it would improve opportunities for safer-sex education, thereby leading to a reduction in the spread of HIV. The comments of the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) were treated with some mirth by several of his hon. Friends. That reaction shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the link between the issue that we are debating and the spread of HIV and AIDS—something about which nobody thought in 1967. This is the first opportunity to look at the legislation since the AIDs pandemic became widely known.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watson: Not at this stage.

An equal age of consent would also enable young gay men more freely to seek advice and support from people and agencies—perhaps, in the first instance, teachers. In the past two or three weeks, other hon. Members and I have received from many agencies letters outlining their experiences. They are very concerned. The citizens advice bureaux, for example, have produced evidence suggesting that younger gay male clients face significant difficulties in gaining independence—particularly in securing access to accommodation. Those difficulties are exacerbated by the age of consent itself, which can act as a barrier to young gay men who want to pursue their perfectly legitimate rights.

After all, a gay man under 21 is at present behaving illegally if he has an active sexual relationship. It is entirely understandable that men in that position feel inhibited from seeking the advice of organisations such as the citizens advice bureaux. The discrimination that they face manifests itself in a number of ways. The citizens advice bureaux have reported disturbing instances of discrimination against lesbians and gay men in several areas, particularly in respect of social security matters. They cite as an example a bureau in Humberside, which reported that a client had been forced to leave work because of continuous harassment about his sexuality. His unemployment benefit was suspended, and he asked the bureau to help him with his appeal. The adjudication officer submitted:

> "Some people are bound to be the subject of humour because they are different—for example, overweight, bald or of Irish extraction."

That quotation highlights the prejudice and discrimination that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) outlined at the conclusion of his excellent speech. We are dealing with prejudice and discrimination, and new clause 3 gives us the chance to end it.

The citizens advice bureaux have also reported that gay clients can be very isolated and can gain from using the services of their local offices, but many—particularly, for obvious reasons, those between the ages of 16 and 21—are not doing so. If we accept the new clause, we shall remove a significant barrier for young men who want to be able to pursue their rights.

An equal age of consent would achieve other objectives. It would protect people who are vulnerable by facilitating increased openness and support in their families; dealing with the matter in the family is often one of the most difficult aspects. It would also reduce the enormous stress and misery involved and, as hon. Members have mentioned, the suicide risk, which the current law and the isolation that it causes can create. It would also remove the stigma of second-class citizenship, which a differential age of consent encourages and allows to fester. That is not an important argument. Equalising the age of consent at 16 would legalise fully consenting, private sexual behaviour for gay men between 16 and 21 years of age. As I have said, such behaviour is legal for heterosexuals, and those gay men who have practised it have faced prosecution only rarely in recent years, and rightly so.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman has twice misled the Committee. He claimed that it is legal for heterosexuals to indulge in the act of buggery, but it is not and never has been legal. It should not be made legal for teenage boys.

Mr. Watson: That was not what I said. The hon. Gentleman was clearly not listening. I was talking about adult sexual activity.

People between the ages of 16 and 21 enjoy rights and are protected by other legislation from sexual assault and exploitation. The law that is under discussion, the Sexual Offences Act 1967, is riddled with inconsistencies. If there is a fear that so-called predatory men will prey on young boys, what lessons can we learn from the effect of legislation in other countries? There is no evidence that in the countries that hon. Members have listed in the debate where the age of consent is lower than in this country—in all cases, it is lower—vast hoards of men prey on younger men or, indeed, boys.

We should also ask why the same argument does not apply to young women. Hon. Members should consider the inconsistencies. If a female schoolteacher seduced a 17-year-old girl, the teacher could, depending on the circumstances, lose her job, but she would not face any criminal prosecution. If a male teacher seduced a 17-year-old boy pupil, he would lose his job and, most likely, his freedom for a period of up to two years. If he seduced a 17-year-old girl, however, the law would have nothing to say about that.

It is also argued that boys take longer to mature than girls. If Conservative Members did not advance that argument in all seriousness, I would find it an amusing argument and I might not be so concerned about it. If 16 year-old boys are, as a rule, confused about their sexuality, why are they allowed legally to marry at 16? Should the law not say that it is understood that the young man and the young lady want to be married, but that it regards them as being confused——

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watson: No, I shall not. The hon. Gentleman is trying to make a speech and I am sure that he will have time to do so later.

There is an ambiguity. If hon. Members argue that 16-year-old males are confused, they should also argue that

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[illegible] males should not be allowed to marry at that age. It is nonsense. The argument has very little validity because experience shows otherwise.

The Committee should respect the view of experts on such an important aspect of the legislation. We have already heard that the BMA believes that the criminality of the sexual activity of young men between the ages of 16 to 21 is harmful. There is also other eminent evidence: the Royal College of Psychiatrists has considered the matter in detail, and we should give weight to its opinion. It has concluded unequivocally:

> "there are no psychiatric or developmental reasons why the minimum age for homosexual practices should be other than 16 years."

It has also stated that sexual orientation is not capable of major realignment after the early teens. We should bear in mind that that is very much in line with the experiences of homosexual men, with whom many hon. Members have had communications in recent months. We should consider the experiences that they pass on to us and learn from them.

An age of consent of 21, 18 or 17 criminalises young men, whom the law claims to protect. Ultimately, the law does not act as a deterrent and does not stop younger men from having sex with other men if their sexuality tells them that they should do so or if they want to do so. A majority of young men know that, and that is the experience which they have communicated to us. We owe them a duty to recognise that fact.

Criminal law should have no place in a matter of private morality and that is what we are debating. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 put British legislation ahead of that in most other European countries. Today, we are lagging behind all those countries and we are in the shameful position of having the highest age of consent in Europe. Hon. Members who oppose what I have been arguing for will say that all those countries are out of step with us, but that is ridiculous.

We must acknowledge the arguments that have been communicated to us. We have the opportunity to introduce legislation that will bring this country into line with our European neighbours. Our citizens have a right to protection from the prejudice and discrimination that I described. When hon. Members uncover discrimination and prejudice, they have a duty to end it at the first possible opportunity. New clause 3 provides that opportunity this evening and the Committee should not shirk from taking it.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): I support new clause 3, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and others who have enabled the Committee to have this important debate.

I listened with great respect to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant), who tabled a new clause in favour of the age of 18.

It is generally expected that when hon. Members pronounce to the House of Commons on a subject, they will lay claim to some expertise or familiarity with the subject on which they are about to opine. It is our loss that no hon. Member will do so tonight and I am no exception. I hope that hon. Friends will agree that when one lacks personal expertise in a matter the sensible thing to do is to seek advice from those who have such knowledge.

Is the British Medical Association opposed to the new clause? As the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) told us, it is not. It argues in favour of lowering the age of consent to 16, on the ground that criminality places young people at greater risk of HIV transmission. I listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby but, with respect, as a layman I am entitled to lay at least equal weight on the opinion of the British Medical Association.

Is the Royal College of Psychiatrists opposed to the new clause? No. Again, as the right hon. Member for Islwyn reminded us, it argues that there are no psychiatric or developmental reasons for the minimum age to be other than 16.

Both Barnardo's and the Terence Higgins Trust believe that the stigma of criminality places young people at risk and diminishes the effectiveness of HIV prevention initiatives in the United Kingdom. Even the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, in a characteristically prudent and understanding declaration, stated that Roman Catholics may reasonably argue for the age of consent to be 16, 18, 21—or even higher.

I have been unable to find any organisation of probity to which hon. Members might look for advice in such matters which argues aginst the age of 16. Indeed, even my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner), who is not in his place and who often seeks to advise Conservative Members, has not pronouned on the matter or given it so much as two minutes of his valuable time.

Those Conservative Members who have lived through the experiences of the past 10 years will need no reminding that expert opinion, however convincing or overwhelming, is no substitute for the judgment that individual Members must make. I repeat that I shall certainly respect the point of view of those who do not support new clause 3. In the past decade, we Conservative Members have flown in the face of expert opinion too often, and with success, to cast aside our own judgments that lightly. I hope that my hon. Friends will at least give some weight to the expert opinion that I have just cited.

Mr. Gorst: Will my right hon. Friend also tell us what weight to put on the sincere prejudices that exist throughout the nation? They may not be well informed, but we should at least bear them in mind, for the practical reason that if we go too far ahead of public opinion that policy will fall on its face.

9.30 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend put that question to the right hon. Member for Islwyn and I agree with the answer that the right hon. Gentleman gave. The House of Commons must, of course, be very careful not to run ahead of public opinion in any matter, and, in particular, in matters of personal conduct of this kind. In my judgment —other colleagues will make their own judgment—I suspect that we have reached the point where it would be right for the House to send a message to the rest of our fellow citizens on this matter. I hope to elaborate on that later.

I hope that my hon. Friends, who do not have any particular expertise, will give at least give some weight to the scientific and expert opinion that I have cited. I should like to give a few practical reasons why I believe that the Committee should turn away from the apparent attraction of the soft option of the age of 18, as proposed in the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West and directly lower the age of consent to 16.

First, the age of 18 is not a happy compromise. Compromises work only when all parties agree with them. In this case, the homosexual community will be gravely disappointed if the Committee decides to vote for the age of 18. It will bring this matter back to the House of Commons again and again. The vote for 18 will not make the issue go away, but a vote for the age of 16 will.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): In common with many of my hon. Friends, I am not sure how to vote tonight. We have all agonised greatly on this issue. My right hon. Friend has touched on an issue that is of concern to many of the public and to many in the Chamber. If we opted for the age of 18 instead of 21, there would still be a barrier between the ages of 16 and 18. If we opted for the age of 16, would we find that soon more and more pressure was exterted to bring the age of consent down to 15, 14 or perhaps even lower?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised that point because it is important. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby seemed to imply that the law was some kind of guideline. I do not wish to see the House of Commons passing laws that are guidelines. It should pass laws that are rigorously enforced. My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) has raised an important point, because if we vote for the age of 18, the danger will be that the law will continue to be applied as it is now, haphazardly, based on the judgment of individual police officers, and so forth. I have no doubt that, if the Committee takes the wise and prudent decision to vote for the age of consent to be lowered to 16, it will be agreed —I see hon. Members around me nodding—that the law should be rigorously enforced and all the weight of our enforcement agencies should be placed behind it.

Secondly—this is not a killer point in any way—most countries of a similar cultural background, such as New Zealand, Sweden, France, Belgium and Holland, have opted for equality of treatment between the sexes in this matter and have chosen ages considerably lower than those that we are considering. Do hon. Members believe that the whole moral fabric of those nations has been undermined?

I should like to make an international point which it may be easy for hon. Members to dismiss. A case has been brought before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. I hasten to reassure my hon. Friends that the Council of Europe is not a European Community institution but an institution of which Britain is a founder and much-respected member. I cannot anticipate the court's judgment but I fear that, in a year or two, we risk being found in contravention of articles 14 and 18 of the convention.

It will not have escaped the Committee's notice that the whole of the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was, as far as I could discern, predicated on the Wolfenden report, published 27 years ago, and on the comments on that report by the Home Office Policy Advisory Committee published 13 years ago. With the greatest respect to my right hon. and learned Friend, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said, the passage of time should be taken into account, particularly as the scourge of AIDS has arisen since both those reports were published.

What concerned me most was the fact that, throughout my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks, he made no mention of his intention rigorously to enforce the law if the Committee votes for the age of consent to be lowered to 18, as he intends to vote. He did not mention the guidance that he would give police officers about enforcing that law. My hon. Friends will be concerned that he did not say how much of the public resources he intended to devote to enforcing the law.

I fear that, if we vote for 18, we shall end up with the worst of both possible worlds—a newly enacted law that is not properly and rigorously upheld but is perhaps used, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby said, as a guideline. My hon. Friends and I are not in the business of voting for guidelines. We want laws that are rigorously enforced and applied. Moreover, young people will still be at risk and in fear of criminality, and this controversial issue will return to the House again and again.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend referred to the scourge of AIDS. He will agree that the best way to avert that is not to criminalise the sexuality of young males. Does he agree that all young people, whatever their sexual orientation, should be entitled to good-quality sex education? Does he agree in particular that education about HIV and AIDS should be restored to the national curriculum?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course I agree with my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to conclude. I would, of course, give way to my hon. Friend, but other hon. Members want to speak.

I shall direct a few remarks specifically at my side of the Committee. I have addressed right hon. and hon. Members only once since I left Government. On that occasion, I was perhaps unwise enough to make a passing reference to "back to basics". I said then, and repeat now, that I am as willing as any of my right hon. and hon. Friends to take a nice warm bath in my own prejudices but that I did not believe that giving homilies to lone mothers even began to address the problems that we needed to address as the party of Government in the coming decade.

The Conservative party has always had the good sense not to tie itself to any dogma, or to have its political philosophy set in tablets of stone. *[Interruption.]* There are currents in this debate, some of which go across the Committee, and some of which are on one side of it. My party has had the good sense not to set its philosophy in tablets of stone. I have no problem with "back to basics" because the basic instincts of Tory Members of Parliament and of the Conservative party have been and are right—whether in relation to education, law and order, defence or, as important, the balance that must be struck between individual liberty and collective responsibility. I have no difficulty with that.

Another Tory instinct is as basic as any of those—the instinct of decency and common sense. That instinct has prevented our party from ever allowing any group, class or section of the community to have hatred directed against it. That instinct has ensured that no Le Pens or Jimmy Swaggarts have been able to gain credence on the political

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

right in Britain. It is to that best instinct of the Conservative party that I appeal tonight, in asking my right hon. and hon. Friends to support new clause 3.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I rise to support new clause 3, moved by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and seconded so well by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), and strongly supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam).

I begin by remembering our late and much-loved colleague Jo Richardson. In the last painful illness that she faced, she deeply wished to be present to vote for new clause 3. Perhaps we shall do something tonight to pay tribute to her memory.

The kernel of tonight's debate is the argument about equality. It was well put from both sides of the Committee, and I will not dwell on it further. Suffice it to say that I believe in the fundamental principle that we are all equal before the law. At present, the law does not permit that in the case of young gay men.

This country has laws that say that one may not discriminate on the grounds of race or gender. Perhaps those laws are not always implemented as Parliament wished when it passed them, but they say that one shall not discriminate. But the law discriminates in respect of the relationships of young gay men. To my mind, that means that it should be changed.

I shall address three or four of the points that have emerged in opposition to the new clause. The Home Secretary argued that perhaps the age of 16 is too young and that a young man needs time to come to a full decision about his sexuality and relationships. I fear that his argument was based on two fundamental misconceptions. The first was that somehow young men can be enticed, encouraged or converted into being gay. That is not so. We are who we are. No amount of attempts by anyone to convert us into something else would pose a threat or danger.

The second assumption underlying the Home Secretary's argument was that the consequences of homosexual activity would set someone apart from the generality of society. I must tell him that he was in danger of lapsing into tautology, because by keeping the law in a discriminatory fashion and placing the age of consent at 18 —at 21, it would still discriminate and enshrine discrimination into the statute book—automatically means that young gay men will be set apart from society. If we remove that discrimination from the statute book, it may go some way towards giving young gay men the self-respect and the self-dignity to which they are entitled and should have.

9.45 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is my hon. Friend aware that the age of consent for girls at 16 was fixed not for sexual reasons, but for reasons of pregnancy and marriage, because that is when a girl could carry a child and get married? At the age of 16 a man could possibly support a family. If there is to be no discrimination on age grounds, why is it 18 for buying alcohol in a pub or working a night shift down the pit? Why do we not have everything at 16, as my hon. Friend would like?

Mr. Smith: We could perhaps argue about other activities that might be proper and right at the age of 16. I must say to my hon. Friend that the law on going into a pub is equal for men and women of all sexualities and all shapes and sizes. I want the law for sexual relationships to be exactly the same. I do not believe that the argument that the Home Secretary advanced holds water.

A second argument has been advanced. It was a question genuinely posed by the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), who spoke about what he called the sincere prejudices that are held throughout the nation. I do not believe that his reading of the public mood on this issue is necessarily as clear cut as he appears to assume. I must also say that those prejudices may be sincerely held, but none the less they are prejudices. One of our duties in a democracy is to protect the rights of minorities, even though those minorities may be unpopular. That is a democratic duty which is placed on us.

Mr. Gorst: I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that people are entitled to hold prejudices but that they are not entitled to hold prejudices that affect anyone but themselves.

Mr. Smith: I am delighted to hear what the hon. Gentleman says because it clearly makes the case for the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South.

The third argument that has been advanced genuinely and sincerely by many people is that by changing the law we shall ensure that older men may seek somehow to exploit or abuse younger men. That is a serious argument and deserves serious consideration, but I believe that it ignores three important points. First, overwhelming the problem of abuse is the problem of the abuse by older men of younger women. That is something about which we should rightly be concerned.

Secondly, we are talking about a change in the law of consent, and consent means consent. There is no scope, and there should be no scope, for the exploitation or abuse of one individual by another. Where there is agreement and consent, however, is it right that the law should come knocking on the bedroom door and intervene in the personal relationship of two mature individuals making up their own minds about what they want to do?

Thirdly, the argument about older men ignores the perversity of the law as it stands, which is that it may actually diminish protection for young men. A young man who is abused and exploited by an older man may be frightened of going to the police to report the incident. He may be worried—his fear may be misplaced, but it is real —that he may be brought to book for what has happened. Because that fear exists, the older man who made the advance and attempted the exploitation may be allowed to go free to do the same again. I do not think that the argument that setting the age of consent at 21 or 18 protects younger men holds water.

A fourth argument has been advanced, and it has been touched on by one or two Conservative Members. It is a deeper and I suggest less worthy argument. It is that being gay is abnormal and therefore unnatural and illegitimate. To those people, I would say this. Yes, we are different. We have a different sexuality. But that does not make us in any way less valid or less worthy citizens of this country. Yet the law at present says that we are.

A century ago, A. E. Housman wrote:

> "Oh who is that young sinner with the handcuffs on his wrists?
> And what has he been after that they groan and shake their fists?
> And wherefore is he wearing such a conscience-stricken air?
> Oh they're taking him to prison for the colour of his hair."

In this country we do not discriminate against people on the ground of the colour of their hair. We do not discriminate against people because they happen to be left-handed. We do not discriminate against people because they are of a different race. But we do discriminate against them because their sexuality is different. I argue that we should not.

I would also argue that it is a question of a fundamental principle of democracy. As long ago as 8 June 1984, the Heads of State of the seven major industrial democracies, including the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, signed a declaration on democratic values.

The second foremost point of that declaration said:

> "We believe in a rule of law which respects and protects without fear or favour the rights and liberties of every citizen, and provides the setting in which the human spirit can develop in freedom and diversity."

The protection and the endorsement of that principle of diversity is what the new clause is all about. Let us back equality tonight, not because it is easy, not necessarily because it will win great applause from the tabloid press, but simply because it is the right thing to do.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I know you to be a fair and balanced Chairman of the Committee, but may I point out that throughout the three-hour debate, one Member only has been called, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who has made the case against either of the clauses? I am sure that you would wish there to be a balance in the argument.

The Chairman: I do not accept the hon. Lady's chastisement and I am sorry that she felt it necessary to raise the matter.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The proposer of the new clause, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), has asked us to turn our eyes towards Europe. I understand that she has European ambitions and so she already has her eyes on Europe. The previous meeting of the European Parliament in Strasbourg passed a resolution which bore out the words of the Liberal Democratic party spokesman, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). If we go down the proposed road, there will be other matters with which we shall have to deal. I take it that that was his message.

The resolution says that certain things must be swept away. First, it says that there should be an end to different and discriminatory ages of consent for homosexual and heterosexual acts. Of course, there is no agreed age in Europe, as we know. Ages of consent go down as far as 12. I wonder how many hon. Members would vote for reducing the age of consent to 12. Secondly, there is to be no prosecution of homosexuality as a public nuisance or a gross indecency. Thirdly, there is to be no barring of lesbians and gay couples from marriage or from an equivalent legal framework and there should be a guarantee of the full rights and benefits of marriage allowing the registration of partnerships. Finally, the most serious change of all is that any restrictions of the rights of lesbians and gay men to be parents or to adopt and foster children should end.

There is a road that the Committee can go down tonight, which has been signposted by that resolution which was passed overwhelmingly in the Strasbourg Parliament in its previous session. I do not think that the Committee should look to Europe. The Committee should look to its own citizens, to its own well-being and to where we should want our country to go. I have listened to the speeches in which some principles were paraded as if they bore the stamp of infallibility.

It has been argued that private morality should not be a matter for the House. If we followed that principle, how many Acts of Parliament would have to be destroyed? It is very interesting that we are told tonight that there must be liberty for males to carry out an unnatural act. However, in the law of this land, that unnatural act is banned between male and female. I have not heard it argued that that law should be removed. That law is to stand. However, the law relating to males must be taken away.

10 pm

This country must realise that the unit of society, and the cement that holds it together, is the family. As goes the family, so will go the nation. If we do not have the cement of the family, society will disintegrate and be destroyed. I plead with the Committee not to despise, reject or to brand the cement of society as some kind of prejudice. The normal sex act within the marriage vow, bringing together male and female and producing offspring, is the happy way; it is the divine way; it is the creative way; and it is the best way. As one of the apostles said, it is the more excellent way.

How can the Committee argue today that we need to deal with an age limit? We have been told that this is not really a matter of age, but of equality. To the hon. Members who have argued that, I ask whether that is not so of everything that they have said. That includes the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who spoke so eloquently from the Opposition Front Bench. Everything that he said in respect of 16 could be argued for 14.

As a father, I know the difficulties that occur when raising a family. If any father were to tell the Committee tonight that his children had no sexual thoughts until they were 16, that person would be laughed out of Committee. I am sure that the hon. Member for Sedgefield thought many thoughts before he was 16.

Let us come down to the hard facts. What has been argued tonight in Committee does not stand up. The right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) told us that if we vote for 16 tonight, the problem will go away and we will never have to discuss it again. That is wishful thinking. The right hon. Gentleman thinks that the European thing has gone away, but it has not and it never will. He will learn that in the days to come.

We cannot say that 16 is the time. Similarly, we cannot say that 14 is the time. We should be trying to save young men and young boys from going down the homosexual road. We should be bringing them to the joys of true marriage and raising a family. We should dedicate ourselves not to the destruction of young boys but to their deliverance. They need to be delivered.

I was in my office for a moment between the two debates this evening when the phone rang. It was a gay rights lobbyist. He started to tell me a story. He said that, at 12, he discovered that he was different from other people; that he was homosexual. I asked him one question, "When you were 12, did you follow every impulse that you had?" He said, "Certainly not." I then pointed out to him that it is the duty of society to persuade, to educate and to seek to bring those who have that problem to a place of deliverance.

Some people say, "No one ever changes; we were born this way; and this is the way that we have to remain." That is not true. Homosexuals have been converted from homosexuality and some of them have good marriages and are bringing up families. I know that from personal pastoral experience. The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said that the time when we must work is the time before they are crystallised. We have a responsibility and an opportunity tonight.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South, with a swipe of her hand, dismissed the Hebrew scriptures, the Christian scriptures and Almighty God. That was just with a wave of her hand. Those of us who have been at the coal face, as it were, of our young people and who have been working with them—there are 1,200 young people in my church and I know what I am talking about—know the difficulties and the temptations. It is my prayer for them that they will learn the "more excellent way", the joy of having a happy marriage, the joy of bringing up their own families and the joy of living in normality, not in abnormality. I hope that hon. Members keep that point in mind as they vote tonight.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Rev. Ian Paisley) made the surprising assertion that people do not change. That is certainly not the view that is expressed in the gospels. The gospels speak of the sinner that repenteth. I hope that, in his consideration of these matters and the mosaic beliefs of the Judaeo-Christian morality which underlies our law, the hon. Gentleman will concede in his heart that it is not necessary for that law to be underpinned by the criminal law of this country and that the criminal law today does not protect our young people from the greatest scourge that modern society has known, the threat of AIDS.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) read a passage from the advice of the Health Education Authority. What he did not read was the advice of that Government-appointed body, which has told the Committee that it believes that it is hampered in its job by its inability to speak to those people——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first new clause relating to the age of consent for sexual acts between men in Great Britain, THE CHAIRMAN *put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The Committee proceeded to a Division; but the Tellers in the Aye lobby having left the doors before all the Members wishing to do so had voted, THE CHAIRMAN *directed the Committee to proceed again to a Division.*

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 280, Noes 307.

Division No. 136] **[10.23 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
[illegible]mstrong, Hillary
[illegible]hby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'tre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Harold
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken

Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Marjorie Mowlam and
Mr. Andrew Rowe.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benton, Joe
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Mudie, George
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael

Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John

Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Page and
Mr. Bill Walker.

Question accordingly negatived.

THE CHAIRMAN *then put the Question necessary to dispose of another new clause relating to the age of consent for sexual acts between men in Great Britain which had been selected by him.*

New Clause 5

AGE AT WHICH HOMOSEXUAL ACTS ARE LAWFUL

'.—(1) In section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 (amendment of law relating to homosexual acts in private), for "twenty-one" in both places where it occurs there is substituted "eighteen".

(2) In section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (homosexual offences), for "twenty-one" in each place where it occurs there is substituted "eighteen".

(3) This section shall come into force on the date this Act is passed.'—*[Sir Anthony Durant.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 427, Noes 162.

Division No. 137] **[10.37 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Dr. Roger
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*

Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil

Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Sir Keith
Speller, John
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tredinnick, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Page and
Mr. Tim Devlin.

NOES

Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy

Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Galloway, George
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godsiff, Roger
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Harvey, Nick
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Horam, John
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
Maclean, David
Maginnis, Ken
Mallon, Seamus
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Ward, John
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bill Walker and
Mr. Robert Spink.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. Nick Ainger be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. Terry Rooney be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Mesothelioma Deaths (Leeds)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10.52 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It gives me no pleasure to return to the subject of lethal asbestos pollution in Armley in my constituency, which I first raised in the House on 25 November 1988 and again on 8 July 1992. Initially, I urged the Government to open a public inquiry into increasingly concentrated cases of people suffering and dying from mesothelioma—the deadly, asbestos-related cancer—in Armley. I spoke of people having no known previous history of contact with asbestos, other than having lived in the immediate neighbourhood of the J. W. Roberts asbestos factory in Canal road, before it closed in 1958.

In the debate on 25 November 1988, I was told by the then Minister of State, Department of Employment that sufferers or people whose relatives had died should try to obtain compensation by claiming damages at civil law. He urged my constituents to take legal action. Many have done so, and lawyers acting on behalf of mesothelioma victims have tried to get Roberts's parent company, Turner and Newall of Manchester—now Turner and Newall plc—into court, to challenge that company over asbestos pollution of the neighbourhood, causing suffering and death.

As I spelt out from the testimonies and eyewitness accounts of the time, local people living in Arley place, Nunnington terrace and attending the nearby Armley Clock primary school can all recall the Roberts' factory blowing out asbestos dust in huge quantities day and night. At times, a layer of lethal snow-like substance covered the streets, pavements and window ledges. Hundreds of residents in the surrounding terraced streets, which run right up against the factory walls, regularly encountered dust from the factory. Its lethal legacy for people who lived in the neighbourhood has been more than 40 recorded deaths of mesothelioma and asbestos-related cancers. Since I first raised the matter in the House, many more people have suffered and died. We still seem to be no closer to calling the company to account for what has happened.

In his reply on 28 November 1988, the then Minister of State, Department of Employment conceded that the situation could be complicated by the time lag and the fact that the firm may no longer be in business. That was an easy mistake for him to make, for, as recently as 22 March 1993, the chairman of T and N plc, Mr. Colin Hope, in reply to a letter from the chairman of the local Armley asbestos campaign, which is fighting the pollution blight currently overhanging their 836 homes, had the nerve to state:

> "As you know, the factory in question was not owned or operated by this Company. It was owned and operated by a company known as J. W. Roberts Limited ("JWR"). JWR ceased production at that factory in 1958/59, and vacated and sold the premises shortly thereafter. Although JWR continued in business for some time after leaving the Armley site, the company ceased to trade over twenty years ago.
>
> I am aware of the various comments and allegations that have been made about JWR's Armley factory, particularly as the source of the contamination to which you refer. Those comments and allegations are not accepted. In any event, they relate to the period when JWR's Armley factory was still in operation, over thirty five years ago. Given the state of medical and scientific knowledge in the years prior to 1959, it is not believed that any legal liability would arise out of the matters alleged."

Although the chairman may cynically disown the company, I have detailed correspondence from 11 March 1964 in which the same T and N plc sought to convince Her Majesty's Inspector of Taxes that, for tax purposes, J. W. Roberts of Armley was still in business as an integral part of T and N and should be taken into account when calculating tax reductions. Is it too cynical to suggest that JWR is counted in only for profits, but discounted when it comes to its responsibility for local lives? Nor is it true that the chairman should give the impression that

> "Given the state of medical and scientific knowledge in the years prior to 1959"

the company did not know the dangers of asbestos. I have referred in previous debates to factory inspectorate reports dating as far as back as 1849, which provided the first warnings that exposure to asbestos could mean danger to health and premature deaths.

In March 1928, Dr. H. De Carle Woodcock, a well-known lung specialist, drew attention at the inquest of Walter Leadbetter of Aviary Mount in Armley to the inhalation of asbestos dust as the cause of fibrosis of the lungs. In the late 1920s, Dr. Grieves—the local doctor—undertook a particular study of patients working at the factory. That thesis is still available in Edinburgh university. Not only is it historically inaccurate to suggest that the dangers of asbestos were not known before the factory closed, as the previous Minister suggested in response to me in 1988, but, more significantly, T and N itself knew. Moreover, the company itself commissioned research into the dangers and then covered up that research for years in order to protect its business interests.

The company resisted the introduction of the 1931 asbestos industry regulations, as is set out in a letter of 30 December 1932. Mr. Turner wrote to Mr. Newall suggesting that the company

> "take a small risk by stretching the regulations to suit our own ends."

By the late 1940s, the company was actively deleting references to any link between carcinoma of the lung and asbestosis. Thus, as the company's own extant records show, the death from asbestosis of Mr. Wren in 1947 was expunged from the asbestos case files. The company's lawyers were more concerned to ward off compensation claims than to face up to the deadly truth about its product.

In 1954, the company's medical adviser, Dr. Knox, joined forces with Professor Richard Doll of the Medical Research Council to produce a study on the risks to asbestos workers of lung cancer. That research was funded by Turner and Newall, but proved too devastatingly sensitive for the company to publish. An internal company memo challenges the conclusions as

> "not supported by adequate evidence".

Dr. Knox was instructed to tell Professor Doll that the research could not be published even in *The Lancet* medical journal. Professor Doll's reply reads:

> "Dear Dr. Knox,
>
> "I was shocked to hear of the decision of your board not to approve publication of our proposed paper. I feel that any positive findings with regard to the cause of cancer must be made available to all research workers in the subject. I would not have undertaken the work in the first place had I imagined that there would be any attempt made to limit the dissemination of scientific data."

That was four years before the Roberts factory closed in 1958. For 48 more months, the lethal asbestos dust was spewed on to the streets of Armley. Four more sets of first-year pupils started school at Armley Clock primary and played in a playground covered in that dust.

It is just not true that the dangers were not known to medical science at the time. They were, and they were researched by Turner and Newall itself, which effected a cover-up. Moreover, internal company memos in the 1960s make it plain that acknowledging any causal connection between asbestosis and carcinoma of the lung would

> "make settlements both more difficult and expensive".

In its own words, the company contrived to

> "ward off the evil day"

when the dangers would threaten the profits of the operation. In other words, the mesothelomia and asbestos connection was known well before the 1960s—as earlier debates on this matter have seemed to suggest.

I know all this to be true because of the documentation that I have cited—and much more which I should like to put on the record—which comes from Turner and Newall's own depository. In the light of previous responses in letters from the former Under-Secretary of State for Health, Lord Skelmersdale, and the former Minister of State, Department of Employment, who responded to an earlier debate, I urge the Minister to allow me to place that documentation in the House of Commons Library. I have it in microfiche form so it will not take up too much room. It is important that both the Minister and her Department and many others interested in and concerned about the issue should be able to study the information for themselves. That truth must be released.

In the debate of 8 July 1992, I referred to the problems of disclosure—of legally forcing the company to disclose all that it knew and knows. As a result of the freedom of information laws in the United States, American lawyers representing the Chase Manhattan bank, which is claiming against Turner and Newall for spraying asbestos in its Manhattan headquarters, have since 1987 gained legal access to all Turner and Newall's United Kingdom files. They have copied more than a million documents. The problem is that no such access is available here in Britain, even though I could go to a library in New York and read the material.

Here, despite Ministers' advice back in November 1988, it has taken almost three years of legal wrangling to get a disclosure in the court. A district judge first ordered T and N to disclose some categories of document back in July 1991. On 11 September 1992, Mr. Justice Laws insisted that a further four categories of document, including all those related to the knowledge of the hazard of asbestos dust and to the layout and the processes of the Roberts factory, be disclosed.

Turner and Newall put in for permission to appeal in March 1993. That appeal was heard on 9 December 1993. At the Court of Appeal, the Turner and Newall barristers said in court that they conceded finally that they ought to drop their appeal. That means that between September 1992 and December 1993, at estimated court costs of £25,000 to the victim clients, the entire legal process was stalled.

Nor is the matter settled yet, because on 8 February, Penningtons solicitors, on behalf of Turner and Newall plc, applied for their time for the compliance to be extended until 1 May 1994. One may think that that is reasonable, but I know that the company lawyers have submitted a detailed affidavit of 4 February 1994 spelling out that, as they are to put all their records on computer and are to use an American company to do it, it would be too difficult for them to comply with that order. They said that the preliminary search work and drawing up of computer

[Mr. John Battle]

specifications cannot be completed until the beginning of July and that the real process of making the documentation available may not happen until 1995.

I argue that this is a company cynically playing for time to ward off what it referred to as the "evil day" when it will have to face public challenges on what it knew about the dangers to the local people of blowing asbestos dust into the neighbourhood of Armley.

Significantly and tragically, a key victim, Mr. David Young, died in December. He went to his death determined to call Turner and Newall plc to account, and, as he said,

"to prevent anything like this happening again".

Tragically, he leaves no one to teke over the fight for his case. Another key test case is of a person who is not well, already 70 years old and is fighting on behalf of her husband who died as a result of mesothelioma.

Before Christmas, I visited a widow who has an income just above the level necessary to qualify for legal aid. She and her family cannot afford to employ lawyers to fight for compensation for her deceased husband and others who have died. It would cost too much. She therefore depends on others getting the company into court.

Turner and Newall pulled out of Armley in 1958, but in a classic case of exported pollution, opened under the name of Hindustan Ferodo in Ghatkopar in Bombay, India. That asbestos dust pollution continues to this day in India. Turner and Newall is a major, multinational group currently valued at £1·2 billion. Its shares on the stock exchange are at an all-time peak. I have already launched a campaign urging shareholders at least to question in what they are investing. In the meantime, I urge the Minister to take seriously and publish a report on the work of Professor Peto, who predicts that deaths from asbestosis and mesothelioma are about to escalate on a scale massively underestimated by the Health and Safety Executive in the past. While Lloyd's may be nervous about the insurance claims implications, the tragic reality is that hundreds more people will be dying needlessly.

11.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), not only on securing the debate, but on the persistence with which he has regularly made his case and on the way in which he has represented his constituents. I am aware that there is a high incidence of the disease in his constituency and they can feel well represented by his efforts.

I also welcome to the debate the other hon. Members with an interest, my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates), the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), who is no longer in his place, and the hon. Members for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), and for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar). I have not done justice to one or two; I also welcome the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie). Of course we will study very carefully anything that the hon. Member for Leeds, West sends us or places in the Library. I look forward to seeing the hon. Gentleman's microfiche information.

I want now to consider two particular matters and I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in warning me that he was going to raise them, particularly as the first issue does not directly concern my Department, but is more the province of the Lord Chancellor's Department. However, I will do my best to make some preliminary comments on disclosure of information.

I appreciate the hon. Member's concern about the difficulties of obtaining evidence held by defendants. However, under English law, the duty to disclose documents can be very onerous on both parties in a given case. A party is generally required to disclose all non-privileged documents that are, or have been, in his possession, custody or power relating to the questions in the action. The test of what is relevant is very wide. It is taken to include any document leading to a train of inquiry. Moreover, the obligation is a continuing one—all relevant documents must be disclosed whenever they come into a party's possession.

With regard to companies, a parent company may be obliged to disclose documents in the possession of its subsidiaries, although that is a question of fact in each case. The court will look to see whether the subsidiary is under the unfettered control of the parent company.

There are court procedures to ensure that a party complies with those obligations. For example, the court can order a party to swear an affidavit verifying that he has disclosed all relevant documents.

The obligation to disclose is, of course, subject to a number of limitations and exceptions. In particular, privileged documents, such as correspondence between a party and the party's lawyers, need not be disclosed.

Some of the issues relating to disclosure are extremely complex and much depends on the facts of each case. I cannot hypothesise about how the rules might apply in the case to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, but I will undertake to ensure that his concerns, his comments in the debate and any comments that he wishes to make to me in supplementary correspondence, will be most faithfully referred to my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor for his comments.

The hon. Gentleman referred almost at the end of his excellent speech to the Peto report. Professor Peto is an eminent epidemiologist who has provided much insight into the nature of certain diseases caused by exposure to substances in the past. Mesothelioma is typical of these, associated as it is with exposure to asbestos decades ago.

Professor Peto first publicly aired his concern over the increasing rise in mesothelioma deaths last August. On that occasion, he estimated that the number of deaths could rise as high as 5,000 per year. However, earlier this year he revised that estimate to

"as high as 3,000 per year by 2020".

When he subsequently appeared in an item on the same subject on the BBC's "Breakfast News", on 2 February 1994, he further revised his predicted figure down to 2,000. He has yet to publish his views on those figures.

Professor Peto's predictions are based on figures supplied to him in mid-1993 from the national mesothelioma register which is maintained by the Health and Safety Executive. The HSE is in the course of an in-depth study of the figures, but provisional results suggest that estimated future mesothelioma death rates, although serious, are unlikely to reach the levels predicted by Professor Peto.

The HSE has looked at the mesothelioma rates in people born in five-year periods, up to the group born between 1955 and 1959, to establish whether those born more recently are less likely to suffer from mesothelioma. It is not possible to look at younger groups, because the time taken for the disease to develop means that very few cases have so far occurred among them.

The HSE's studies show that men born between 1940 and 1944 have the highest risk of developing mesothelioma at a given age. For those born later, the risk decreases, and it decreases quite markedly for those born after 1948.

The HSE estimates that the peak annual death toll from mesothelioma is likely to be at least 1,500, probably reached between the years 2010 and 2020. However, to that figure must be added the deaths due to other asbestos-related diseases—asbestosis and asbestos-related lung cancer. The combined total of all fatalities due to asbestos exposures is already estimated to exceed 3,000 per year, and it could rise to between 5,000 and 6,000.

Professor Peto was not fully aware of those trends when he made his earlier forecasts. The HSE has now provided him with some additional data, and his later predictions are now closer to those of the HSE. I mention those facts not to belittle what the hon. Gentleman has said about the seriousness of the issue but, rather, to record the seriousness as currently perceived by the HSE.

Although there is understandable public concern about current deaths from mesothelioma and future estimates, it is very important to be sure that the lessons of the past have been learned, that current workers are effectively protected and that conditions giving rise to the disease are a thing of the past.

The younger group—those aged under 40—now showing a decreased mesothelioma rate would in the main have been first exposed to asbestos after the introduction of stricter and more comprehensive regulations and after the voluntary industry ban, in the late 1960s, on the use of blue asbestos, the type most closely associated with mesothelioma. The mesothelioma mortality figures therefore suggest a reduced risk after those measures were introduced.

The hon. Gentleman is well aware of the extensive measures that were introduced in the 1980s, following the report of the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on asbestos, to bring an end to asbestos-related diseases—measures such as the formal prohibition of blue and brown asbestos and the licensing of asbestos removal contractors. Because of the long latency period between first exposure to asbestos and the diagnosis of mesothelioma, the current figures, as publicised by Professor Peto, cannot tell us anything about the effect of that legislation and industrial practice since 1980.

Professor Peto has also expressed concern about the number of younger men, particularly in the building industry, who are currently contracting the disease. Such people could have had significant exposure to asbestos because of its widespread use in construction in the 1960s and 1970s. Much of that asbestos is still in place, and Professor Peto is rightly concerned that building workers might still be at risk today.

The Government and the HSE fully share Professor Peto's concerns. Although his remarks were based on anecdotal evidence, the HSE's preliminary analysis of deaths from mesothelioma in the 1980s shows a relatively high incidence among occupations such as electricians, heating and ventilation installers and carpenters. The HSE is now discussing with Professor Peto the scope of a possible study which could reveal a fuller analysis of the occupational history of younger people who are now developing mesothelioma. The purpose of that study would be to identify whether any further specific action needs to be taken.

Mr. Battle: Will that study include people who might have contracted mesothelioma but might have had no history of working in any of those occupations? Will their histories be traced, or will the study concentrate on electricians, plumbers, joiners and so on who had regular contact?

Miss Widdecombe: I will write to the hon. Gentleman about the precise terms of reference, but I understand that it will be a fairly comprehensive study. I shall specify what is envisaged so that the hon. Gentleman has the right information.

Controlling risks from asbestos remains a high priority for HSE inspectors, who now demand a high level of awareness by industry and continue to maintain a vigorous enforcement policy of current controls. Inspectors are finding that current legislation provides an effective framework for enforcement and control of activities that could expose workers to asbestos.

I rehearse that evidence because, in the light of what the hon. Gentleman has brought before the House, it is important to stress that the risk is fully recognised and that all possible measures are being taken to protect workers today and in future. I repeat my congratulations to the hon. Gentleman on raising this very important issue. If there is anything further that he would like from me, I invite him to meet me in the Department.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 22 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL
[*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 22 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Personal Social Services

1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the money available to councils for spending on personal social services has changed over the years 1990-91 to 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Total standard spending for personal social services has increased in real terms by 48 per cent.

Mr. Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that under this Government no area of local government activity is more generously funded than the social services, particularly community care? Bearing in mind the lamentable performance of some Labour authorities, will he ensure that they behave more responsibly and sensibly? In particular, will he apply that scrutiny now to Norfolk county council?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. The figures reflect the priority that the Government place on policies for the elderly, the disabled, children and those with mental health problems, and he will have noticed the increase this year. He is also right to note the need to keep a sharp watch on councils run by the Labour and Liberal parties. The figures for this year show that Norfolk's funds for social services will increase from £72 million to £86 million. If he looks around, as I have looked around, at examples of Labour authorities running social services, he will see not only the reckless record on spending in so many areas but the appalling record on delivery. Sadly, he has only to look, as I recently have, at Labour's record in authorities such as Islington and Nottingham to see that children are at risk as a result.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I am disappointed that the Minister seeks to make party political points from a policy on which we all agree. To make community care work, is it not also necessary to look at other facilities that social services have to deliver, such as meals on wheels, home helps and particularly home adaptation for the elderly? Will he ensure that, as well as the direct programme, local authorities have the resources to carry out those services as well?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that the resources for social services as a whole do not just come from the community care special transitional grant. That grant has been good news, but if he looks at the overall resources for social services, which fund all those domiciliary and day centre provisions, he will notice that over the last four years social services provision has risen from £3.6 billion to £6.4 billion. That is a Government putting their money where their policies are.

Mr. Sims: Is not community care in most parts of the country working well, particularly where there is co-operation with the private and voluntary sector so that care packages can be put together that are suited to their recipients? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that all authorities are making as much use of the private and voluntary sector as they can?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right to say that in the delivery of community care we look to good-quality provision from all sectors, including the private and voluntary sector. He asked the direct question whether I am satisfied that all authorities are ensuring that those sectors can contribute as they should. The straight answer is no. Too many obstacles are being placed in the path of good-quality private and voluntary sector provision by the dogma of Labour and Liberal authorities. We support the provision of the independent sector for reasons not of dogma but of better-quality care for people in need.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Going back to the question, does the Minister accept that there are important differences between standard spending assessments and actual levels of spending? Will he confirm the figures produced by the House of Commons Library, which show that reductions in Government support for local authority funding for social services since 1979 have cost social services departments £6.2 billion—money which was desperately needed to implement 14 new Acts of Parliament that increased the responsibilities of local authority social services? If the Government have been so generous, why did they actively encourage local authorities to introduce charges for day care, home care and a whole range of services for vulnerable elderly and disabled people—services which were previously free?

Mr. Bowis: I do not think that within that tirade we heard a word of thanks from the hon. Gentleman for the figures for Wakefield increasing from £29 million to £40 million. That is the pattern within the overall increase from £3.6 billion to £6.4 billion for social services this year. The hon. Gentleman now needs to remember and recall, for the benefit and education of the ranks behind him, that not only are we giving money to social services, but we expect in return good use of those resources. If local authorities do not use resources effectively, they cannot deliver as good-quality services as we expect.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that last year Cheshire received an extra £10 million to help with the transition to care in the community in addition to a 21 per cent. increase in social services funding in the preceding three years? Will he take the opportunity to salute those in the national health service and in social services at ground level who are making care in the community work within the generous resources that are being made available?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Cheshire is receiving an increase this year from £84 million to £97 million. He is right to praise those on the ground and in the field who, day by day, are providing good-quality services. If he wants a contrast, I invite him to join me on the Clapham omnibus that goes through my constituency eastward to Lambeth where he will see the Labour party in action with a record of decay, dereliction and scandal. That is the opposite of what we want.

Pay Increases (Financing)

2. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has given to health authorities and trusts on how to raise funds to finance pay increases; and if she will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The £1.6 billion additional resources in 1994-95 announced in the unified Budget includes sufficient to allow for pay increases, provided that they are broadly in line with efficiency improvements.

Mr. Connarty: I thank the Minister for that reply. Does she not realise that there is some absurdity in the estimate of £450 million in efficiency savings and a pay award which will cost £418 million? Is it not true that, particularly with inflation, there will be very little left for increased services? Would it not be better to scrap the wasteful market model and put the £1 billion savings into patient care?

Mrs. Bottomley: This year, an extra £1,600 million is going into the national health service. Those are enormous sums of money together with the efficiency improvements that have been progressively made possible with the reforms. We are treating more patients more effectively. That is better for staff and better for patients.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be well aware that the trusts vary tremendously in quality and in the skill with which they manage their budgets. Will she give an assurance that, as her policy develops, she will find a way of rewarding those trusts that have made a good show and make it easier for them to meet the ever-increasing efficiency targets? There will come a time when the best run trusts will find it difficult to make the efficiency savings that she keeps demanding.

Mrs. Bottomley: The best-run trusts are progressively moving towards devolved pay arrangements. One of the great freedoms of the trusts is that they can manage their own pay. We welcome review body reports which recognise that this a transitional year. They heralded the move towards devolved pay. I well understand that it will not be to the liking of Labour Front-Bench Members, sponsored as they are to a man by the health unions.

Mr. Blunkett: Can we try the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) again? If £450 million has to be found through so-called efficiency savings to meet the 4 per cent. increase in activity levels promised, and if the NHS has to find the same amount of money to implement the proposals for pay increases by efficiency savings, which of the two pledges—the increase in activity or the refusal to acknowledge that there will be major cuts—does the Secretary of State accept this afternoon?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman, having so singularly failed to convince the shadow Chancellor of his spending commitments in the document that the Labour party has recently produced, has failed to recognise that I was able to persuade our Chancellor that the national health service needed an extra £1,600 million this year. With that extra money and the efficiency savings that are now possible, I am confident that we can not only pay the staff fairly but increase patient care.

Mr. Dickens: Would my right hon. Friend concede that the £1.6 billion extra that has been found this year for the health service represents £83 per household, which brings a total of £1,565 per household into the NHS? Why do we need to play politics at Question Time when the facts speak for themselves?

Mrs. Bottomley: As ever, my hon. Friend has it. He will agree with me that it is not only the input into the NHS, but what we do with that money. There are still a large number of areas in which we can improve the efficiency of the NHS, including the Audit Commission, whether through skill mix, the use of beds, or prescribing. With a generous settlement for the health service this year, our task now is to use it efficiently and effectively for patients.

Prescription Pricing Authority

3. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what downsizing she expects in the administration of the Prescription Pricing Authority in 1994-95.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): None.

Mr. Cousins: Is the Minister not concerned about the creeping privatisation of more than 1,000 jobs in Newcastle, where prescriptions are processed more cheaply, more accurately and with more fairness than in any equivalent organisation, using the second largest computer installation in Europe to produce the best public health information based on prescriptions anywhere in the world? Is he not concerned about British public administration at its British best? Will he come and look at it in Newcastle and stop meddling?

Dr. Mawhinney: It is not creeping privatisation. It is a market testing programme to ensure— *[Interruption.]* I am interested that hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench do not know the difference. The market testing programme is to ensure that the taxpayer, patients and the NHS get the best value for the considerable sums of taxpayers' money that are being expended.

Mr. Congdon: Given that the price of many drugs is less than the prescription charge, will my right hon. Friend consider, where no risks are involved, making more drugs available over the counter?

Dr. Mawhinney: I think that that moves slightly outside the scope of the question, but, as we are already doing what my hon. Friend requests, I am able to give him that assurance with some satisfaction.

Smoking

4. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the last five years in reducing the number of people who smoke.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures on adult smoking prevalence in England are taken from the general household survey, which is conducted every two years. In the four years to 1992, adult smoking prevalence fell by 3 per cent. to 28 per cent. of the population.

Mr. Coombs: While I welcome my right hon. Friend's explanation of the downward trend in the general level of smoking in the population, I must point out to him that there is currently a worrying upward trend in the number of young girls in this country smoking. Bearing in mind the risks of smoking to women during pregnancy, what other measures can he introduce—apart from increases in taxation, which I welcome, and which are in stark contrast with the policy of the last Labour Government—to try to counter that extremely damaging trend?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the damaging effects that smoking can have on pregnant women and also on the children born from those pregnancies. In addition to the information that we have recently made available to all hon. Members, he will be interested to know that in the 11 to 15 age group those children whose parents do not smoke have already met our "Health of the Nation" target for the end of 1994. The problem is associated with children whose parents smoke, and they are not responding as we would wish. That underlines the serious messages coming from Conservative Members about the attitude and behaviour of parents on the behaviour of their children.

Mr. McCartney: Since the beginning of Question Time, four of our fellow citizens have died of tobacco-related cancers. When will the Secretary of State and the Minister commit themselves to supporting the Tobacco Advertising Bill presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), getting the tobacco industry off the Government's back and saving the lives of the 300 babies a year who are killed by passive smoking, the 300 citizens a day who die because of the tobacco industry and the 110,000 people a year who are killed unnecessarily by the industry's activities? When will the Government support the nation, and end the industry's campaign to recruit new smokers each and every day because tobacco is killing its own customers?

Dr. Mawhinney: I must say that the hon. Gentleman put the case better on Second Reading of the Tobacco Advertising Bill. The truth is that both Government and Opposition are committed to reducing tobacco consumption, and the Bill's passage will proceed in the normal way.

The House may find one piece of information encouraging. If the other 10 European Union countries—apart from the Netherlands, which has a slightly better record of tobacco reduction over the past 20 years—had behaved as we have over that period, between 25 million and 30 million smokers would not now be smoking, and more than 5 million people who have died prematurely in those countries would not have died if they had followed our lead.

Mr. David Atkinson: Now that coroners can cite smoking as the cause of death, has the Department considered including the statistics in Government health warnings on tobacco products and in advertisements?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestion, which I shall seriously consider.

Pay Review Bodies

5. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for the future of the pay review bodies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The role of the review bodies will be kept under review as trusts increasingly use their freedoms to determine pay locally.

Mr. Jones: Is not the right hon. Lady hopelessly at odds with the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Does she really believe that there is extra money for extra pay?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman should talk to his party's health spokesman. I thought that his difficulty lay in the Tippexing out of the price on the recently published policy document, which was described by *The Times* as "cosmetic surgery".

I have no difficulty with my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor. As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said in such a distinguished fashion, my right hon. and learned Friend has made an extra £1,600 million available for the national health service—an extra £83 per household. Let me inform the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that, since the beginning of Question Time, we have spent an extra £1.5 million on the health service.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend understand that the health service trusts are really asking for a large degree of freedom from the findings of the review bodies, so that they can reward those who have worked better and thus make overall savings for their hospitals?

Mrs. Bottomley: I entirely agree. We want to devolve pay as far as possible; we want to make good progress in that regard this year. The review bodies' reports commend such action, and we are looking for results from the trusts, which know that they can achieve better efficiency by adopting a more flexible approach to their staff.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State urgently review the pay agreements with dentists, in view of the rate at which they are leaving the national health service? Is she aware that, in the whole of my constituency and half the neighbouring constituency, only one dentist is now taking on NHS patients? When that dentist was approached yesterday, the earliest appointment that he could give was in July. Is the right hon. Lady aware that the emergency peripatetic dental service provides only one dentist for 105,000 patients in the area? The NHS has broken down here. Will the Secretary of State please do something about it?

Mrs. Bottomley: Dentists have received a 3 per cent. increase in their fees under the review body's recommendations. More money will go into dentistry than ever before. The hon. Gentleman is right, however, and that is why we have already commissioned the Bloomfield report on the remuneration of dentists. We want a system that is fairer to dentists, to the taxpayer and to patients. I hope that we shall be able to make more announcements on that subject before long.

Practice Nurses

6. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many practice nurses are employed by general practitioners; and what was the number prior to the introduction of the general practitioner contract.

Mr. Bowis: Many practice nurses work part time; translated into whole-time equivalents, the number more than doubled from 4,632 in 1989 to 9,680 last year.

Mr. Duncan: I think that hon. Members on both sides of the House would welcome any improvement in primary health care that results from an increase in the number of practice nurses—*[Interruption.]* Has my hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order, Mr. Campbell-Savours. Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was just explaining.

Mr. Duncan: Has my hon. Friend had an opportunity to read a recent Labour party policy document, which claims that the Labour party wants an improvement in primary health care? How does he reconcile that with the Labour party's wish to abolish fundholding, when fundholding practices are exactly the practices in which the improvement in primary care is taking place?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right on both counts. He is right to point out the genuine support that practice nurses are able to give our GPs in helping them to meet immunisation targets, to carry out minor surgery, to take part in our asthma and diabetes programmes, and so on.

As for the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I shall not be held to account for Labour's policy. Labour will be held to account for its policy and it will have to account to the taxpayer for the cost of its policy. As my hon. Friend rightly says, Labour would destroy what is good and send us a bill for £6 billion for the privilege. That is 4p on income tax for starters.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister stop indulging in petty party politics, which ill suits him, and answer the question? Is it not nonsense that in the present situation a fundholding practice in Yorkshire can go to down to Dorset to hire a practice nurse, use the same nurse and cut her pay afterwards?

Mr. Bowis: I am glad to know that that is not a party political point. I remind the hon. Gentleman that when the Labour party was in office in 1979—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman does not want the answer to the question. At that time, we had 888 practice nurses. We now have 9,680 practice nurses. The hon. Gentleman is a schoolmaster; even in the classics department, that would work out as an increase of 900 per cent. That is quality, and that is progress for fundholders and all GPs.

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend said a moment ago that the Labour party would be accountable for its policies. In the next few moments, will he try to find out what those policies are, apart from the abolition—

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is going to ask a question about Government policies I will listen to him. As he knows, the Government are not responsible for the Opposition.

Mr. Hayes: I was going on to congratulate my hon. Friend on the 900 per cent. increase in practice nurses since 1979 and the effect that the abolition of GP funding would have on that.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. If it were Government policy to seek to understand Opposition policy, that is the one policy on which we would have to declare a failure.

Ms. Primarolo: Is the Minister aware, before he congratulates himself, that the number of managers in general practice has increased by 34 per cent. since the introduction of the 1990 GP contract? Is he also aware of the low morale and frustration among GPs as a result of the increasing demands on their time for bureaucratic, time-wasting work? Today's survey—I am sure he is aware of its publication—shows a 9.4 per cent. increase in GP fundholders' work. When will the Government act to review immediately the GP contract and fundholders, stop wasting patients' money on bureaucracy and spend it on the patient instead, which is what we intend to do?

Mr. Bowis: If 90 per cent. of GPs are now involved in the chronic disease management programme, if 76 per cent. are involved in minor surgery and if 86 per cent. are reaching their higher child immunisation targets, I think that we can say that GP targets are doing very nicely, thank you, without the hon. Lady's criticism. If she went into the average GP's surgery, she would meet many people who support GPs and who would resent her attack on that support. For her to dismiss all GPs as "managers", using that as a derogatory term, is ludicrous. She should remember that, in supporting GPs, we are supporting primary care and that we are doing so to the tune of a £504 million a year increase on the £206 million that we spent four years ago. Again, that is progress and, again, the hon. Lady does not like it.

Mr. Oppenheim: How does that information square with what was being said when the GP contract was introduced? Did not the doctors' trade union—the British Medical Association—and the Opposition try to frighten the sick and vulnerable by telling them that the GP contract would increase doctors' lists and reduce the number of practice nurses? As that has clearly not happened, how seriously can we take any pronouncements by the Opposition about the NHS when they are prepared to try to frighten the sick and vulnerable so unnecessarily?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. Doctors had their concerns when the contract came into force, but we understood their concerns and listened to, and took account of, them. Doctors are now pleased, I think, that the contract is in place. It is helping them to see more patients every day of their working lives. The doctors have moved on, but the Labour party has not.

Expert Advisory Group on Cancer

7. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the first report of the expert advisory group on cancer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the spring.

Mrs. Kennedy: Given that the group is to investigate inequalities in cancer treatment across the United Kingdom, does the Secretary of State agree that the development of an independent cancer treatment centre in north Wales, which will be too small to sustain the number of staff with the required skill and experience, will result in the long term in a worse service for the people of Merseyside?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will know that her regional health authority in Mersey, for which the Department has an extremely high regard, is giving priority to research and treatment for cancer of which, I understand, there is a high prevalence in her constituency. I know that she will be reassured to learn that discussions are under way between officials from Mersey regional health authority and those from Wales.

Mrs. Roe: Does not fighting cancer depend crucially on early detection? Therefore, were not the Government getting their priorities right when they ensured that Britain was the first country in the European Community to establish national breast and cervical cancer screening programmes based on a computerised call and recall system? Is not it also a success of Government policy that the GP contract, which was opposed by the Labour party, is ensuring that there is a greater uptake for cervical screening due to the provision of incentive payments?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed, cancer is one of the key aspects of "The Health of the Nation" strategy and one in which we are determined to make further progress by the turn of the century. My hon. Friend rightly commends the GP contract, characterised by the Opposition as "too heroic" for the targets to be met. In 1990, 66 per cent. of GPs met the higher cervical cancer target: the figure is now 83 per cent., with 97 per cent. of GPs receiving target payments. I commend the GPs, but I also commend the new GP contract.

Ms Lynne: Is the Secretary of State aware that a staggering every 30 minutes, one woman dies from breast cancer in this country and that that is the highest rate in the world? Does she accept that more resources will have to be found to ensure that every woman with breast cancer sees a specialist and that we establish a national standard of care to prevent any more unnecessary deaths?

Mrs. Bottomley: I share the hon. Lady's concern about breast cancer, which causes 16,000 or more deaths every year. Seven per cent. of national health service spending goes on cancer services. The breast cancer screening programme has been a formidable success, with 70 per cent. of women now taking up the invitation to be screened, but I should like the other 30 per cent. also to take up that invitation.

United Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust

8. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the budget estimate for the United Leeds hospital trust.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): The forecast expenditure by the United Leeds Teaching Hospitals national health service trust for the current year is £165 million.

Mr. Battle: The Minister will know of the recent health ombudsman's report, which says that Leeds general infirmary failed in its duty to a 55-year-old neurological patient who was discharged against his family's interest into private nursing care. What steps has the Minister taken to ensure that there are no other patients in Leeds or elsewhere in private nursing care who ought to be properly and fully cared for by the national health service? Is not that appalling episode a classic example of the privatisation of the NHS, for which patients and their families are paying too high a price?

Mr. Sackville: We have made it clear that we acknowledge that that was a rare but unacceptable case in which procedures were not properly followed. We have made clear to all health authorities and trusts the proper discharge arrangements that should be followed.

Sir Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend will remember the debt that I owe to the national health service and to the Leeds general infirmary and its superb services, which are also available to my constituents. Will he ensure that the specialist services available in the United Leeds hospital trust are available over as wide a range as possible?

Mr. Sackville: We all rejoice in my hon. Friend's recovery. I remind him that I have visited the trust three times. I went to announce the new £70 million hospital for the Leeds general infirmary in 1992, and I went twice last year. I turned the sod, as they say in Yorkshire, for the new Chapel Allerton hospital, and then attended the topping-out ceremony only a few weeks later. On none of those happy occasions did I see the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) or any of his colleagues. Why? Because they were all skulking in some National Union of Public Employees office, planning new attacks on the NHS and all those who work in it.

Sunderland Health Authority

9. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to reduce beds in the Sunderland health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that Sunderland health authority's five-year plans propose that acute services in Sunderland should eventually be concentrated on the Sunderland district general hospital site.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Minister aware of a report by Professor Keri Davies recommending that the number of beds in Sunderland be reduced from the present 1,600 to 800 or 900? Is he aware that the health authority members were asked to approve that report without being shown it, that it has not been made available to the community health council and that I, the local Member of Parliament, cannot obtain a copy? What confidence can the people of

Sunderland have that the changes in their health service will be properly managed when the health authority behaves in such a way? What assurance can the Minister give them that any changes made will be properly discussed in public?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Gentleman should know that the actual level of staffed beds is 1,150, so the numbers that he gave for the reduction are inaccurate. He should also know that Sunderland has the lowest waiting times anywhere in the northern region. It is not surprising that, with the growth of day surgery and the new day surgery unit on the district general hospital site, in-patient times will fall, and there will be a lower demand for beds. The hon. Gentleman must realise that if there are two or three hospitals and it is clear from projections of bed demand that at some time in the future we shall be able to treat all the patients better and more effectively in one hospital, it is necessary to take action. If we did not, we should be asking the national health service to spend money on buildings rather than on patients. That is no way to run a health service.

Ministerial Visits

10. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to visit the Lambeth community care centre to discuss an increase in services.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health visited the Lambeth community centre on 5 February 1993. Any increase in services at the centre is dependent on local health authorities and fundholders.

Ms Hoey: I hope that the Minister will take the time to visit that unique centre in Lambeth, which serves local people extremely well and is highly needed and valued in the area. Will he a commitment to expanding the services so that a second community care centre can be opened in the Brixton area, with a special remit for work with sickle-cell anaemia, a disease of which there is a large preponderance of sufferers in my constituency?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. She will be pleased to know that some time ago I told my private office that I should like to try to fit in a visit to the Lambeth centre during the year, diary permitting, because I, too, want to see the excellent work conducted at that centre. She will know that, with the London implementation group and the primary health forum, we are considering a variety of ways in which to deliver increased primary health care and one of those is developing other centres.

Mr. David Evans: Does the Minister think that Lambeth ought to increase its services, since some of that lot over there have taken to being in bushes in Belgravia during the night—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is going to remain within order. I remind him that the question is specifically about Lambeth community care centre and I do not think that there are bushes outside that building.

Mr. Evans: I think that the Lambeth community care centre needs to instruct that lot to have caps and mufflers to keep them warm when they are hiding in bushes.

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that extra resources are devoted to the provision of community care in Lambeth. It will be for those locally to decide how best to use those extra resources.

Mr. Skinner: On the question of community care in Lambeth, or anywhere else, let me make it plain that I am prepared to have my conduct examined at the Dispatch Box if every Cabinet Minister will have his conduct examined there. Better still, let us have an election and let the people judge. After that, I shall be sat over there and some of those Conservative Members will want a fresh job.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman feels better for getting that off his chest, but it has nothing to do with the Lambeth community centre.

Mr. Blunkett: It is difficult to follow that. In accepting the need for support and care in Lambeth and in other inner-city areas and for a strategic approach to tackling drug abuse, would the Minister reflect on his actions and those of his Department when they received a report, commissioned in January of the past year, which suggested the need for a strategic approach to drug abuse? As that report came up with proposals to make the Government's actions central to such a strategy, they sent it back to be rewritten. May I have an assurance that what will be published will be the original report from Roger Howard Associates and not the fiddled report, which denied Government responsibility for a strategy against the important issue of drug abuse in our community?

Dr. Mawhinney: As is almost always the case, the hon. Gentleman has got it wrong. The report was commissioned to investigate the provision of local services. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced just before Christmas the setting up of a co-ordinating unit to help the Government in combating drugs. There will be a central Government strategy. What we need is a local and regional strategy to supplement it and it was on that that the report was commissioned to advise.

North West Thames (Treatments)

11. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the North West Thames region in increasing the proportion of hospital treatment carried out on a day case basis.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1979, the number of day case patients has risen from 37,000 to 132,000.

Mr. Clappison: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Is not it the case that day surgery has many clinical benefits and allows resources to be used to treat more patients? Given that there is still scope for more day case surgery in inner London, and given the relative cost of hospital treatment there, would not it be desirable for London hospitals to make further progress with day surgery and allow resources to be released to serve patients in the rest of the Thames regions?

Mr. Sackville: I agree with my hon. Friend. Day surgery is popular with patients and is now recognised as the best procedure for many surgical interventions. The fact that it has gone up so fast in the North West Thames region is good news for my hon. Friend's constituents and good news for the region, and I defy any Labour Members to say anything different.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Prime Minister aware that a schoolboy was killed last year in Auchinleck in my constituency, another was killed last week in Biggar, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), and there is widespread concern throughout the United Kingdom that school buses have no seat belts but three children to a seat, with no attendants? Will the Prime Minister order immediate action to prevent further deaths, without waiting for Europe to act, or is he more concerned about saving money than saving lives?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman's last remark was unworthy and I hope that he will withdraw it. I am aware of the tragic incident that occurred last week in Scotland. There will be an inquiry into that death. I have asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to report to me on the basis of that inquiry so that we can examine whether action is appropriate.

Mr. Dover: Was not one of the best achievements of the Conservative Administration the creation of enterprise zones? Many of us welcome the latest plans for such zones to be set up where coal mining is running down. Will my right hon. Friend discuss with other Ministers the possibility of creating enterprise zones in areas such as Chorley—where defence industries are running down as a result of the peace dividend—because of capital allowances, no business rates and no planning restrictions?

The Prime Minister: I had the opportunity of looking at some of the work done in the enterprise zone in Lanarkshire just last week. I certainly can confirm that they have been very successful. In areas that face particular difficulties because of substantial job losses, perhaps because of the collapse of a single employer or industry, we look across the board to see what help can be given. Enterprise zones are an important part of that, but not necessarily the whole of it.

Mr. John Smith: Following the success achieved so far in stopping the killing in Sarajevo as a result of the threat of military action, will the British Government adopt similar firm initiatives to end the sieges of the proposed safe areas of Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Srebrenica and Bihac? Will the Government also support urgent action to bring relief and protection to the inhabitants of Mostar?

The Prime Minister: We have been examining what can be done following the successful action at Sarajevo. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed that in Paris yesterday. Even as we speak, a meeting on that matter is going on among political directors and I hope to have the opportunity of discussing it further with President Clinton in the early part of next week. What we wish to see is the relief of the United Nations contingent in Srebrenica by the end of February—within a week—and we hope to open Tuzla airport in the first week of March.

Mr. John Smith: I hope that the Prime Minister and the other countries will maintain the momentum that recent events have created. In that connection, is not it clear that further troops will be required? If General Rose, who is the commander on the spot, asks for further troops, ought not the Government not hesitate in giving him further support from his own country?

The Prime Minister: On the first point of developing plans further, we think that the UN should develop plans for other towns urgently. Mostar, Vitez and Maglaj are the three at which one would look first. The situation in each of those towns is different. In Mostar and Vitez, for example, the conflict is between Croats and Muslims, but all of them undoubtedly are in need of desperate assistance and relief. We hope to use the example of Sarajevo to build new impetus in the peace negotiations and the closer involvement of the United States and Russia will help that.

As to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's second point about troops, we shall examine that matter when there are requests. Those requests are directed not just at the UK, which has made a substantial contribution already —as has France—but at the whole range of countries. We hope that they will all see what special assistance they may be able to give.

Sir Anthony Grant: Regardless of the outcome of the vote last night, does my right hon. Friend agree that the disgraceful scenes at St Stephen's entrance were an affront to parliamentary democracy?

The Prime Minister: The House yesterday had the opportunity to examine in detail a matter of great complexity and importance for many people. My judgment is that the House came to the right decisions, and I support the decision that was taken. I regret the difficulties that occurred outside the House yesterday and I hope that, after reflection, there will not be a repeat.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister agree with Lord Justice Scott, who said today that public interest immunity certificates in the Matrix Churchill affair were used by Ministers to withhold information that was trivial and which there was no sensible public justification in withholding?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen those remarks by Lord Justice Scott, nor have I seen the context in which they were made, nor whether it was a statement or a point put to a witness for response. On this and any other point related to the Scott inquiry, I will say that I set up that inquiry so that Lord Justice Scott could report. I am content to leave it to him to report and I do not intend to comment on those matters until such time as I have that report.

Mr. Bellingham: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to see the *Financial Times* survey which shows that, of the top 25 European companies, a staggering 14 are British? Is not that remarkable fact another sign of our growing economic strength and should not we be proud of it? Will my right hon. Friend tell the Opposition to stop running the country down?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt among any of our European partners about the strength of the economic recovery in this country. It is steady and shows every sign of continuing at a time when many other European countries still face great difficulties. My hon. Friend is entirely right that many of the largest and most effective international companies in Europe are British.

Q2. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Prime Minister share the concern of the British people that the future of Britain's last car manufacturer was determined yesterday by a Japanese company and a German company without any reference to long-term British industrial interest? What will the Prime Minister do to secure the future of Rover? Will he simply come to the Dispatch Box again and say that this important matter of industrial strategy which is of concern to the public has nothing whatsoever to do with him?

The Prime Minister: A few years ago, there was not a remotely profitable and worthwhile car industry in this country at all. We now have a series of companies providing a lot of jobs, making a lot of profits and exporting. It will not be long before we are net exporters of motor cars, and that could not possibly have happened but for inward investment which is itself related to the policies of the Government.

Mr. Devlin: With regard to the comments by the chairman of Honda, reported in today's newspapers, that the British are no longer serious about manufacturing, will my right hon. Friend take steps to reassure the heads of Japanese businesses, particularly those that have already invested heavily in the north of England and south Wales, that Britain's future lies with manufacturing and that the British are serious about producing cars, fridges and other solid goods?

The Prime Minister: Just yesterday, Honda Motor Europe publicly confirmed its intention to develop Swindon as

"a centre of manufacturing excellence"

and to continue its work in helping improve the performance of United Kingdom component suppliers, in particular, to help them to win export orders to Honda in Japan. There is no doubt whatever about the position of the Government. We believe that manufacturing industry is important and requires support. It is getting support and it is beginning to export abroad on a scale we have not previously seen. That support and assistance will continue.

Q3. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Corston: Is the Prime Minister aware that "Social Trends 1994", a Government publication, reveals that as a direct consequence of Tory Government policy since 1979 the average disposable income of the richest 20 per cent. of households has increased by £6,000 a year while the 20 per cent. of households at the bottom of the income scale have had their average disposable income cut by £3,000 a year? Does not that reveal the hypocrisy of the Prime Minister's professed commitment to creating a nation at ease with itself?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady was being selective in what she said—*[Interruption.]* She was selective from the report. The net disposable income of people at all ranges of income has increased and the proportion of total tax take paid by those on top incomes has increased, not been reduced.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to convey the thanks, congratulations and good wishes of the House to General Sir Michael Rose? Do not the events of the past fortnight show that firm, clear, decisive leadership—political and military—produces results?

The Prime Minister: There is no doubt about the success that General Rose has had. I shall be happy to convey my hon. Friend's congratulations to him.

Q4. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Denham: Since the Conservatives came to power, everyone who is paid less than £64,000 a year has seen his total tax bill go up, but everyone who is paid more than £64,000 a year has seen his tax bill go down. Why?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about tax bills—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am about to answer in my own way. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about tax bills, why did he and his colleagues vote against every tax reduction in the last decade?

Q5. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: May I thank my right hon. Friend for his positive remarks a moment ago about manufacturing industry in Britain and particularly for what he said about the contribution of Honda in Swindon to manufacturing in Britain? Will he confirm that it remains the policy of the Government, in the interests of manufacturing industry in Britain, to oppose the social chapter and do everything possible to resist moves towards a single currency in Europe? Will he further confirm that Conservative candidates in the European elections later this year will fight on a manifesto that clearly rejects such damaging centralising tendencies?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I can confirm that. The Government's position on the matter is totally clear. When the European People's party publishes its manifesto later this week neither the Conservative party nor Conservative

Members of the European Parliament will be bound by that document, although there will be much in it with which we shall agree. On the question of a single currency and the social chapter, our policy is entirely clear. So, alas, is the policy of the Labour party, which would swallow a single currency immediately, irrespective of the economic damage that it would cause, and would accept the social chapter, with its very damaging consequences for productivity and jobs.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to raise with you matters relating to the Sessional Orders of the House, which are passed at the beginning of each Parliament and which, among other things, lay on the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis a duty to keep open the roads in the vicinity of the House and to ensure free passage of hon. Members, and to prevent disorder in the vicinity.

Given the ugly scenes that occurred last night, which were referred to during Prime Minister's Question Time, will you, Madam Speaker, please examine what happened and what clearly went wrong? Can you say whether it is still the policy that no demonstrations whatsoever are allowed in the immediate vicinity of the House?

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does it relate to this matter?

Mr. McFall: No.

Madam Speaker: In that case, let me first respond to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

I have already received a report on last night's disturbance, during which violence was used and access to and from Parliament was obstructed. Behaviour of this kind cannot be excused, and is, indeed, an embarrassment to the larger number of people who simply want to express their opinion peacefully. The police are well used to regulating access to the House to those who wish to lobby Members in a way that is consistent with the very important right of free movement, into and out of the House, enjoyed by Members. The Sessional Order issued to the Commissioner of Police requires the streets to be kept open for this purpose.

This requirement was not able to be met at all times last night, and I am sure that lessons will be learned by the police that will reduce the possibility of a recurrence. But I emphasise that last night's disturbance was the sole responsibility of those who resorted to violence, and I should like to express the House's thanks to the police officers who contained events and, in the course of their duty, suffered violence themselves.

Mr. McFall: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that the Sheriff Court Fees (Amendment) (No. 2) Order was approved on 9 February. The order imposes court fees on petitioners in Scotland. Two days later, in Paisley sheriff court, Sheriff Stoddart refused to impose the £53 fee on a petitioner, saying that the fees contained ambiguities and imprecisions. He criticised the whole idea as offensive to the concept of the availability of justice in the court on equal terms. As a result, the Scottish Courts Administration has issued guidance to sheriffs, saying that it is taking legal advice on the matter. This brings the whole statutory instrument system into disrepute.

Given the importance for justice in Scotland and the fact that people have already paid these fees, can you, Madam Speaker, advise me further on the issue, so that we may help the many thousands of people in Scotland who are trapped by this legislation, which the Government introduced needlessly?

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for me. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman realises that I am not able to give legal advice of that nature or, for that matter, of any other nature. Ministers on the Front Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman's comments, and I hope that something may come of the matter as a result of his point of order.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: I call motion No. 1.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Speaker: Do those Members who are objecting intend to do so on all these motions?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I declare motions 1 to 9 to be negatived:

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Bulgaria) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Czech Republic) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Slovak Republic) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and Romania) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

LOCAL ELECTIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

REDUNDANT CHURCHES

That the draft Grants to the Redundant Churches Fund Order 1994 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Eggs from Foetuses (Prohibition of Use)

3.34 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the use of eggs taken from aborted human foetuses for fertilisation procedures; and for connected purposes.

This small Bill is of great importance—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. May I hold the hon. Lady up for a moment? She is well accustomed to projecting her voice, but I ask for some order so that we may hear what she has to say from the start. Will the House please come to order?

Dame Jill Knight: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I shall begin by saying what the Bill is not about—it is not intended to stop research or to stop the use of human eggs donated by women. The Bill is intended to prohibit the use, for fertilisation purposes, of eggs from human aborted foetuses.

I am introducing the Bill for several reasons. First, it is totally repugnant that an unborn child—a child who was deliberately prevented from being born—should be plundered to facilitate the birth of another child. It must surely be against the most basic of human rights that an unwanted child should be destroyed and used to create a wanted child.

Secondly, we are told that there is a shortage of human eggs. Private hospitals apparently want them so badly that they are offering free treatment in return. We are assured that that is legal. Millions of women in this land are perfectly able to donate eggs willingly for that purpose.

I warn the House that if the use of foetal eggs is not made illegal, women will be offered money to get pregnant and to have the child aborted so that the eggs can be subtracted and used to meet the shortage. Women might be offered more money to leave the abortion until a later stage, when the eggs are "riper"—to use a medical term.

If the use of foetal eggs becomes common practice, what a thriving market might develop in other organs. If eggs are okay, why not livers, hearts, kidneys or corneas? Those are also in desperately short supply, and so, for many people, is money.

Thirdly, it does not take much imagination to envisage the effect on a sensitive child—or even an insensitive one—when he learns that his mother never lived, but was destroyed at the behest of his grandmother before he was even born. A woman who became pregnant after the procedure, even though she had sought it and agreed to it, might well have nightmares during the later stages of her pregnancy, which is often a nervy time, as she pondered the fact that she was carrying a dead child's baby. It would indeed be a terrible thought.

Fourthly, the law says that a woman must give written consent before her eggs are used to create a baby. It is difficult to see how an unborn girl foetus could be prevailed upon to sign the form, and it will not do to say that the foetus's mother could do so instead. For good reasons, the law does not say that the grandmother of a baby created by in vitro fertilisation can sign—it must be the egg-donating mother, and that is impossible.

There is confusion about whether the law allows the use of eggs from aborted foetuses. It has been said that it is unlawful, but I have searched hard and cannot find any statute that says so. Certainly it is not covered by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. The chairman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority was questioned twice on the matter and was unable to say where in that or any other Act it was stated that using eggs from human foetuses for fertilisation was illegal.

Of course, the proposal is in its very early stages, but there is no doubt that it will become possible. It does not always follow that, if scientific practices are possible, they are desirable. The HFEA is currently asking the public to give their opinion on the matter, so that the authority can reach a decision about whether licences should be granted. Surely the authority would not be doing that if the practice were legal already?

I find it chilling that the authority is reported as saying, "Well, yes, the idea does sound rather repulsive at first, but think about it and you will get used to it pretty soon." That sounds as if it is trying to condition us to the idea and the probability that it will choose to legalise the practice, but how can it be right that a matter of life and death, which touches the deepest human feelings and is of extremely wide public interest, should be decided by a committee? Many of its members are erudite and some are even expert, but they do not represent or have to answer to the people of Britain. Let the House decide about the matter. Since the authority has asked for an opinion, let the House give one.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Alan Beith, Mr. Joe Benton, Mr. Derek Enright, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Phil Gallie, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Rev. Martin Smyth and Mrs. Ann Winterton.

EGGS FROM FOETUSES (PROHIBITION OF USE)

Dame Jill Knight accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the use of eggs taken from aborted human foetuses for fertilisation procedures; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 55.]

Orders of the Day

Intelligence Services Bill [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd) *rose— [Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving do so quickly and quietly, and share the joke with me later?

Mr. Hurd: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Intelligence Services Bill fulfils the pledge of the Prime Minister to put the Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6, and the Government communications headquarters on a statutory basis. It complements the arrangements in the Security Service Act 1989, so that, if the Bill is passed, for the first time, all three security and intelligence agencies will be covered by a statutory regime.

The Bill is the latest in a series of steps marking the Government's commitment to greater openness on security and intelligence matters. To change the metaphor and make it more personal, I am just a little proud to be the parent of three related reforming measures. The first two of my offspring are flourishing, and I hope that the Bill, the third of the trio, will soon follow the others at the font to receive the blessing of Parliament.

The first of those offspring was the reform of the Official Secrets Act 1911. Then came the Security Service Act 1989, which, as Home Secretary, I introduced to the House, placing the Security Service on a statutory basis. The Bill closely follows the provisions of that Act. In May 1992, the Prime Minister avowed the existence of the SIS and made a commitment to introduce legislation for the service. That July, he said that legislation would also be introduced for GCHQ.

Greater openness continued to follow. In June 1992, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced that Joint Intelligence Committee papers would no longer be withheld from publication indefinitely as they had been in the past. Since then, Joint Intelligence Committee records that have been cleared for release from the JIC's inception in 1936 to August 1945 have been made available in the Public Record Office. In the past 18 months, the Government have reviewed and released other previously retained security and intelligence-related records.

I have recently agreed that the records of the Foreign Office's information research department, which was closed in 1977, should be reviewed for release. I hope that it will be possible to release the first batch of those interesting papers by the autumn.

In July 1993, the Government published a booklet about the Security Service, making available for the first time some information about its role and structure. That was followed in October by a booklet explaining the country's central intelligence machinery and detailing—again, for the first time—the terms of reference of the Joint Intelligence Committee.

In November last year, the Prime Minister announced for the first time the overall scale of expenditure by the security and intelligence agencies. He also announced that, from April this year, all expenditure on those agencies would be carried on a single published intelligence vote.

There will always be hon. and right hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), who ask for more. That is their right, but I hope that, before they press us to do more, they will acknowledge that we have travelled a long way down this road—further than I suspect they, and certainly I, thought likely seven or eight years ago. This Bill is a further big step. Indeed, it is the next logical step in this policy of greater openness in security and intelligence matters, wherever possible.

I emphasise the importance of the words "wherever possible". We believe that the public should have access to information on security and intelligence matters when that does not pose a threat to national security or the operation of the agencies. But, by their very nature, most security and intelligence matters should remain secret. Obviously, to reveal them would be to put at risk national security, the success of operations and, in some cases, the lives of the men and women who take part in those operations and work for the security and intelligence agencies. That is why successive Governments have made the point that they cannot comment on the agencies' operational matters. The introduction of the Bill does not change that policy.

Given the clear need, which I hope and believe most hon. Members will recognise, to retain the secrecy of most intelligence and security information, we believe that, in the circumstances of 1994, there should be proper arrangements for accountability. That is why we have decided that, in addition to providing a commissioner and a tribunal for complaints—machinery contained in the Security Service Act 1989—the Bill should include for the first time provision for an oversight committee of parliamentarians to scrutinise the expenditure, administration and policy of all three security and intelligence agencies.

I shall return to that matter later. May I just add here that the chief of SIS and the director of GCHQ made it clear at a press briefing that I held when the Bill was published last November that they and the staff of the two agencies, for which I am primarily responsible under the Prime Minister, welcome the Bill, particularly the element of parliamentary oversight that it introduces.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Time and again in recent years, we have been told that it is out of the question to have any form of parliamentary scrutiny, that there was ministerial control, and that Ministers were answerable to Parliament. Although the line has slightly changed, why have the Government decided not to accept the kind of parliamentary scrutiny unanimously recommended by the Home Affairs Committee?

Is the Foreign Secretary not aware that what is now being produced is totally inadequate—an appointment by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, with the committee reporting to the Prime Minister first? It will not satisfy those of us who are determined that, sooner or later, we will have the parliamentary scrutiny that other democracies have and which was recommended by the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

Mr. Hurd: The Bill will not satisfy those who believe that Parliament, the public or the media should be able to scrutinise the operations of the security and intelligence agencies. *[Interruption.]* That is not what the hon. Gentleman said, but it is the direction in which he wishes to push us. I shall return to the question of oversight in a minute. We have moved substantially from the position that I advocated as Home Secretary in 1989, and I will explain why. Before the hon. Gentleman pushes for more, he should analyse what is in the Bill and the reasons for it. However, I shall return to that point in a minute.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Hurd: I shall return to the question of oversight later, but perhaps my hon. Friend wishes to intervene now? It is his bisque.

Mr. Shepherd: I wished simply to ask whether the members of the committee would be "designated persons" within the terms of the Official Secrets Act 1989.

Mr. Hurd: I think that they would have to be, but perhaps I could check that point, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will confirm it, or deny it if I am wrong.

I should like to deal with something that perplexes some critics of the agencies—their importance in the world of 1994. It is a world which has changed, but which remains deeply turbulent and dangerous. Having looked at it with some thoroughness, we are clear there is a role for the agencies alongside the armed services and diplomatic services in protecting and furthering the interests of Britain and its citizens at home and abroad.

The threats change—as they have throughout history—and they have changed again in the past few years. They include nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional proliferation of weapons; they include terrorism and the threat to our armed forces in times of conflict, serious crime, espionage and sabotage. I know that there is scepticism in some quarters, so perhaps I could give some examples of those threats and how the agencies help to tackle them.

Clearly, weapons proliferation is a substantial threat following the break-up of the Soviet Union and its arsenal of weapons. We tried to tackle it at a diplomatic level by negotiating treaties, but intelligence helps us to act against unscrupulous Governments who aim to break those treaties.

Perhaps I should illustrate the value of intelligence work in that field. Our agencies recently provided one of our European neighbours with intelligence about a major construction contract being undertaken in a developing country by one of its national companies. Our agency was able to show from its intelligence that the proposed facilities were meant for the production of weapons of mass destruction, and as a result of that intelligence, the allied Government concerned was persuaded to frustrate the contract.

The terrorist threat is real and chilling. I do not need to give the House the list of terrorist murders and murderous attempts in recent years. I should have to add to that list the attacks which did not take place and the lives that were saved if I were to illustrate fully the work of the agencies.

Perhaps I can also give an example in that field. At the time of the Gulf war, the intelligence agencies gained access to premises occupied by a known terrorist who was living under an assumed name in the capital of a developing country. The agencies got hold of some crucial details about his contacts and associations; they passed that intelligence to the law enforcement agencies in a western European country that he was known to visit, so he was watched. As a result of that surveillance, the life of an ambassador of one of our allies was saved, because the terrorist and his group were preparing to assassinate him.

On serious crime, intelligence can be particularly important as a protection during periods of armed conflict—for example, in the Gulf war in 1991.

Intelligence about the capabilities of our enemies saved the lives of British service men and women. The contribution that the intelligence agencies make to the safety of our armed forces is greatly appreciated by those forces themselves.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I appreciate the point that the Foreign Secretary is making about the importance of the security services in all these serious areas, but what concerns one or two people who watched what happened in the House of Lords was the reluctance of the Government to define the serious nature of these events as opposed to less serious ones.

Many people are concerned that the security forces occasionally get involved in matters that do not come into that category of seriousness. Will the Foreign Secretary at least consider in Committee whether definitions could be written into the legislation to make it clear that the security services should be concerned with the serious threats to the state, not less serious issues?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right, but if he looks at the Bill, he will see that it is full of safeguards in that respect. If he looks at the provision for warrants, authorisations and the matters that now must come to the Secretary of State—with the commissioner standing over my shoulder, ensuring that what I do is in accordance with the Bill—he will see that, for the first time, the safeguards will be there.

The way in which the two agencies—the SIS and GCHQ—operate is already in line with what the hon. Gentleman wants. What will be new under the Bill is that the law and the commissioner will be able to ensure that that is so. The hon. Gentleman is on to an important point. Those agencies should not concern themselves with trivial matters.

To give another example, serious crime is increasingly international. Transnational criminal organisations operate in various countries, seeking to escape the reaches of domestic law enforcement agencies. There, our intelligence agencies support the efforts of the police and Customs and Excise to prevent and detect such serious crime.

A British law enforcement agency recently asked the SIS to help monitor a large consignment of drugs from a developing country believed to be destined for the UK. The service could not rely on the co-operation of the authorities in the country concerned, so it sent an officer there under an assumed identity.

Soon after his arrival, in difficult and dangerous circumstances, the officer was able to identify and enlist the support of an employee of the transport organisation which was innocently handling the movement of that consignment. With the help of that employee, the

[Mr. Hurd]

consignment was monitored to a point outside the country, where it was seized through international action, and the gang of traffickers involved were arrested.

There is the provision for action—the tasking of our intelligence agencies—in the interests of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom. Those who have followed these matters know that that is a well-worn provision. It is in existing legislation, and is provided for in the European Convention on Human Rights. It sometimes causes puzzlement as to what it can mean.

Examples of where it might be useful are where there is instability in a part of the world where substantial British economic interests were at stake, or where there was a crisis or a huge difficulty about the continued supply of a commodity on which our economy depended.

The House will notice that the Bill restricts the activities of the SIS and GCHQ for safeguarding the economic well-being of the country to the acts or intentions of persons outside the United Kingdom. The agencies may not and do not get involved in domestic economic, commercial or financial affairs.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I thank the Foreign Secretary for giving way on this point, because the matter of control of the agency and the procedures to control it are quite important.

What steps are taken to ensure that the agency does not get involved in unauthorised operations? Where such unauthorised operations have taken place, what steps are taken to ensure that it does not happen again? What disciplinary action is taken? Given the nature of the operation that we are dealing with, how can we be sure that operations subsequently described by Ministers as unauthorised really were unauthorised?

Mr. Hurd: Legislation relating to the Security Service is already on the statute book. I know of no evidence to suggest that the machinery set up by the House in 1989 has proved inadequate or defective, or that security operations have fallen within that category.

The Bill primarily concerns the other two agencies, for which there is currently no statutory provision. It introduces statutory arrangements for warrants, authorisation, the appointment of a commissioner and the establishment of a tribunal—that is the novelty, in comparison with the previous arrangements—for an oversight committee. That is quite an apparatus of control.

I am already consulted if either agency wishes to authorise particularly sensitive operations, but that is not a statutory arrangement; it is just what happens. The Bill proposes that the arrangements should be elaborated, refined, extended and put on the statute book, and that machinery should be introduced to deal with any breaches.

As I have said, the commissioner will look over my shoulder, and the tribunal will examine any complaint from any member of the public that the agencies might have acted without authorisation in the manner described by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). That is a big step towards securing what he wants.

Before we become too enmeshed in the question of possible breaches, difficulties and dangers, I think it right to record our appreciation of the loyalty, courage and hard work of those involved. It has not been possible to do so before. That work is very dangerous, and provides few rewards—in the form of public recognition, or in any other form.

Most hon. Members know one or more of the individuals involved; it should be pointed out that their work, although unrecognised, is as essential to the public good as much of the other work that is constantly praised in the House. The terrorist attack that is prevented, the potential crime that is disrupted and the vital intelligence that is conveyed to our armed forces or aid workers do not make the news; but that work is essential to public well-being.

Let me clear up a point that is often raised, and was almost touched on by the hon. Member for Upper Bann. The SIS and GCHQ do not work to their own agenda, invent their own requirements for information or act independently without the prior knowledge and clearance of Ministers. As the Bill makes clear, they are both directly accountable to the Secretary of State; they must remain politically neutral, and they operate only within strict parameters. They do not invent adventures of their own; they carry out tasks in support of specific policies.

This is where the Joint Intelligence Committee comes in. It lays on the SIS and GCHQ detailed requirements and tasking, which are reviewed annually in a process with which I am now familiar: it combines rigorous analysis of the requirements for secret intelligence with a great deal of consultation with what are known as customer departments. From that rigorous process emerges a list of requirements, which must then be approved by Ministers.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I warn the Home Secretary that I shall not be present for the winding-up speeches? The Standing Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill sits morning, noon and night.

May I ask which Ministers knew about the activity of the security services—albeit 10 years ago—in relation to the miners' strike? As, I believe, the only Member of the present Parliament who appeared for an hour and a half before the Franks committee dealing with the Falklands, may I ask in what circumstances a Minister is informed? Lord Franks and his colleagues were extremely confused about the issue.

Mr. Hurd: Both the examples that the hon. Gentleman gives have been thrashed out on the Floor of the House over and over again, and Lord Franks issued his report.

I would simply say, from my experience, which does not cover either of the examples that the hon. Gentleman mentions, that there was somewhat more consultation in the Home Office even before the passage of the Security Service Act 1989, but the Security Service Act is plain and has worked well, I think, for five years. I find now, in my present job, that there has been increasing consultation of the Secretary of State when operations are proposed that are sensitive—that could cause difficulty.

I have never known an operation to be proposed in any of the three services that infringes the principle of political neutrality. I find, however, that there is an increasing tendency to consult the Secretary of State on what might be called sensitive or controversial matters. That will now be enshrined in the Bill because of the procedures laid down in the Bill for warrants, in the case of operations against property, and for authorisations covering a rather wider field.

The Bill provides for ministerial control of the way in which the agencies act to fulfil those tasks by, as I have said, a system of warrants and authorisations. In addition to those statutory provisions, the SIS will continue the existing procedure that I mentioned, whereby my specific clearance is sought for more sensitive operations.

I shall run through the Bill quickly for the convenience of the House, as is normal on Second Reading.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool) *rose—*

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman, and then I will get on.

Mr. Mandelson: On the subject of ministerial control, which I think is very important and to which I shall return if I am lucky enough to be called, will the Foreign Secretary say, in terms of the Bill, what powers he believes the Intelligence and Security Committee will have to summons Ministers, which Ministers, and how frequently? What depth of questioning does he believe it will be acceptable for the committee to engage in for proper ministerial accountability to that committee to be secured?

Mr. Hurd: I shall mention the oversight committee later, but its job will be to examine expenditure and administration of the three agencies. The committee will therefore be able to examine and to take evidence, not as a court of law but as a matter of fact, from the agencies and those people who are responsible for the agencies—

Mr. Mandelson: And policy?

Mr. Hurd: — and policy, but not operations. When there are—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Foreign Secretary dealing with scrutiny now? I thought it was coming later.

Mr. Hurd: No; I will discuss that in greater detail, but I am answering, in sum, the hon. Gentleman's points.

Clauses 1 and 3 provide for the continuation of the SIS —it is referred to in the Bill as "the Intelligence Service" —and Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham under the authority of the Secretary of State, and set out their respective functions. They provide that those functions will be exercisable in the interests of national security only, with special reference to the defence and foreign policies of the kingdom, in the interests of the kingdom's economic well-being, or for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime.

Clauses 2 and 4 provide for the appointments of the chief of SIS and the director of GCHQ and set out their responsibilities. They place specific requirements on the heads of agencies, regarding obtaining and disclosing information—both are important—and reporting to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, and they require the agencies to remain politically neutral.

Clauses 5 and 6 provide for the Secretary of State to issue warrants authorising entry on, or interference with, property or wireless telegraphy in pursuit of the agency's functions. They replace the similar warrant provisions of the Security Service Act, and they make warrants available in respect of the functions of all three security and intelligence agencies.

Clause 7 is a provision for warrants and for authorisations. It provides for the Secretary of State to authorise certain acts abroad that are necessary for the proper discharge of the functions of SIS.

I hope that the House will agree that those three clauses ensure that certain actions can be undertaken by the agencies under the specific authority of Ministers only.

Clauses 8, 9 and 10 provide three important safeguards on the activities of the agencies. First, clause 8 establishes a commissioner. That is familiar to the House, because there is already a Security Service Commissioner. The commissioner will review the exercise by the Secretary of State of his powers to issue warrants and authorisations for SIS and GCHQ.

In my experience as Home Secretary, and latterly as Foreign Secretary, the role of commissioner is not a cipher. The Commissioner of the Security Services oversees rigorously and the commissioner in charge of the Interception of Communications Act 1986, with whom I deal now, oversees rigorously the way in which I use the powers entrusted to me by statute. There is nothing routine, scanty or inadequate about the way in which the commissioner undertakes his task.

The commissioner will also help the tribunal, about which I shall speak in a moment, to deal with complaints. The Bill places a statutory duty on all members of the intelligence and security agencies to disclose to the commissioner any information that he needs in order to carry out his functions.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): My right hon. Friend referred to the Security Service Act 1989 and the commissioner as models for the Bill. Why is the commissioner unwilling to declare how many complaints have been made against the security services under the terms of that Act? Although we were confident when the Act was passed, some of us are no longer so confident that he has had a great many complaints to investigate. Would it not be simpler for him to declare in his annual report how many complaints there have been?

Mr. Hurd: That is a matter for the commissioner to work out for himself; I am not answerable for him. My experience of the Security Service Act 1989 and the Interception of Communications Act 1986 is that the commissioner's work is rigorous and important.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I shall try to help the right hon. Gentleman. I might be misinterpreting what the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) said, but page 2 of the Security Services Commissioner's report, dated March 1993, states the number of complaints received.

Mr. Hurd: That is a matter for the commissioner. I think that he sometimes declared them and sometimes did not. *[Interruption.]* I believe that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the Commissioner for the Security Service, who is the responsibility of the Home Secretary. I am saying that it is for the commissioner to decide whether to provide particular information. Sometimes he has, and sometimes he has not, but that is a matter for him.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of the role of the commissioner, to which he has paid tribute, will he explain how it overlaps with the later provision in the

[Sir David Steel]

Bill for a parliamentary committee? Is the parliamentary committee to be excluded from examining the same aspect of the commissioner—the use by Ministers of warrants?

Mr. Hurd: The three bits of machinery have different functions, which I am trying to describe to the House. The commissioner is responsible for the exercise by the Secretary of State of the authority given to the Secretary of State under the Bill. The tribunal is responsible for investigating complaints and may ask the commissioner to follow up the investigation of such complaints. The oversight committee, with which I shall deal later, is responsible for overseeing policy administration and expenditure.

It is an issue that hon. Members will want to debate in detail in Committee, but I do not see why there should be an overlap between the three separate functions allocated under the Bill to the three separate mechanisms, individuals or groups which the Bill proposes. I was about to deal with the second, the tribunal.

Clause 9 establishes the tribunal to deal with complaints against the intelligence service or GCHQ. It is closely modelled on the security service tribunal, which has been working effectively since its establishment under the 1989 Act. The tribunal will, for the first time, give those complaining about the activities of SIS or GCHQ the assurance of an independent review and redress in matters that could particularly affect their privacy and prospects.

The arrangements for the tribunal—now for the two agencies with which the Bill mainly deals and, formerly, for the Security Service—have regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and, we believe, fully comply with it.

Clause 10 provides something new, about which hon. Members have already asked me. It proposes an entirely new form of oversight of all three security and intelligence agencies—a committee of parliamentarians. As several hon. Members will remember, that idea was discussed in 1989, when there was considerable concern, especially among my hon. Friends, that further widening the circle of secrecy to an oversight committee might put national security at risk.

Five years ago, I shared that concern. It seemed to me that either one put such a parliamentary group inside the ring of secrecy, in which case what its members could say to the world outside, including the House, would be strictly limited, or one kept them outside the ring of secrecy, in which case they would have nothing especially important to communicate—although they would be free to communicate it. In 1989, that seemed to me a dilemma which we had not resolved.

I believe that the House will judge that, with the hindsight derived from four years' experience of the Security Service Act, and since the avowal of SIS, we have now found a way of overcoming the difficulty and reconciling those considerations. I believe that the committee proposed in the Bill will provide welcome additional and effective monitoring of the agencies, without putting national security at risk.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: For the benefit of my hon. Friends, I recall that half an hour ago the Foreign Secretary did not know whether the membership of the committee would be subject to official secrets legislation, and that it was a nod and a wink from the civil servants in the Box that affirmed the position for the House.

If the hon. Members who are to be members of the committee will be subject to official secrets legislation, why can they not have access to some operational matters? Why is that wrong in principle? Why can they not have access to some operational matters, in the same way as —*[Interruption.]*

Some of my hon. Friends may shake their heads, but in the United States of America, several hon. Members interviewed Congressmen and bureaucrats who were members of a committee scrutinising those very matters. Many of us believe that that can be done here, if Parliament is prepared to nominate certain Members of the House to committees on the advice of the Prime Minister, as suggested. That is not a major departure from the proposal in the Bill. If the hon. Members concerned will be covered by official secrets legislation, why, in principle, can they not have some additional rights?

Mr. Hurd: In response to the hon. Gentleman's first comment, I did not get my knowledge from the civil service Box; I do not have eyes in the back of my head. I answered by the light of my own knowledge, and I believe that I answered correctly. I was answering my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, and I gave the answer that I believed to be correct, but I said that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster would confirm the position when he wound up.

On the hon. Gentleman's second question, he does not seem to be living in the real world. Operational matters involving secret agencies ought to remain secret. The hon. Gentleman says that they can be fully shared with all Members of the House—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I did not say that.

Mr. Hurd: —because all Members of the House would be subject to the Official Secrets Act. That is a mechanism for shutting the stable door after the horse has gone.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is not what I said.

Mr. Hurd *rose— [Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

Mr. Hurd: The protection provided by the Official Secrets Act is precisely like ensuring that the stable door may always be closed after the horse has gone—that is, that somebody may be prosecuted and punished after he has done the mischief. We are concerned, as is anybody who is serious about the operation of the agencies, not about punishing the person responsible for the mischief after it has occurred but about preventing the mischief before it happens.

I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's argument is strong, because he is relying on the ability to prosecute and punish, whereas we—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's reference to the Official Secrets Act makes sense only if that is his argument.

We are saying that we must provide against the mischief, against the revealing of secret operations, before it occurs, and that is what the Bill does.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Perhaps the Foreign Secretary could tell us what criteria he will introduce for membership of the committee. If the members are not bound by the Official Secrets Act 1911, what criteria will the Secretary of State lay down for membership of that committee?

Mr. Hurd: I was coming to precisely that point. Being under the Official Secrets Act 1911 is not in itself a sufficient protection. As it says on the face of the Bill, the committee will comprise six Members from both Houses appointed by the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. That can be—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Hurd: I have given way to the hon. Member once.

That can be argued about and will be argued about, but I believe that, when the House reflects on what we are considering—the proposal for an oversight committee for the first time—it will see that we should be anxious that that oversight committee should be effective on policy, administration and expenditure, and that it should not lead to any danger of revealing secret operations. That is the circle which we are trying to square, and what the House is after. That is what we are trying to reconcile, and what we did not succeed in reconciling in 1989.

We are coming forward with the proposal, and before hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Workington, start rubbishing it, I hope that they will reflect on the need to reconcile those two considerations. The simple proposition on the face of the Bill is a good way in which to do what we are seeking to achieve. It is the way in which we propose to deal with the matter, and we shall defend it.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton) *rose*—

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way for the last time.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I hope that my question will be more friendly and less absurd than that of the hon. Member for Workington. At the moment, MI5 is responsible to the Home Secretary, and it is in that context that the Select Committee on Home Affairs has the power of scrutiny over the work of the Home Secretary and his agencies.

In response to that, the Select Committee on Home Affairs produced a report on the scrutiny of the Security Service, to which the Government responded. The Bill appears to give the right of parliamentary scrutiny on matters of administration, expenditure and policy to the oversight committee. Does that deprive the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which is, after all, a Committee of parliamentarians of all parties and not appointed by the Government, of the right to ask the head of MI5 or any part of the Security Service questions about administration, expenditure or policy?

It should not ask about day-to-day operations. We have never sought to exercise that power, and it would have been wrong to do so. However, it seems that, if my right hon. Friend is giving a power to an oversight committee, which is not directly responsible to the House for its activities, the Government may be taking away a power of the House to control the Executive.

Mr. Hurd *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If there are many more mini-speeches of that nature, some of the hon. and right hon. Members who are hoping to catch my eye will be unsuccessful.

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I have given way too often, but none of the interventions in my speech has been in the least beside the point. The House is being asked to tread new ground, to reconcile considerations which we all know are important, and it is finding its way.

It is certainly not the purpose of the Bill to truncate in any way the existing responsibilities of existing Committees. I am not talking of the ambitions that Select Committees may have—that is a different matter. I am talking about their present responsibilities and it is certainly not the intention of the Bill or of clause 10 to cut in any way the existing powers and responsibilities of Select Committees.

As I said, the oversight committee will be charged with scrutinising the administration, policy and expenditure of the security service, the SIS and GCHQ. Subject to the provisions of the Bill, the heads of the three agencies will be required to disclose to the committee the necessary information to enable it to fulfil that remit. Clearly, that is one of the most important elements in the Bill.

For the rest, we are extending considerably—not totally —into the field of the two agencies, the SIS and GCHQ, what is already working well in the case of the Security Service. But here we are breaking new ground and putting the Security Service, as well as the two other agencies, under this new oversight committee.

We have thought a great deal about what would be the effective mechanism in which Parliament would have confidence but which could also be privy—this is the crucial point—to the special information necessary to enable it to carry out its job. The combination of an all-party committee of parliamentarians and unprecedented access to security and intelligence information will achieve that goal.

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I shall put two points to the Foreign Secretary. Although this will be a committee of parliamentarians, it certainly will not be a parliamentary committee in two important respects: first, its proceedings will not attract privilege, and, secondly, there is nothing in the Bill as far as I can see that gives the committee the power to send for persons and papers.

Mr. Hurd: The question of privilege is not one for me, but the right hon. Gentleman's first point is fair. It is a parliamentary committee, but it is not in the same family as other Select Committees of the House. It is unique and special, and it will have a unique and special job. The Bill provides a power for the committee to examine agencies and that is its job. Therefore, I do not see that there is a mismatch between the job and the powers.

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will argue that point in Committee. I am aware that he has made it before. Having looked at the matter again this morning, I do not see how there is a mismatch between the powers of the oversight committee and the job that it will be asked to do.

I have argued that the services of the intelligence agencies are vital to the interests of our country. In a democracy, it is right that those agencies and their activities should be on a statutory basis, that there should be adequate safeguards, that there should not be unnecessary mystery, and that there should be public

[Mr. Hurd]

confidence in the way in which the agencies work and in the arrangements for their accountability and control by Ministers.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I am going to conclude my speech.

The Bill fulfils those requirements. It is important and logical. As I said, it comes at the end of a long series of measures—some small and some big—that we have taken, especially over the past seven or eight years to open up this field. I do not say that we have got every arrangement perfect, but there has been steady progress towards greater openness.

I remember vividly the debates on the Official Secrets Bill—being told that every editor would quake in his shoes, that it was draconian, that few editors would not spend some time in prison once the Bill was passed, and that the threat to the freedom of the press was absolute. I remember some eloquent speeches on this theme, but nothing whatever has occurred to justify those premonitions. I hope that debates on this Bill will be somewhat more prosaic. It is the latest in a series of steps in the direction that I have mentioned.

We drafted the Bill after careful study of the Security Service Act 1989, after a lot of consultation in Government and with the agencies, having regard to the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and taking account of what happens in other countries. The Bill will provide us with an effective and important piece of legislation and will complete the task set in hand of providing a good statutory framework for all our security and intelligence agencies. I commend the Bill to right hon. and hon. Members, and invite the House to give it a Second Reading.

4.28 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I begin by welcoming the Bill in principle. It represents an important change and makes a significant contribution to the increased scrutiny of the activities of the intelligence and security services.

The Bill proposes changes which the Opposition believe to be long overdue. I join the Foreign Secretary in praising and paying tribute to the distinguished record of the intelligence services, and to the Secret Intelligence Service and those at the Government communications headquarters who have played such important roles over many years in the interests of defending Britain, our democracy and our interests world wide. I happily and readily put that tribute on record.

We accept also the need for considerable secrecy in much of what those services do. Many of those who threaten our interests and security act in deeply secret ways in pursuit of their goals, which are often criminal or subversive. Those people are often involved in terrorism or the laundering of money, or are members of drug cartels, so there must be an element of secrecy and security in pursuit of them.

Britain retains global interests and internationally shared responsibilities with our allies in the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Commonwealth and the United Nations. We must be vigilant in trying to counteract and, better still, to prevent terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the weapons trade and drugs trafficking.

We accept the need for modern and efficient secret intelligence organisations in a rapidly changing, but all-too-unstable, world. The issues involved include scrutiny, oversight and accountability, and constructing a framework within which they should work and be accountable.

The background and history of the long debate about accountability are interesting. The security and intelligence services exist to protect our democracy and democratic freedoms. They exist to work in the national interest, but I, and many others in the Labour party, have long argued that they should not be outside the law.

We believe that the services should be subject to parliamentary oversight and scrutiny, and that is why we welcome the general principles of the Bill. We welcome the proposals to enable the policy, performance, objectives and budgets of the services to be held to account. I share the view of the Foreign Secretary that no parliamentary committee of whatever nature—I will come to the detailed nature of the committee later—should be involved in operational matters.

The obvious, if perhaps not totally apposite, comparison is with police authorities. We want police authorities to oversee the work of the police, but they do not involve themselves in operational matters. I do not believe that a committee of the House should do so in respect of the security and intelligence services. I believe that the objectives that I was talking about can best be met by the establishment of a parliamentary Select Committee, and I shall argue the case for that later.

Before I do that, I will discuss the list of examples that the Foreign Secretary gave to the House, and which he intended to be helpful. The list was of the different circumstances in which action had been taken in our collective interest and well-being. What was interesting was not so much the list that the right hon. Gentleman gave, but the omission. He did not mention the dog which apparently did not bark in the night. He did not mention what happened when he and his right hon. and hon. Friends were covertly arming the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq.

From what we have heard and seen written about the Scott inquiry, I do not believe that the responsibility for that matter can be laid at the door of the Secret Intelligence Service. The responsibility lies, of course, with Ministers. I hope, when Lord Justice Scott comes to report, that those Ministers will accept their responsibility and, if necessary, hand in their resignations at the appropriate time.

The Foreign Secretary made a different speech today from the one that he made on 15 December 1988 when, as Home Secretary, he introduced the Second Reading of the Security Service Bill. That is why some of his right hon. and hon. Friends had rather glum faces. On that occasion, he drove them into the Lobby against exactly what he proposes that they should go into the Lobby to support tonight. He drove them into the Lobby against any idea or suggestion that a committee of parliamentarians—a scrutiny committee—could possibly work, could possibly be accepted, could possibly be in the national interest or could possibly be effective without breaching security and putting the operations of the Security Service at risk. His speech is set out in the *Official Report* at great length.

The right hon. Gentleman's speech was surpassed only by the usual completely over-the-top speech of his right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Education, then the Minister of State, Home Office. The then Minister of State dismissed all rational argument and debate in sweeping, ridiculous phrases, implying that the creation of such a committee would never happen. Ministers all seem to have had a blinding conversion in the recent past.

Only in 1992, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then Home Secretary, said in evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs that he did not think that policy and operational matters could be distinguished. Therefore, of course, he implied that no scrutiny committee could ever be acceptable to Her Majesty's Government. What a change today.

In his speech in 1988, the Foreign Secretary said:

> "In those circumstances, which are borne in upon us day by day, it is not possible to distinguish, as some have genuinely sought to do, between policy and operations, overall resources and how they are spent, or theory and practice. Those distinctions can be made on paper and can be beguiling, but they do not work in practice."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 1110.]

Those were the right hon. Gentleman's very words. I should think that, as well as Opposition Members, some of his right hon. and hon. Friends and people outside the House may want to know why the Foreign Secretary has so totally changed his mind; why he is now standing on his head. We welcome his conversion, but his speech today was a very different performance in tone and content from that speech in 1988.

There are many more quotations with which I could pursue the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hurd *rose—*

Dr. Cunningham: I see that the right hon. Gentleman is rising to the first bit of bait. Perhaps I will save the rest for later.

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I can help to shorten the right hon. Gentleman's speech. I dealt with the point in my speech. It is perfectly true that in 1988 I held and argued those views. But since then, over the past year or so, I have looked to see whether we could find ways in which we could form an oversight committee. I have done so because the views of the agencies have changed and the kind of work that they do has changed. I believe that we have now found a way in which we can reconcile those considerations.

The arguments remain exactly the same as when we argued the matter through in 1988. Then, the Government did not feel that there was an answer that reconciled the different needs. We now feel that there is one. Life has moved on. Our thinking has moved on. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman welcomes that. I hope that he will welcome the rest of the Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: We shall come to the rest of the Bill in a moment. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's conversion. I probably welcome it a great deal more than some of his right hon. and hon. Friends sitting on the Benches behind him will do.

Mr. Winnick: I am sorry for interrupting my right hon. Friend's speech. Does he accept that when we debated the measure in 1988, Labour Members raised time and again the abuses that had occurred in the security services? While we recognised the work being done both at home and abroad, we brought to the attention of the House the Wright affair and the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) and Patricia Hewitt had been targeted by the security services because they held senior posts at the time in the National Council for Civil Liberties. There were many other examples of tittle-tattle about the private lives of those involved in the leadership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. That had nothing to do with security. It was a misuse and abuse of our democratic procedures by people involved in the security services who were out of control. That was why we wanted parliamentary accountability.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend. Those and many other instances led us a long time ago to the conclusion that it was not only practicable but essential to have some parliamentary oversight and scrutiny of the security and intelligence services.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: In a moment.

Mr. Whitney: On this point.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not intend to stray from the point, so the hon. Gentleman should contain himself for a moment. Having read remarks made by him in 1988, I shall be very interested to see how he votes tonight. We know well that he was no supporter of the idea of a scrutiny committee.

The Times of today tells us—I suppose that it can be only an estimate as we are not allowed to know all the facts —that these activities cost the taxpayer about £900 million a year. That may be a gross exaggeration. If the Foreign Secretary is about to leap to the Dispatch Box again and tell us so, I hope that he will give us an accurate and comprehensive figure.

Mr. Hurd: The Prime Minister has given the figure. The right hon. Gentleman does not seem to be in full possession of the facts.

Dr. Cunningham: I, too, have some published figures. They are contained in the report that the research division of the House of Commons Library produced for this debate. The reality is that other people believe the amounts to be very different from those that are given. I am asking the right hon. Gentleman to say which information is accurate. He says that the Prime Minister has given the figure. Indeed, during the past few years, the Prime Minister has given the House many answers that turned out not to be valid in all circumstances.

Mr. Whitney: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to his party's views about the need for a parliamentary committee of oversight. The Labour party adopted these views after it lost power. During its period of office, successive Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries and Home Secretaries held quite contrary views. Can the right hon. Gentleman comment on their conversion?

Dr. Cunningham: I happily agree with the hon. Gentleman. I thought that the people to whom he has referred were wrong, and if they have not changed their minds they are still wrong. I have held my views about the powers of Parliament ever since I became a Member of the House. The powers of the House of Commons are pathetically inadequate in many respects. This is just one classic example. I dare say, without checking the record or straying too far from order, that the hon. Gentleman is one

[Dr. Cunningham]

of those who have consistently voted against strengthened powers for Parliament and against increased support for Members to enable them to do their job more adequately.

Mr. Whitney: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way again. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman flatters himself.

The decision to bring the Secret Intelligence Service into the daylight was welcome, but since everyone in London could see the building of the wonderful new headquarters just down the river from here it was hardly credible to maintain the fiction that the organisation did not exist. I wonder how many of us will be invited to the house-warming party.

Another interesting matter about which we need to know is the exact cost to the public purse of the building at Vauxhall cross and of the refurbishment of Thames House South and whether the public are getting value for money. For these reasons, too, I firmly believe that we should have such a committee. In any event, the public would think that we were lacking in the discharge of our responsibility to them if we were to allow sums of this magnitude to be spent without asking some very searching questions.

Turning to some details of the Bill, as did the Foreign Secretary, I shall start with clause 7 as, broadly, I accept what the right hon. Gentleman said about the earlier provisions. Clause 7 is interesting. It gives the people involved complete and very wide-ranging immunity. Apparently, they did not have such immunity previously. Perhaps the Minister of State, when he winds up, will comment on that matter.

From our researches, it seems that clause 7 may be necessary for the purpose of taking into account the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1948. I do not know whether that is true—it is just a bit of surmise and detective work on my own part—but it would be very interesting to know why we have a long, complex and very wide-ranging clause providing these immunities if, for all these years, the members of the Secret Intelligence Service have been able to operate quite happily overseas without them. Or have those people been operating overseas without safeguards from potential prosecution in this country? Whatever the reasons, I hope that the Minister of State will tell us a little more about the provisions of clause 7 and why it is so necessary.

Clause 8 says:

> "The Commissioner shall make an annual report ... to the Prime Minister"

and:

> "The Prime Minister shall lay before each House of Parliament a copy of each annual report made by the Commissioner under subsection (5) ... together with a statement as to whether any matter has been excluded from that copy in pursuance of subsection (7)".

I accept that the commissioner should report to the Prime Minister and that the Prime Minister should have some right of veto. This is a matter for the commissioner to decide. As I said in an intervention, the commissioner— a post provided for under the Security Service Act 1989—sets out on page 2 of his report the number of complaints received and investigated in 1992 and the number received in 1991 but investigated in 1992. So I am not clear about the purpose of the intervention of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason).

What concerns people is not that matter or the fact that the numbers are not given—they are given—but what the commissioner has to say, later in page 2, about complaints. Incidentally, none of the complaints is upheld. Commenting on the fact that 40 complaints were referred to him, the commissioner says:

> "In no case have I made a determination on the basis that a warrant has been issued in relation to the complainant's property. This fact may lead some to speculate that members of the service are carrying out operations involving unlawful interference with property, such as installing eavesdropping devices, without the authorisation of a warrant issued under the act. Indeed, from time to time I am asked whether I am satisfied that such operations are not being carried out. Although I cannot answer the question categorically, because it is not my function to review the operations of the service, and, in the nature of things, such operations, if they existed, would be concealed".

That is what concerns the public. We need to be able to call people to account, not so that we can ask about the nature of operations but to satisfy ourselves, on the basis of inquiries by the tribunal and the commissioner and by a committee, that the public have as much assurance as it is possible to give that these organisations are acting within the law and that there is proper supervision of warrants. I am not against the warrants—it would be absurd to take that view—but I believe that we need more safeguards.

Mr. Allason: When the 1989 Act was passed, the commissioner was given very wide powers, and some of us believed that he would have power to investigate and report on complaints. In subsequent reports, there was no reference to the number of complaints. Now there is such reference, but only as a result of pressure. More to the point, the commissioner declined to investigate any complaint relating to any episode that had been initiated before 10 December 1989. So while many complaints were made, they were all ruled out of order.

Dr. Cunningham: The obvious response to that intervention is that presumably the commissioner did not have the statutory powers to investigate before then.

Clause 10 illustrates what lies at the heart of some of the differences between the two sides of the House over this legislation. That clause describes the establishment of the Intelligence and Security Committee, which will not be a Select Committee or a parliamentary committee, but will be made up of Members of Parliament. It will not, therefore, be governed by the normal rules that apply to Select Committees. Apparently, the issue of privilege will not apply, although the application of the Official Secrets Act 1989 might circumvent that problem.

What sort of committee will it be? It will not be a Select Committee or a committee of privy councillors—it will be all the better for that as neither I nor the Home Affairs Select Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), am persuaded that every member of such a committee should be a privy councillor.

I am also worried about the size of the committee. Six members are proposed, with a quorum of three. In the circumstances, it may be difficult for it to achieve that quorum, especially since at least one member of the Lords and one Member of the Commons must be present.

We have considerable misgivings about the nature and size of the committee. It should be a Select Committee and it should be larger. We can discuss that matter in the Standing Committee, where my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) will be leading for the

Opposition. We should be thinking of a membership of the order of nine members and then a quorum could be more readily achieved, as could agreement between the parties involved about who should be a member.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I take my right hon. Friend back to my intervention during the Foreign Secretary's speech. If the committee is neither parliamentary nor a Select Committee, but almost a quasi-departmental committee with Members of Parliament nominated to it by the Prime Minister, and if its members are subject to the Official Secrets Act—as was said in the House—why, in principle, should it not be able to ask questions about operational matters? I could understand my right hon. Friend's reservations if the committee were to be a Select Committee, but as it will be a quasi-departmental committee with Members of Parliament on it, why can it not ask questions on issues about which those Members are concerned? They will not be reporting back to Parliament.

Dr. Cunningham: As always, I give my hon. Friend full marks for persistence. Whatever the status of the committee, it should not be able to interfere in operational matters. I made that clear at the outset and I am not persuaded to change my mind.

I am also concerned that the committee will apparently not have the power to call witnesses and commission papers to be brought before it. That is another weakness for a committee that is seriously expected to deal with scrutiny or oversight. Those are all serious matters and they dramatically weaken the proposal at the heart of this legislation.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the committee should not report to Parliament but to the Prime Minister. I do not regard that as parliamentary scrutiny or oversight, because the Prime Minister has the right to veto sections of its report—I call it prime ministerial oversight and scrutiny.

If we are to have an effective parliamentary watchdog to oversee such matters and to probe and scrutinise, it should report to Parliament. It cannot legitimately be called a parliamentary committee unless it does so. That is another major difference of opinion between the Opposition and the Government over the details of the legislation.

Of course, it is okay for commissioners to report to the Prime Minister—that is what they are appointed for—but a parliamentary committee should report and be answerable to the House for the conduct of its affairs.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does the right hon. Gentleman concede that the description of the committee in the Bill, where it states that it will examine "expenditure, administration and policy", gives it a remarkably wide brief, given that is within the wall of secrecy?

Dr. Cunningham: There would be little point in having a committee that was not within what the Foreign Secretary termed the wall of secrecy—

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Circle.

Dr. Cunningham: Okay, whether it is a circle or a wall, there would be no point in having the committee unless it was able to penetrate whatever geometric figure that the Foreign Secretary cares to use to describe the boundaries of the activities of the security and intelligence services. That is something else which we need to redress during the passage of this legislation—

Mr. Richard Shepherd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I am in danger of taking up too much time, but I shall give way.

Mr. Shepherd: The right hon. Gentleman will have noticed that the committee will look into the security and intelligence services and Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham. As I failed, could he try to tickle out from the Foreign Secretary the fact that the commissioner for GCHQ and for the intelligence services will be the same person as the commissioner for the security services? Similarly, membership of the tribunal for GCHQ and the intelligence services will be the same as that for the security services.

Dr. Cunningham: I had come to the conclusion that that was the case and that the same person and organisations would deal with both, but I am sure that the Minister of State will confirm or deny that when he replies to the debate.

I have another question on schedule 3 to the Bill which states in paragraph 3(1)(b)(ii) that information sought may be denied

> "because the Secretary of State has determined that it should not be disclosed."

That is another sweeping power. The committee will not have the right to certain documents and memorandums because the Secretary of State has the power to say no. That is another great weakness in the powers of the committee that the House is being asked to establish.

I must press on to other aspects of the proposals and to the omission in this or any other Government decision of any redress for people employed at GCHQ. To the Government's continuing shame, GCHQ employees are denied the right to join a trade union of their choice. That decade-long denial of a basic freedom and democratic right is deplorable. It is clear that the mulish obstinacy of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary is to blame for the failure to end the stalemate that has existed for so long. Trade unions have met all the requirements that the Government have placed on them following their discussions with Sir Robin Butler—discussions established willingly after a suggestion by the Prime Minister, I believe.

Britain has been condemned and will, no doubt, be condemned again by the International Labour Organisation, which said that banning unions at GCHQ contravened article 87 and is a unique occurrence in western democracies. No other country and Government have taken such action and it does not bear even the simplest scrutiny.

The Government have given up the nonsense about threats to our security and betrayal. We know from our history that most betrayals of this country were not perpetrated by trade union members. That was always not only nonsense, but an insulting piece of nonsense. The record clearly shows from where and by whom our country has been sadly betrayed. Apparently, the Government now argue that if people were allowed to belong to a trade union of their choice, there would be a "conflict of loyalty". I cannot for the life of me see how that argument can stand the simplest test.

[Dr. Cunningham]

Why is it that the permanent secretaries of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the permanent secretaries in the Ministry of Defence, the permanent secretaries in the Home Office—who are members of the First Division Association, an organisation affiliated to the Trades Union Congress—do not have that conflict of loyalty? Why are they trusted to handle highly secret and sensitive material? Much lower ranking employees and officers at GCHQ, however, apparently pose some threat to our national security. Of course, it is absurd. A former Secretary of State for Defence, Sir John Nott, blew all the arguments about operational matters at GCHQ out of the water when he said that at no time had the efficiency of GCHQ ever been diminished as a result of trade union activities. It is a disgrace that that state of affairs continues.

In a parliamentary answer, I was pleased to be told by the Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that the Government

"have no plans to withdraw from the International Labour Organisation."—*[Official Report, 15 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 715.]*

It is good news because there have been suggestions to the contrary—that the Government might avoid the international humiliation that is coming their way. Even though it may be difficult, we shall continue to pursue the matter to the end of the passage of the legislation and beyond. I reiterate unequivocally the determination of a Labour Government to restore the basic democratic right to people at GCHQ.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is pursuing a false argument. Between 1979 and 1981, 10,000 staff days were lost at GCHQ through industrial action. The unions are aware that disruption occurred. When the Government withdrew union rights in 1984, they brought GCHQ in line with the other security and intelligence agencies. There is no accusation of disloyalty or betrayal; there was simply a desire to prevent the disruption at GCHQ such as had occurred in preceding years.

Dr. Cunningham: I do not know whether we take what the right hon. Gentleman said as a retraction of the accusations of disloyalty, but such accusations and threats to our security were thick on the ground. Trade unions were described as the enemy within by the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, so it is no good his trying to wipe the slate clean and pretend that the accusations were not levelled. They were levelled and formed the original basis of the Government's argument. I have made clear the position of my party on the issue. I have no doubt that the International Labour Organisation will make its position clear. The right hon. Gentleman can squirm as much as he likes, but he knows that he and his colleagues are denying people a basic human right, which they are entitled to have and which we shall restore.

Reading the speeches of Lord Callaghan of Cardiff and Lord Jenkins of Hillhead during consideration of the Bill in the House of Lords, I found confirmation that things have not always been well within the security services. We know that there have been similar problems in the Secret Intelligence Service in years gone by. The Scott inquiry should have some interesting and important things to say about more recent events. Now, I for one would like to know what the Secret Intelligence Service knows about the scandal surrounding the financing of the Pergau dam in Malaysia, a matter in which the right hon. Gentleman appears to have played a foolish, if not ignominious, role.

History tells us that we should be vigilant about our intelligence and security services because there is, and always will be, a conflict between liberty and security. The latter is pursued for the collective good, but we must be vigilant to ensure that our essential liberties are not eroded in the necessary pursuit of intelligence and security. The challenge for us all is to get the balance right. The Bill's provisions, particularly those in clause 10, do not meet that challenge.

The Bill is welcome because it is another step towards ending the deeply conservative, secretive culture of government in our country. I welcome it because it gives Parliament more, although not sufficient, powers to scrutinise what is done at taxpayers' expense and in the national interest. It is interesting that, in 1988, the Government—because the right hon. Gentleman, who was then Home Secretary, recognised that constitutional issues were involved in security services legislation—moved that the legislation should be considered by a Committee of the whole House. They should do so again today. If they do not, I shall.

The Bill represents a fundamental change of mind by the Government and the Secretary of State in particular. In that sense, it is victory for the arguments that we have advanced over the years and we shall go on advancing those detailed arguments in Committee.

5.6 pm

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): I am glad that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) welcomed the Bill in principle, but the central point of his attack on my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was extraordinarily badly judged. Near the end of his speech, the right hon. Gentleman showed that he had studied the House of Lords *Hansard*, which is littered with former Foreign Secretaries and Home Secretaries of a Labour persuasion saying why they were in favour of the proposals. My right hon. Friend is marked out as the only person who, in office, has taken that view and determined to do something about it. It is a matter for congratulation that he has taken responsibility and not used the ease of life on the Back Benches to reflect on what he might have done.

Today, there was a seizure of Semtex in Accrington —I do not think that it was identified by a passing panda patrol car. Undoubtedly, the intelligence services had a hand in that. Their work is vital in the fight against terrorism in these islands, in Europe and throughout the world. We do not need reminding today that that work has never been more important. The threats that we face now are of a complexity, variety and degree of danger and seriousness that mean that the importance of the intelligence services in their different roles has never been greater. Those roles will not remain the same; they will have to change in terms of emphasis and the relative roles of the Security Service, GCHQ and the Secret Intelligence Service.

My right hon. Friend referred to the risk of nuclear proliferation—not through Governments, but through private enterprise. We know that there are people who have cash and there are customers for such materials. The dissolution of the old Soviet Union and the existing massive arsenal produce a great risk of the material dissipating into unsuitable hands. Biological and chemical warfare presents challenges of a different, but incredibly, dangerous sort to society. The threat of blackmail from different groups is real. My right hon. Friend also referred to crime and drugs.

Drawing on my experience as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and, subsequently, for Defence, I recognise the debt that we owe to the Security and Intelligence Services. Indeed, I recognise the debt that many people owe, but do not know that they owe. Sir Percy Cradock said that one of the roles of the security services is to prevent things from happening that might otherwise cause great stress and suffering. Many of those can never be discussed, but let no one, by virtue of that silence, suggest that the danger does not exist.

Characteristically, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did the House a great service in illustrating with examples, in a way that has never been done in the House before, the sort of work recently done by the security services for the protection of life and the prevention of outrage.

The security services serve our country, but are also responsible to it. The issue facing us is how to ensure that they can do their work, in which secrecy is vital, without allowing them total freedom, unaccountability or independence of action. They must be given that essential element of secrecy in their work yet sufficient accountability and structure of control that our country can have confidence that they are operating at all times in the national interest, in the fullest sense of that phrase.

By virtue of the secrecy under which they operate, they have a unique opportunity to abuse their power and authority. But they also have a unique opportunity to be abused by people who can make all sorts of allegations against them. By their nature, those can never be challenged and may never see the light of day.

It is therefore in everyone's interest that we have a structure that allows the best possible control, recognising the special circumstances in which the security services work. As my right hon. Friend said, that is the dilemma faced by other countries. The Library has done us a service in producing an analysis of other countries' attempts to work in that area. Interesangly, they are all slightly different and have sought to address the problem recognising their different circumstances.

It is essential to strike the right balance of secrecy. In the offices that I held, I discovered that the knowledge about operations and the desire to know a little more about what is going on is extremely seductive. Often, and quite rightly, Ministers have no idea about operations that are taking place. In many circumstances, it is essential that the need-to-know principle be operated as tightly as possible, not because people are trying to do things that they should not do, but because people's lives are often at risk in those operations.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is no longer in the Chamber. In an intervention he suggested that a member of our security services should be required to undertake an operation advised on by the hon. Member in some wider committee role. I was delighted that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quickly made it clear that he was not in favour of a committee intruding into operational matters. Obviously, that would not be realistic.

It is essential that we give the confidence that secrecy will be protected, not just to those who serve at present, whose lives as we stand here now are at risk in various ways, but in the interests of future recruitment to the service. It is alleged that, when the United States Congress was moving down a route that some people in the Central Intelligence Agency feared was too expansionist, our intelligence services recruited a number of their people who felt that their lives and security could be at risk if the freedom of information legislation removed the protection that secrecy gave them.

That issue is important if we are to have effective intelligence services in the future. This is a competition. Some people can make effective agents and they are known in other countries. We know that some of them sell their services, but they will be concerned to know that if they commit their lives to a service in that way, it is a service with an employer they can trust and who will protect their secrecy and their lives for the service that they give. That is a key issue in the effectiveness of our security services.

Today, we are discussing how our country can feel confident that the security services that we fund, which provide our country's defence and protect its national interests, operate in a proper and acceptable way. No matter what the calibre and integrity of the Ministers responsible or the directors whom the Secretary of State appoints, to satisfy public confidence there needs to be a separate assessment and an ability to assess. Although it is difficult to get the balance right, the proposals of the commissioner, the tribunal and the committee are a sensible way to start. They may develop, but I believe that the balance is right to start this new development.

The key elements in the committee's obligations are expenditure and administration policy. The right hon. Member for Copeland referred to the alleged cost. One article said that it was not Her Majesty's Secret Service but "Her Majesty's expensive service", and that is true. I shall break one element of secrecy about my past responsibilities. My right hon. Friend may remember the most ludicrous meeting that I have ever attended—the public expenditure survey round. I was sitting with a poor benighted Chief Secretary, faced by the great Secretaries of State, the permanent secretaries and the directors general of the various agencies arguing about correct expenditure levels for our country's security and intelligence services. It is extremely important that that be conducted in a more careful and continuous way.

We need to consider the balance to be struck between confidence in the cost—the service is expensive—and confidence in the quality of the administration and control. The right hon. Member for Copeland referred to examples of certain elements of the service. Whether those concerned factional disputes or unclear authority, clearly the administration and organisation were inadequate. The public have a right to feel that they are adequate and that the policies pursued are in our national interest.

A number of amendments were moved in another place about whether it was a significant economic issue or of significant national interest. The right hon. Member for Copeland will no doubt move such amendments, but I do not know whether they need to be framed in legislation. Nobody could argue that those points are not valid, but it is a question of judgment. We need an external assessment before we can be confident that those judgments are being correctly made.

Mr Rogers: In relation to important issues for the economic well-being of the country, the Foreign Secretary in another guise said that the Bill applied to such matters as key commodities, yet during discussion of the Bill in another place the Lord Chancellor said that there were also other considerations. Perhaps from his great and vast experience, the right hon. Gentleman could give us some idea of what he considers would effect the economic well-being of the country.

Mr. King: It has been specifically determined by Congress and the United States Administration, which directed the United States intelligence agencies to combat industrial espionage against United States technology. Different economic considerations may be regarded as key areas of importance to our national economic situation.

The importance of establishing confidence in the intelligence services has another aspect. A feature of terrorism that I know well from my own experience is that terrorists have a twin-track ambition. The first is, by the nature of their activities, to terrorise, to intimidate and to compel. At the same time, they actively try to undermine the institutions of our free society that defend us and to seek to frustrate them. It is no coincidence that at a time of heightened terrorism, various allegations are made not just against the police and the system of law and justice, but against the intelligence services. It is part of the campaign that terrorists wage to undermine the institutions that we value to protect our way of life and our democratic society.

It is no good simply complaining that it must be an unfair attack on the intelligence services; we need to take the necessary steps. My right hon. Friend is showing great intelligence in recognising in his proposals the need to respond to that and to bolster the defences of democracy. His proposals are not just in the interests of Parliament or greater public accountability, but in the interests of the services themselves, so that they can command greater public respect and confidence and thereby be more resistant to the charges, challenges and allegations that may be made against them.

The Bill will put a heavy responsibility on members of both Houses. It will be difficult for the Committee Members, within or outside the wall of secrecy, to master the responsibilities that the Bill lays upon them, but I believe that it is the right structure.

I query only one small point. In another place, it was suggested by the Lord Chancellor that the committee might include one member of another House and that it might not be an equal division of three and three. The Bill requires a quorum which must include one member of the House of Lords, and that if he is not there the committee will not be able to meet. It is a small technical point, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend will understand.

The Bill refers to the laying of an annual report. It requires that the committee

> "shall make an annual report on the discharge of their functions to the Prime Minister and may at any time report to him on any matter relating to the discharge of their functions."

It then states:

> "The Prime Minister shall lay before each House of Parliament a copy of each annual report".

It does not say the Prime Minister shall lay before each House of Parliament any other report that the committee may make at any time. I appreciate that the point may be raised in Committee, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will deal with it today.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, the Bill marks a further step in the progress that he has made, and for which he deserves great credit, away from the lunacy of the unavowed services with which we have lived for so long. I suspect that the answer to the question from the right hon. Member for Copeland about whether people have committed unauthorised acts overseas is that they did not have to be authorised because they were not avowed, and if they did not exist they could not have been authorised to do things. That is now ready to be changed and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on a measure that is in the interests of our country and the intelligence services.

5.24 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I begin by endorsing what has been said by both Front-Bench spokesmen about the patriotism, courage, devotion and skill of members of the security services. It comes as no surprise that the leaders of those services welcome the Bill.

Let me say straight away that I welcome the Bill. I am prepared to congratulate the Government, and particularly the Prime Minister. The hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) put his finger on it accurately when he said that previous Prime Ministers of all political persuasions have been extraordinarily timid about releasing control of the security and intelligence services, even to selected and supposedly perfectly reliable Members of the House—not that I am suggesting that there are any unreliable Members.

I propose for the purposes of today's debate to confine my remarks to clause 10 and schedule 3, which relate to the establishment of the committee. Having congratulated the Prime Minister on his forward step, I think that he is being far more timid than necessary.

The Foreign Secretary has had to defend the proposition that the committee should not be a Select Committee of the House. I have yet to hear any reason at all why it should not be a Select Committee.

Every single one of the various elements in setting up a committee—its size, the people to be nominated to it, its powers and the publication of the report—can be totally protected by the Prime Minister. His interests and the interests of the Government and the security services need be at risk in no way, as I shall seek to show, by giving the committee the powers of a Select Committee.

For example, it would not have to rely on the Committee of Selection for its size or membership; that can be determined by prime ministerial resolution. It would not have to go through the Committee of Selection, the independence of which some hon. Members on both sides of the House have been sceptical about from time to time with respect to the influence of the Whips. I am glad that my Chief Whip is not here to hear me say that.

Everyone knows that the membership of the committee will be decided by the Prime Minister, and that nobody will get on the committee without his approval having to be enshrined in primary legislation. Nothing is laid down in the Standing Orders of the House about the size of a Select Committee; that can be determined by prime ministerial resolution.

The Government cannot be sensitive about the publication of the report, because clearly sidelining would apply. No committee would produce a report containing sensitive passages that the Government say should not be published. I consider that absolutely inconceivable, and I pray in aid my experience on Defence Committees.

The only thing about which the Government may be sensitive in giving the committee the powers of a Select Committee is the timing of a report. The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) may have come close to the nub a few moments ago, when he pointed out that the Bill provides for the Prime Minister to publish, suitably excised of course, the committee's annual report, but makes no provision whatever for requiring him to publish any interim reports.

The committee has a remedy in its own hands; it can tack on to its report anything that was in the interim reports, if it so decides. I cannot imagine that only the timing is inhibiting the Government from giving the committee the powers of a Select Committee. I should like to know what other reason there is.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): One point that will be different from the normal conventions of a Select Committee—perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can say whether this would be brought within his proposed changes to procedure—is that, in effect, the Prime Minister can replace a member of the committee.

Dr. Gilbert: I have observed that point, and I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, but those things could also be done by resolution of the House or prime ministerial motion at any time—for example, by saying that X shall no longer be a member, and that Y shall be appointed in his or her place.

I shall make a few brief Committee-type points on clause 10 and schedule 3. I raised earlier the question of privilege. I do not consider that an unimportant matter, unless it is conceived that the only witnesses that the committee will interview will be the heads of the security services.

I do not know whether that is at the back of the Government's mind, but if so, clearly, questions of privilege would be otiose. In any case, the Prime Minister will have control over the excising from the report of any matters that he considers to be sensitive, and therefore anything that he would consider to be a breach of privilege and defamatory.

It escapes me why the committee's proceedings should not be covered by privilege. That relates to witnesses other than official witnesses whose evidence might be published in the report. It seems inconceivable that the committee will merely report to the Prime Minister a set of conclusions. Presumably when it sends its report to the Prime Minister, it will give the reasons and the evidence that lie beneath those conclusions. That is why one needs, in my judgment, the protection of privilege if one is to interview any witnesses other than the heads of the security services.

The other question that concerns me is the powers of this committee of parliamentarians. There is nothing in the Bill to give the committee the power to send for persons and papers. That is a fundamental power of any parliamentary committee. If the committee is not to have that power, is that because it is conceived that the only people from whom the committee will take evidence are the heads of the security and intelligence services and GCHQ? I cannot imagine that that is the case, because I have reason to believe that there will be provision in the Bill for the committee to travel.

Obviously, if one is to inquire into the efficiency of those services, one must have discussions with official representatives of the services abroad, with whom they will have co-operated, unless one is to take everything on face value—and only a pretty spineless committee would do that. One will also need to discuss with members of other oversight committees in other countries. Therefore, it seems essential that, if the committee is to go outside the restricted range of the heads of the two services and GCHQ, it must have powers to send for persons and papers.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater made an important point about the quorum. I, too, have made that point elsewhere before now, and I hope that that matter will be taken care of in Committee.

I shall now deal with a couple of other important points that are not touched on in the Bill. The first is access. In another place, the Lord Chancellor said that the committee would have access to the Prime Minister at all times. It is in the Bill that it will be able to send reports to the Prime Minister at any time that it considers suitable. I hope that the access is intended to go wider than that.

From the language that the Lord Chancellor used, I take it that the right of immediate access to the Prime Minister is similar to the right of access that the chiefs of staff have to the Prime Minister on matters that they consider necessary and which are urgently to be brought to his attention. I should be grateful if we could have confirmation that that is the Government's view, and their interpretation of what the Lord Chancellor said.

Secondly, I think it extremely important that the committee has access to the Comptroller and Auditor General, because no Committee in the House has anything like the number of staff at its disposal that the CAG has. He already has access to the operations of the services. Without that access specifically awarded to the committee, its powers will be considerably diminished.

On membership of the committee, like my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I congratulate the Government on not confining membership to Privy Councillors. There is an incredible mystique in this place about Privy Councillors. Personally, I would not trust some of them within miles of the committee—I will not name them, but they are to be found on both sides of the House.

An awful lot of thoroughly respectable and reliable hon. Members are not Privy Councillors, and I would welcome seeing them on the committee. When one sees how cavalier some Privy Councillors are with their Privy Councillor's oath—they shall be nameless, but there are those who rush out to commit their Cabinet memories to their publishers —it is extraordinary that they were ever of a mind to take the oath in the first place.

Mr. Winnick: My right hon. Friend makes the point that the committee is not confined to Privy Councillors, although the Bill does not say that. Does he agree that it is almost certain that the majority of the six will be former Cabinet Ministers, who will almost certainly be Privy Councillors? I for one will be extremely surprised if more than one member is not a Privy Councillor. Although that is not in the Bill, for obvious reasons, I do not share my right hon. Friend's optimism.

Dr. Gilbert: I am obliged as always to the wisdom coming from my hon. Friend and parliamentary neighbour who is the Member for Walsall, North. If he has recommendations to make to the Prime Minister about the membership of the committee, no doubt he will make them.

One piece of ambiguity that arose today was from what the Foreign Secretary said compared to what the Lord Chancellor said. I should be grateful for clarification. I can assure the House that I am not quoting the Lord Chancellor out of context, but he said:

> "the committee will have access to operational information but only in so far as that does not transgress the criteria for sensitivity and the other criteria for withholding information, which are specified".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 3 February 1994; Vol. 551, c. 1414.]

That seems to mean that there will be a whole lot of areas in which the committee will have access to operation information.

In other words, the words of the Lord Chancellor, which are repeated elsewhere in his intervention, seem unambiguous. But schedule 3(4) says:

> "The following information is sensitive information for the purposes of paragraph 3 above—
>
> (b) information about particular operations which have been, are being or are proposed to be undertaken in pursuance of any of the functions of those bodies".

That seems to be a pretty blanket elimination of any operational information whatever.

On the face of it, the Lord Chancellor's assurance in the other place is worthless, unless the Government are proposing at least to remove paragraph 4(b) from schedule 3. I quite understand paragraph 4(a), which relates to the ability to identify individual members of the service or their operational methods. When the Minister is winding up, I should be grateful if he could shed some light on that.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: That may be qualified by schedule 3(1)(b)(i), which refers to information that, as well as being sensitive,

> "in his opinion"—

that is, the opinion of the director of GCHQ or that of the director-general of the security service—

> "should not be made available under paragraph (a)".

Dr. Gilbert: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his assistance. However, I had already read that passage in conjunction with the paragraph to which I referred, and I should like to hear the Minister's interpretation rather than the hon. Gentleman's.

I hope that we shall be given an assurance about the sidelining of the report. I trust that the Government envisage a natural discussion between the Committee and the Prime Minister's officials—not him personally, of course—about how much of the report will be published.

I have a few years' experience, having been a member of the Defence Select Committee and, before that, a member of the defence and external affairs sub-committee of the Select Committee on Expenditure. When we produced a report, we would produce it in toto—with no sidelining—and then send it to the officials in the executive branch to find out what they thought.

A perfectly proper process of negotiation and debate would follow. We would say, "For heaven's sake, you need not take this bit out; what on earth is secret about it?", and they would say, "You don't understand: it relates to this and that." A trading process would then occur. The hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) has been a distinguished member of the Defence Select Committee for many years, and took part in many such negotiations; he will confirm what I have said. I hope that the Government will make the same procedure available to the oversight committee.

I am disappointed that the Government have not felt able to trust hon. Members more. As well as spending several years on the Committees that I mentioned during the 1974-79 Parliament, I spent eight years on the Defence Select Committee after 1979; in the intervening time, I spent nearly three years at the Ministry of Defence.

In all that time, I was not aware of a single leak of classified information from a single one of those Committees; all the leaks of official information came from the Ministry itself. That must be the experience of anyone who has been a Defence Minister. I challenge any hon. Member to quarrel with my account of events—and I cannot believe that much has changed since then.

I hope that the Government will show a little more confidence in the House, and give the committee's members more power and authority. They will not lose any serious powers of control. I assure the Government that their fears are entirely unnecessary; but, having said that, let me add that I hope the House will give the Bill a fair wind.

5.42 pm

Sir Archibald Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): I welcome the Bill. I am pretty sure that I would not have done so 10 years ago, but I believe that the international security position has changed dramatically since then. I feel that we can now risk greater openness in regard to the operations of our intelligence services, for there is no doubt that a degree of risk is involved in appointing any kind of parliamentary committee to oversee their activities.

Despite the disintegration of the Soviet threat, other threats are emerging—not the least being terrorism, the expansion of the drug trade and the failure of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We must face up to that failure. As a Minister, I had to say that the treaty was working very well, but I do not really believe that; I believe that it has been a failure in general. Alarmingly, it does not seem to be stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons across the world: many nations are acquiring a nuclear capability.

I am also concerned to note that, despite the efforts of our intelligence services, we do not seem to know the details of other countries' nuclear weapon-developing capabilities. At the beginning of the Gulf war, an assessment suggested that Iraq was still 10 years away from nuclear capability; after the war, when we were able to probe deeply into the whole operation, we found that the country was within 12 months of being able to produce nuclear weapons. That is very alarming, and suggests that our assessments of other countries may be proved inaccurate as well: they may be much nearer to nuclear capability than we think.

It must be right to put security and intelligence service employees on to a statutory basis. I am very pleased that they feel comfortable with the Bill, which will make their duties much clearer and less equivocal. Let me echo my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr.King) in stressing the risks and threats involved in the work of many of those employees: some risk their lives for little return, material or otherwise. We owe them a great debt. It is easy to be harshly critical of intelligence service workers, and to believe any malicious rumours that may be circulating;

they are in an extremely difficult position, in that they cannot defend themselves publicly. The Bill, to some extent, recognises the debt that we owe them.

It is important that GCHQ is being brought under the statutory umbrella. Given the technical nature of its operations and its relatively small interface with the public, I doubt whether it will produce many problems. I suspect that the secret intelligence services are in a rather different category, in that there will always be people who feel that they are being victimised in one way or another by those services. There is bound to be a constant stream of complaints, imaginary or otherwise. That problem must be dealt with, but I think that the Bill does so to some extent.

It is excellent that we are putting the whole business of the Foreign Secretary's issue of warrants on to a statutory basis, and that his authorisation of intelligence operations is being put on a more sensible footing. It must be right to appoint a commissioner—much along the lines proposed in the Security Service Act 1989—to examine the question of warrants and authorisations, and to allow the tribunal to investigate complaints. I feel strongly that the investigation of complaints should be the task of the tribunal. It has some powers to deal with such matters, but not enough, and it is sensible to place the onus there. I should be concerned if it were shifted to a parliamentary committee which is not in the position—or should not put itself into a position—of having to handle such matters.

It has already been pointed out that the tribunal has not the power to compel witnesses to attend, or to call for papers. Perhaps the Ministers will consider giving it extra powers; we should feel very much more comfortable if it had them.

I come now to the question of the committee of parliamentarians and the great debate as to whether its members should be Privy Councillors. It will obviously be of great benefit to keep the committee relatively small. The more members the committee has, the more likely it is that leaks or mistakes will be made by Members of Parliament —who, let us face it, are not renowned for their discretion. Briefing the press seems to occupy most of the daylight hours of many of my colleagues. It will be quite a cultural change for them to become involved in any part of the Government's activities in which people are not briefing the press day and night. The smaller the committee is, therefore, the more likely it is to be secure. There seems to be an almost direct relationship between the size of a committee and the likelihood that it will operate in a reasonably secure way.

The establishment of the committee will be a useful step towards parliamentary scrutiny and will, to some extent, meet the criticisms of people who are worried that the security services have been operating with no parliamentary oversight.

The remit of the committee seems to be very broad. I echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater in saying that it is important that the committee operates on a need-to-know basis. I do not think that that extends to detailed operational matters. It would be a great onus on the members of the committee if they knew about detailed operational matters because if, by some misfortune, they were to let any of that information slip it could result in agents being betrayed and killed. That is not a responsibility which I would want.

I think back to the time of the Gulf war. If my right hon. Friend and I had made one small mistake in the information that we gave, we could have put men's lives in danger. That is not a responsibility which I should like to have if I were a member of the committee. I would not wish to be continuously apprised of all the secret information about operational matters.

Parliament needs to scrutinise the considerable sums of money that are spent by the security services—as the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) mentioned. It is right that Parliament has a scrutiny to ensure that we obtain value for money.

It is important for the committee to convince itself that correct procedures are being followed in operational matters, but it is more important than anything else to have some parliamentary input into the setting of priorities in the operations of our security and intelligence services. The pattern of threats to our security changes daily. It does no harm to broaden the debate about what our priorities should be, where the money should be spent and where people should be deployed and things done. It is difficult to achieve a balance in the allocation of resources to our intelligence services. I believe that it would be of great benefit if that debate were broadened by a parliamentary committee, so I very much welcome the Bill and congratulate my right hon. Friends on bringing it forward.

5.53 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) has a well-deserved reputation in the House for parliamentary candour, but he took quite a few breaths away a few moments ago when he announced that what he had told us so recently from the Front Bench about the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was something which he did not really believe. That is characteristic of him.

I recall a celebrated occasion, before the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell was a Minister, when he presented to the House a petition on behalf of his constituents opposing the construction of the M25, and a week later he popped up and presented another petition on behalf of his constituents in favour of the construction of the M25. There were puzzled faces in the House. I well remember his saying that we were entitled to know his own position, and that he had decided resolutely to remain on the fence as it was the only comfortable place to be in the circumstances. I believe, therefore, that he has demonstrated, then and again this afternoon, that he would be an excellent member of the committee that is proposed in the Bill.

I must not be tempted to stray from the few words that I want to address to the House. Let me begin by saying, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat party, that I join the Foreign Secretary and the shadow Foreign Secretary in paying tribute to the work of the intelligence services at every level. The fact that we are discussing scrutiny mechanisms is not a reflection on their dedication or competence. I pay all members of the intelligence services, past and present, full tribute—including the 14 sacked trade unionists at GCHQ Cheltenham, a subject to which I will return later.

My party gives an unqualified welcome to the principle of the Bill. We will support it tonight, because we have a long-standing policy and a long-standing view that there is a need for parliamentary scrutiny of the security services.

My mind goes back to when our anxieties were first provoked. It was during the period of the Labour Government—I think it was the Labour Government under Harold Wilson—when there was great anxiety in the

[Sir David Steel]

House, in the press and among the public about the scale of telephone tapping. Naturally, it was impossible to get Ministers to answer on the subject and no one knew whether the scale of telephone tapping, which was excessive, was authorised or unauthorised. There was no way in which the anxieties of the House could be resolved. If we had had a committee at that time, it would at least have been able to make a report on the matter.

Our view was that the proper course was to have a committee of Privy Councillors, and that was the view that we took when I was leader of the party. I will say later why we took that view. As recently as the passage of the Security Service Act 1989, the lack of parliamentary scrutiny caused us to vote against the legislation.

I therefore welcome the Government's change of heart and the broad outline of the Bill, but I wish to ask some questions, which I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will answer later, about the definition of expenditure, administration and policy, the words used in the Bill.

First, we need to be sure how wide are the remits and the powers of the scrutiny that is proposed. As to policy, for example, reference has already been made to events in Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait. To what extent were the security services involved in the decisions? I do not want to trespass on the ground being covered by the Scott inquiry, but it is obvious that the intelligence services must have given advice to Ministers about the process of rearming Iraq after the Iran-Iraq war, as a counterbalance, supposedly, to the growing power of Iran.

Secondly, there is the subject of GCHQ and unionisation there. A few months ago, it appeared that the Government were likely to reach some agreement on the basis of a no-strike agreement at GCHQ, but that possibility fizzled out and came to nothing. Will the committee be able to consider a happy resolution of that matter as a matter of policy?

I agree with the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell about priorities. Will the committee be able to examine the remit of the security services, especially in the sectors of political surveillance and the internal political intelligence role? I ask that question because of what was said by the former Home Secretary, my noble Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, when he recounted in another place his experience, which he could best describe as

> "an inherent lack of frankness, an ingrowing mono-culture and a confidence-destroying tendency to engage in the most devastating internal feuds"

— pretty strong language from someone who was in charge of the service. He argued that he was doubtful about the internal political intelligence role. He said that he assumed that the object was to help Ministers with useful information, but he went on to say that, in his experience,

> "the organisation concerned consumed far more of"

his

> "time as a Minister with its own internal squabbles than any useful information which it ever provided. The balance was distinctly negative."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 December 1993; Vol. 550, c. 1034.]

That is merely the view of one former Home Secretary, but we must take it seriously. I should have thought that one of the early objectives of the new committee should be to ensure that the policy of the services in those spheres was correct. I should like confirmation of how wide the definition of policy is to be.

Similarly, is what we all know to be the widespread practice that was revealed in the Matrix Churchill case —the employment of business men in foreign countries as part-time agents—a sensible form of administration? Will the committee ever enjoy the power of the relative committee in the United States Congress of overseeing the appointment of senior officials? Is that to be part of administration? Will the committee be able to examine individual cases? I am referring not to complaints of the kind to be dealt with by the tribunal but to individual operational cases that have gone wrong—not current cases —in order that lessons may be learnt for the future.

I was not happy with the Foreign Secretary's reply to my intervention. I should like to know whether the committee, like the commissioner, will be able to question the use, and the scale of use, of warrants issued by the Secretaries of State or whether that matter is to be reserved for the commissioner and denied to the committee. If so, that would be wrong. We need a little more clarification of what is meant by administration.

As for expenditure, various figures have been bandied about. The largest that I have heard is £900 million, which I find difficult to believe. The cold war has ended and, although that does not necessarily mean that all threats have disappeared, the taxpayer has the right to ask who is scrutinising the expenditure. The former Secretary of State for Defence gave us an insight into a meeting with a Chief Secretary about a public expenditure round which he thought was unsatisfactory. Clearly there is a great deal of work to be done.

Lord Howe of Aberavon, the former Foreign Secretary, said that there was a danger that the intelligence services would find new targets to replace those that had gone, in order to keep people busy. I do not think that that is too much of a danger. Like, I am sure, many others, I am deeply disappointed by the global picture left after the end of the cold war. There are new areas where the intelligence services are, sadly, now needed in order to find out exactly what is going on following the disintegration of the cold war super-power structure. I believe that the great majority of people will accept that the security services are needed in the war against drugs and terrorism and against arms traffic, particularly the traffic of nuclear and chemical weapons. However, if the secret service is to be worth having, it must remain secret, and here I come back to the difficulty of how the committee will operate.

To be fair, the Government have made a pretty good stab at solving the problem, but they have not necessarily got it quite right yet. I hope that they will be generous in Committee in allowing consideration of the many suggestions, some of which have been made today and others that will no doubt be made in the form of amendments.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) that if the committee is not covered by privilege—I do not understand why it should not be—it must be. If it does not yet have the power to send for persons and papers, such a power should be written into the Bill in Committee because the committee will not be able to operate effectively without it.

I suspect that I shall be in a minority, and I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman in this case, but I believe that there is a case for the committee's being composed of Privy Councillors. I do not say that because I believe that they have any particular wisdom, and I do not share the view that they belong to a cosy, conspiratorial club, but, unless the members are Privy Councillors, we might find that the fact that there are non-Privy Councillors on the committee is used as an excuse for failing to provide the committee with the information that it needs. I think I am right in saying that one of the members of the Franks inquiry was made a Privy Councillor after his appointment so that that very danger could be avoided. The House should consider the matter very carefully.

I am also concerned about the reference in the schedules to how the members of the committee are to be fired. There is a reference to members vacating their post if required to do so by the Prime Minister. In other words, the House will have no say in the matter, which will be decided by Prime Minister's fiat. One is bound to ask the rather odd question, what security of office will the members of the security committee have? If there are awkward members on the committee—the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) catches my eye, and he is a good example—will they find that their security of tenure suddenly comes to an end? I do not have an easy solution, but we should explore the problem further in Committee.

I shall make two final points relating to the committee's access to information. Schedule 3 refers to the fact that information may be denied to the committee if the Secretary of State has determined that it should not be disclosed. The phrase "Secretary of State" in an Act is a term of art, but we are entitled to know how many Secretaries of State are covered by that term. Presumably, it will not cover only the Foreign and Home Secretaries —it is likely that a large number could decide that the committee must be denied information. I should like further clarification of that issue.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East mentioned the report that the committee will make to the Prime Minister. I agree with his description of what should occur in the nature of bargaining about its contents—"bargaining" is perhaps the wrong word; I mean "intelligent discussion" —and about what may or may not be sidelined, but I believe strongly that if the committee disagrees with the Prime Minister at any point about what should be in the report, the fact of that disagreement must be made known to the House. The right hon. Member for Dudley, East shakes his head, but it is important that both Houses—the committee will comprise Members of both Houses—should be told of any disagreement between the Prime Minister and the watchdog body that we are proposing to establish.

It is not an easy matter and I do not subscribe to the view that the committee should be a routine Select Committee. It must be unique in its authority, style and powers and it is important that in Committee the Government are generous in considering suggestions to improve the mechanism, which, as a whole, I warmly welcome.

6.7 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I welcome the Bill and congratulate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on the way in which he presented it. He did so very fairly and he has done something that no one else in politics has ever done—he has brought the security services to the attention of the public and allowed what has often been the dark room of the secret services to be opened up.

I shall refer to a few of the items mentioned by the former leader of the Liberal party, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not do so immediately.

What is to be welcomed in the Bill? For the first time, the public can know that a committee is to be structured to oversee the expenditure, the administration and the policy of all the intelligence services and Government communication headquarters. Although not a parliamentary committee, it is sensible for it to be composed of senior Members of Parliament, not only from the party in government but from the parties in opposition. For the first time, the functions and purposes of the intelligence services are to be scrutinised and their finances inspected and commented on by persons outside the establishment circle of the Prime Minister, the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for Defence and the Home Secretary.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) centred on clause 10 and schedule 3. Mine will do the same. I am pleased that the committee will not investigate individual complaints that may be made against the intelligence services. That is to be done elsewhere. If the committee had to deal with those, heaven knows where it would be.

It seems to have been fair game for anyone to criticise the secret services and to make allegations that, on the whole—unless the Prime Minister sees fit to intervene, which more or less never happens—are not rebutted. It seems to have been open season for people to write whatever they like. That situation should not be accepted, now or in the future, and the Bill takes a giant step towards blocking that loophole. Equally, full and detailed criticism of the policy and overall management of any of the services can now be assessed and examined in a way that has never been possible before. That should be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, as it has been so far.

There is some disagreement about whether the committee should be a Select Committee. However, there is no doubt that if the committee is to do its job properly, most of the time it will be considering highly confidential information of particular concern for the security of the country as a whole. I remind right hon. and hon. Members that over the past three or four years there have been a great many leaks from the reports of Select Committees and that although they have been investigated by the Select Committees concerned and referred both to the Procedure Committee and to the Liaison Committee, it has not been possible to do anything to stop them. Indeed, the press has refused to refrain from publishing leaks of details from draft reports, which often have no real standing, and such leaks continue to be published.

Could not leaks from the committee—

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Emery: May I finish what I was saying?

Could not leaks from the new committee cause great harm to the work of the intelligence services and to the interests of the country? I suspect that in the real world much confidential and secret material would not be made available to the committee if it were a House of Commons Select Committee. That is sad, but, at the moment, true.

Mr. Mullin: The right hon. Gentleman is right about the need to avoid leaks, but I am sure that he will also confirm that the intelligence service has proved extremely

[Mr. Mullin]

leaky, albeit selectively, over the past 10 years or so—to the extent that journalists have been able to write books apparently with corroboration by its serving members. Should not the rules apply to everyone, rather than to Parliament alone?

Sir Peter Emery: I am delighted to accede to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. Indeed, perhaps the intelligence service ought to pursue a little more carefully some of its own activities.

I shall now deal with the manning of the committee. Six seems a sensible number; it should not be too large. I am glad that there is to be a member of the other place on the committee, but I urge that that person should not have to be permanently present for there to be a quorum. That would put much too great a load on whoever was nominated.

The Canadian Parliament provides the example that is in many ways closest to our own and I recall that in the late 1970s it went through a similar exercise and decided to have a committee of five. As the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, the former leader of the Liberal party, said, everyone on the Canadian committee had to be a Privy Councillor. I believe that there is some benefit in appointing senior Members of Parliament, although perhaps not necessarily Privy Councillors, so that the committee does not appear to be an old establishment club. However, having been appointed, perhaps its members should be made Privy Councillors for the purposes of the committee. If they are good enough to be given the security information, they are probably worthy of such recognition.

If the committee is to carry out its work fully, it will consider much information in great depth, which will be time consuming and will require a great deal of reading. The work could well take half a day every day of the week if it were done fully. The management of an industrial organisation spending £900 million a year would spend that sort of time examining its administration, policies and financing.

In that connection, I note that the Bill allows for payment to the commissioner, but not to any of the other members of the committee. That may be all right for Members of the House of Commons, who receive a parliamentary salary, but we in this House might make a case on behalf of the poor member from the House of Lords, who will not have a parliamentary salary and who will be entitled to payment only by attending the other place, which his duties on the committee are likely to prevent him from doing. In Committee, we should consider the possibility of funding for that purpose.

When the committee reports, is it satisfactory that it should do so first and only to the Prime Minister? It is important that the Prime Minister should publish its reports. I was led to understand that he would publish all of them, and I ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to tell us, when he answers the debate, whether that is the case.

I am certain that nothing in the Bill will take away the committee's ability, if dissatisfied with the amount of information vetted and removed from its annual report by the Prime Minister, to return to the subject and, if necessary, to make a further report so that the matter can be considered. Nothing in the Bill takes the ultimate responsibility away from the Prime Minister, so it should be the Prime Minister who decides what comes to Parliament. It is right and proper that reporting should work in that way.

Will the Minister give me an assurance that knowledge of documents and the classification of documents will be made available to the new committee? That question arises from certain facts that have emerged in the United States in connection with the working of the Freedom of Information Act. There, it has become evident that information has been upgraded to "secret" or "highly secret" so as to cover up—I use the American term "a balls-up". One can imagine some managers being willing to take that approach here if they have made a mess of their work. We need the Minister to give us an assurance that if there is any evidence or proof that that has happened, the strongest action will be taken against any perpetrator?

I shall now come quickly to my conclusion, because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. Having welcomed the Bill, I have tried to analyse some parts of it. If the Intelligence and Security Committee is to be seen and judged as more than a cosmetic protective facade for the security services, it must be seen to have teeth. I agree with the right hon. Members for Dudley, East and for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale that there is no reason why the committee should not have the same powers as a Select Committee to call for persons and papers. Clearly it will have the power, which we see in use all the time, to call for the heads of the services. Also, in calling for persons and papers, the committee should not be able to call for serving members of the security forces, who must be protected and should be represented by the Minister or by the heads of their departments.

If there is a public outcry about the adminstration of certain aspects of the security forces, whether by the press, journalists or authors, I see every reason for the committee having the power to be able to call before it the perpetrators of those especial accusations so that it is able to inquire more fully. The perpetrators could be invited to appear, but, if they refuse that invitation, the committee ought to have the power to ensure that they attend.

The committee should be staffed adequately and have funds to carry out its duties. That may well mean that it needs to pay advisers for certain aspects of its work. It needs to be able to authorise persons to disclose information that would otherwise be covered by the Official Secrets Act 1989. Paragraph 5 of schedule 4 would amend the existing law by adding the tribunal to the bodies that may give official authorisation to persons to disclose information the disclosure of which would otherwise be unlawful under the Official Secrets Act. Surely, if that power is to be given to the tribunal, it ought also to be given to the committee. Otherwise, certain evidence may not be as apparent as it ought to be.

It must also be seen that the members of the committee are reporting only to the Prime Minister and that, when they are approached, as they will be, by the media on any sort on any matter, they should say only that they are investigating and that they shall be reporting to the Prime Minister. They will be urged to say this, that and the other, and their position will be difficult unless they stand firm and say they have no comments to make on matters, that the investigation is for them and that a report is to be made to the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister publishes that report, the committee members may comment on it, but until that point, they should be given the safeguard of not being badgered by the press to make comments about what is or is not being considered by the committee.

Given those powers and that the committee, when appointed, is manned by persons who are known and have been seen to be of independent mien—persons who are considered to be good House of Commons men and, if I may say, the committee should not be a resting place for former senior Ministers—the structure of the Bill will allow the public to have confidence and know that there is adequate supervision so that the nation's security forces are acting for our defence and for the defence of the nation.

6.22 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): The speech of the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) was so nearly a perfect replica of the Government's position that I have a feeling that he may be destined for a place on this distinguished committee. At one point, I even thought that he was negotiating the remuneration. Should he be so fortunate as to catch the Prime Minister's eye, I am sure that he would make a suitable member.

I welcome the Bill as a first and long-overdue step along the road towards rendering our security establishment democratically accountable. The measures outlined in the Bill provide the barest minimum of accountability, but, when measured against past experience, it is quite a large step forward, since we have never previously taken any forward steps that I have been able to detect.

However, we have a long way to go before our security services are worthy of a modern democracy. What is proposed falls a long way short of what is taken for granted in the United States, Canada, Australia and other democracies which we profess to admire. One of the ironies is that the Russians always seem to know more about our security services than do Parliament or the British people. That was so in the past. I hope that that will not be the case in future, as the Russian services have been a little less efficient recently.

One of the difficulties with the security services has always been that, while demanding the right to absolute secrecy, their members have always felt at liberty to talk to selected journalists and to selected Members of Parliament. However, when the Select Committee on Home Affairs, of which I am a member, asked a while ago whether it could interview the head of MI5, it was initially told by the Home Office that it could not do so under any circumstances and that hell would freeze over before that was possible. I rang round a few newspaper editors and found that the head of MI5 had been dining with them. We also discovered that the previous head of MI5, Sir Patrick Walker, had given the farewell speech at the retirement party of Sir David Nicholas, the former editor of ITN, at the Savoy and had begun his speech with the words:

> "My name is Patrick Walker, I am the head of MI5".

When we put that to the Home Secretary, we subsequently received an invitation to lunch with Stella Rimington, for which we were extremely grateful. However, as we said in our report, that was no substitute for proper accountability.

It will not have escaped the attention of students of such matters that over the years—I do not suggest that the problems necessarily exist today, as there has been quite a large clear-out in the past few years, for which we must be grateful—there have been a few problems with our security services. One of the problems in dealing with the security services is that they spend a large amount of public money. It is, by and large, unaccounted for, although we have had a few global figures every so often. If one strains over the Terrace, one may have a glimpse of the lavish new MI6 headquarters near Vauxhall bridge and there is the new MI5 building on Millbank which one cannot see from the Terrace.

Having large sums of money and not being accountable to anyone for spending it inevitably leads to bad habits; it would happen whatever the regime. When the committee studies the financing of the Security Service, it will need to be rigorous, but it is not unknown for security services to exercise some ingenuity in burying inconvenient expenditure in other budgets.

Over the years, there has also been evidence of gross incompetence. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) quoted his hon. Friend Lord Jenkins of Hillhead as saying that the security services in his time were much preoccupied with internal feuding. Such evidence as has been published suggests that, for a period in the 1970s and the 1980s, they were paralysed by internal feuding on a scale that one might have expected from small Trotskyist groups. Evidence suggested that they became extremely introverted and their employees only mixed in circles where their views were never seriously challenged, because, for most of the time, they were with people of identical views. A former Tory Home Secretary said to me a while ago that there had been a great deal of dead wood—his expression not mine—but that it had been cleared up a little, and I welcome that.

Secrecy has been used over the years to disguise incompetence, apart from anything else, and we are entitled to know that the vast sums being spent are being spent to achieve proper security of the country and are not financing unrelated ventures. I am not satisfied that the quality of the intelligence service has always been as high as it has been made out to be. I remember during the Gulf war when a number of people of Iraqi origin were seized arbitrarily and plonked in Pentonville prison. Three of them were my constituents, one of whom ran a kebab shop somewhere in Sunderland, which was thought to be subversive to the national interest. They all had to be released eventually because it was discovered that the information supplied by the security services on most, if not all, of those seized, was wholly inaccurate. That does not give us grounds for confidence at the time of a national emergency.

The third problem that is a matter of record is that in years gone by—I hope that it has changed; indeed, I am confident that it has changed—the security services have been targeted to some extent against members of the elected Government. There was a series of smear campaigns against a former Labour Prime Minister—that has been well documented—a former Home Secretary, Lord Merlyn-Rees, my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and the former Conservative Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath). I do not think that it is right—I am sure that no one would justify this—that persons who are paid to defend the security of the state should waste time and resources on attempting to undermine members of the elected Government.

As recently as three or four years ago—I think it was in 1989 when we were debating the Official Secrets Bill—on the front page of the *Sunday Express* there was a headline about a lady spy and a Labour Minister and a picture of a noble Lord who defected to the SDP because he was such

[Mr. Chris Mullin]

a great threat to our democracy. Obviously, the picture had come from a security source—it had been taken 10 or 20 years previously. I cannot imagine why someone thought it worth while to put the picture on the front pages of the *Sunday Express.* I think that it was to tell us that not so much had changed as was being alleged.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's overall point, but he is repeating what may turn out to be no more than gossip and allegations. I am surprised that he quoted from the *Sunday Express.* I do not believe everything that I read in newspapers and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not either. I think that a lot of this is possibly a wild allegation.

Mr. Mullin: My point is that the photograph appeared on the front page of the *Sunday Express.* It is open to the hon. Gentleman to look it up in the Library if he so wishes. I have a copy somewhere—it is not controversial. One can see that the photograph was not taken by a photographer from the *Sunday Express.* I do not want to make a big deal of what is simply a little illustration of a wider problem.

The fourth problem that has been with us over the years is that in the past the security services have been targeted —perhaps Ministers should take responsibility for this— against those engaged in legitimate political activity, and sometimes no political activity at all.

Some years ago, I wrote a novel which was dismissed by some at the time as typical left-wing paranoia. The book shared a similar plot to one written by the Foreign Secretary. He and I have one thing in common—we have both written novels about an attempt by the right wing to destabilise an elected Government. Among the features of my little novel was that all senior employees of the BBC were vetted by MI5. A few years ago, that turned out to be Brigadier Ronnie Stoneham occupying room 103 at Broadcasting House. I had an MI5 agent on the general council of the CND. Some years later, that turned out to be a chap called Harry Newton. As a matter of routine, I had MI5 bugging Labour Ministers. Mr. Peter Wright's book was published some time later and confirmed that at least some of that had occurred. *[Interruption.]* There was a grain of truth about Mr. Wright's allegations; otherwise, the Government would not have gone to such lengths to suppress them.

About three or four years ago, I went to lunch with Mr. Marmaduke Hussey, the chairman of the BBC. The purpose of the lunch was to bend my ears and those of a number of my colleagues on the subject of the Broadcasting Bill which was being introduced at the time. Halfway through the lunch, I asked who worked in room 103 now that Brigadier Stoneham had retired. All around the table, one could hear the sound of knives and forks hitting plates. Marmaduke, clearly choking on his smoked salmon, said, "Patricia, I think this one is for you". A lady down the other end of the table said that she thought it was a special assistant to the director-general. I asked, "What is his name and what does he do?"

We had the top brass of the BBC around the table and none of them could name the special assistant, let alone tell us what he did. There were some clumsy attempts to change the subject and I said, "I'll tell you what, why don't I nip down, knock on the door and see?" "Don't do that," they said, "we'll send you a letter." With a little prompting, they did. I received a letter in which the BBC was at pains to assure me that everything had changed since Brigadier Stoneham's day. However, it seemed to suggest that a man with a similar background and doing a similar job was still in place there.

I wonder whether it is necessary for all senior BBC personnel to be vetted in that way and for some of them —I speak as a former BBC employee—to be honoured with an upturned Christmas tree on their personnel file. I wonder whether that was ever necessary. As we are on the subject, I also wonder how a former head of MI5 came to be so close to the editor of ITN that he was called to give a speech at the man's retirement party. It may be that they are neighbours somewhere down in Surrey or they went to the same school, but there is another explanation that I invite hon. Members to contemplate.

It has been alleged more recently that some of the spare capacity at GCHQ has been used to bug domestic telephones, which is outside its remit. The allegation came from someone who worked in the Cabinet Office until shortly before he made the allegation. I do not know whether that is true—I only know that these matters are part of the problems that we have had with the security services over the years.

Another feature is that the security services have engaged in operations that are difficult to justify in terms of national security. I am talking about some of the arms contracts to Iraq, which have already been mentioned, and —I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) is not present, because I have a feeling that he has something to do with this—the training of Khmer terrorists in Thailand by British soldiers. That went on from about 1982 until the present Foreign Secretary came to power—God bless him—and put a stop to it in 1989.

I do not know how that could ever have been justified in terms of national security. We had no possible national security interest unless we owed a few favours to the Americans in return for what they did for us in the Falklands war, which they were calling in.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Did the hon. Gentleman note the article written by Boris Johnson a week last Sunday in which he suggested that questions of espionage and matters relating to GCHQ and so on had been transferred, as it were, to questions arising out of the European Union, defence questions and all these other matters? Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in national security, does he regard it as significant, interesting or absurd that we are apparently transferring responsibility even to the European Union, raising questions of treason?

Mr. Mullin: I am not sure that I am qualified to say, but I express admiration for the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity in managing to get his hobby horse in to this debate.

I mentioned all the past problems that we have had with the security services because they are a matter of record. It is also a matter of record that when caught, they have casually lied about what they did in the past, as they did to Lord Callaghan. When Lord Callaghan instituted an inquiry at the end of the 1970s, he was grossly misled about what was going on. When the security services do not lie, they sometimes suppress evidence that is inconvenient to the official version of events. The Matrix Churchill case is possibly the best, most recent example of that.

The test of the Bill will be the extent to which it helps us to resolve those problems and change the culture in the security services. The culture may have already changed to some extent. Perhaps we would not have the Bill if it had not already changed, so we must be grateful for small mercies.

Under clause 8 of the Bill, a commissioner will be appointed to report to the Prime Minister, and a tribunal will be appointed to deal with complaints. As has already been said, those are features of other legislation. A tribunal was set up under the Interception of Communications Act 1985. I believe that I am right in saying—the Minister will put me right if I am not—that that tribunal has never upheld a complaint in its nine-year history.

The Security Service Commissioner was set up under the legislation in 1989. The Foreign Secretary, in opening the debate, said that the commissioner had given him a hard time—I think rigorous was the word used by the right hon. Gentleman. It was not so rigorous that any word reached the outside world, or was reflected in the rather bland reports that sometimes find their way into the Library.

There are two possibilities. The first is that both the previous complaints tribunal and the one under the Bill are presiding over a nearly perfect system. That may explain why no complaint has ever been upheld at any of the tribunals. The other is that perhaps the scrutiny that they have exercised so far has not been as rigorous as it should.

The Intelligence and Security Committee, which will be set up under clause 10, has been referred to by other hon. Members. The committee will have six Members appointed, and dismissed, by the Prime Minister. It will report to the Prime Minister, who may exclude any item he wishes before a report is laid before Parliament. The committee will deal with expenditure, administration and policy, but not operations.

No hon. Member can seriously expect that the committee should have a detailed knowledge of operations. Clearly that does not make sense, but there is a grey area between operations and policy as was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel). When does a policy become an operation, and therefore outside the remit of the committee? Brigadier Stoneham and his heirs at the BBC—are they a policy or an operation? That area ought to come within the remit of the committee. I would hate committee members to be told after raising a subject that it was an operation and outside their remit.

I share the view given by most hon. Members that the committee should be a Select Committee, which is appointed by, and accountable to, Parliament.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will my hon. Friend serve on it?

Mr. Mullin: My hon. and very good friend asks me if I would be willing to serve on the Committee. I do not think that I shall be flooded with invitations, so the House must not consider this to be a job application.

The committee should be accountable to Parliament and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) has said, it should have powers to send for persons and papers and should be covered by privilege. Reference has been made to the staff who will work for the committee. That is an important point which has not been touched on in the debate so far. Who will be the staff? Will persons be sent down from Millbank or Vauxhall to service the committee? Will it be people who are employed by Parliament, and who share Parliament's desire for scrutiny? Will they come from the Cabinet Office in Whitehall?

That is rather important, because hon. Members who serve on Select Committees know the extent to which we are dependent upon those who staff those Committees. Obviously, hon. Members could be easily led astray, or the committee could be led into complacency, if the staff were not of a suitably rigorous frame of mind.

Dr. Gilbert: There is another point on the question of staff to which my hon. Friend has not alluded. Will not it be necessary for the committee to have at least one member of staff from this place to advise it on procedure?

Mr. Mullin: That is right. Who staffs the committee is nearly as important as who sits on it.

As the committee will not be a Select Committee, it will not be accountable to Parliament, will not have powers to send for persons and papers that are not covered by privilege and may not have the power to select its staff, we will be dependent entirely on those lucky people who are appointed to sit on the committee.

If the Government are serious in their desire to make the intelligence services accountable to the people whose interests they are supposed to serve, I hope that those who are appointed to the committee will be of a sufficiently rigorous and inquiring frame of mind. I hope that they will not be tame pussycats who will roll over to have their tummies tickled at the first sound of the magic words "national security" being whispered in their ears.

Some names have been canvassed already, and I make no comment on any of them. Some of them look worthy, but it does trouble me slightly how predictable it seems. When the subject was first raised more than a year ago —about the time of the Home Affairs Select Committee report—the same old names came up. I may be pleasantly surprised, and find that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and inquiring and rigorous minds of that nature are appointed. I am also prepared for the possibility that I may not be all that surprised.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): My hon. Friend has probably had the same type of letter that I received from a constituent. My constituent worked at Coulport for a few months, where bombs and weapons are made. He was told that he had been fired because he had not been given a security pass. I wrote to find out why, and was told that it was because of national security. However, my constituent got his job back because somebody had made a tragic mistake.

Unfortunately, there seem to be lots of those tragic mistakes when people have been denied the opportunity to work. Hon. Members do not get satisfactory answers or conclusive statements to allow us to make a case, and so we drop the cases. We are not really looking after our constituents properly because of the bland replies.

Mr. Mullin: My hon. Friend is certainly right that one of the effects of blanket secrecy is that mistakes get made and covered up, although that is not necessarily intentional. I hope that that culture will change under whatever system is established.

I will conclude on this note. As I said at the outset—and we should not be churlish—this is a small step in the right

[Mr. Mullin]

direction. Those of us who are reformists by nature will be grateful for small mercies, but we have a long way to go before we can call ourselves a modern democracy.

6.46 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Like almost every hon. Member, I welcome the Bill in principle and, for the most part, in practice although one or two rough edges need smoothing off.

I am worried about the concept of further steps which seems to be creeping into everyone's speeches and which implies that more is to come and that we have not reached a settled order of things. It also implies that this measure is just experimental and may lead to other things. Many hon. Members have indicated clearly what they want. It seems to me that either this measure is a balance, in which case one keeps it as a balance, or it is a further step.

The problem with steps is that they tend to be followed by further steps, as the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) said when he began his delightfully anecdotal speech. The trouble with stepping off a balance is that you lose your balance. I hope that we shall lose that terminology and concentrate on the fact that this is a new arrangement for an established order of things, that we shall make it work and that it has an underlying stability. It is not healthy for the conduct of the secret intelligence services if they feel that this measure is a temporary stopping point before we rush on to other things. I hope that there will be no more talk of steps, and certainly no more from those who are trying to advocate and establish that this is where we are now and where we should dig in and stay.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary emphasised the continuing need for intelligence services in a world where people who have been caught up in the great spy dramas we have all enjoyed in paperbacks think that the role of the special intelligence services finished with the end of the cold war, on the day when the KGB began having open days at Ljubyanka. That is nonsense. We are in a completely new situation. Terrible things may yet happen in Russia—not a return to previous ideology, but other unpleasant things. One hopes that they will not, but they may. There are also a whole variety of new threats to which hon. Members have rightly referred.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary emphasised the modern nature of terrorism. It is, indeed, a changing phenomenon and it is spreading in weird and dangerous ways. We think that terrorism, say, in Egypt, Algeria or the Maghreb in general or the operations mounted and orchestrated out of Khartoum are remote to us. People say, "What is the threat to us?" The answer is that if such things get out of control they can be a threat to the stability of Europe, including northern Europe. There are great dangers which we need to know about well in advance.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the proliferation of weapons. That is obviously dangerous now, with the dispersal of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal. We should be aware of the proliferation not only of nuclear weapons but of all sorts of other weapons of mass destruction. We are living in a world in which, just as we seek to use preventive diplomacy to halt really nasty conflicts before they escalate, we need preventive secrecy to operate on a highly efficient basis and to be allowed to proceed in ways that permit the operational freedom necessary to be in advance of any nasty developments that could come out into the open, which would mean that we were too late. That means secret work. Secret work means a careful and sensitive scrutiny, and it is on that aspect that I wish to make a few remarks. I shall not detain the House long.

First, I wish to ask a question about accounts and cost. I am glad that a single published figure for the cost of security is to become available. Hitherto, little bits of the cost popped into the estimates which come before the various Select Committees, including the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, on which I serve. Then, suddenly, great lumps such as the vast cost of the new establishment at Vauxhall Cross appeared, sitting unhappily and out of context in the middle of the Foreign Office Vote or some other Vote.

If the overall figure is available, the policy makers and Ministers will have to keep justifying the secret service and the case for it in new conditions. Otherwise, people will ask—this has already been hinted at in some speeches—"Why do we need to continue spending this amount of money? What are these people doing?" The emergence of a single figure will require in parallel with it a sustained, systematic and regular justification of expenditure on the intelligence services. The two things must go together. Otherwise, there will be growing doubts and scepticism when the figures are bandied about.

The committee of parliamentarians has preoccupied us all. It has been rightly pointed out that it will not be a Committee of Parliament. It will not be a Select Committee. It will be a rather new animal. It is hard to think of an analogue for this group of people who will be Members of both Houses of Parliament and will be appointed by the Government. That sounds as if they will be part of the Executive; yet somehow they are supposed to be a filter which will exert a degree of accountability that will satisfy Parliament.

The committee will report annually, as we know, but it will not report to Parliament. It will report to the Prime Minister and it will have a task of oversight which will be extremely large. It will examine the whole range of expenditure. We are apparently talking about hundreds of millions of pounds, although we are not sure how much. The committee will examine administration, which will be a very large operation. It will also look at policy.

The committee will stand aside from operational matters. However, those hon. Members who have said that there is a grey area are right. There is always a grey area between policy and detailed operations. It is not always easy to draw the line. All that looks to me like work, and a great deal of work. The committee will have a very considerable task if it is really to have oversight. It will have large responsibilities.

Contrary to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) said about the need for a small committee, I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends may have to consider adding a couple more members to the committee. They will certainly have to consider something slightly larger. I believe that the tasks are very considerable. One could be looking at an extremely time-consuming occupation and not the sort of thing that can be taken on by someone who already sits on six other committees. The members of the committee will not be able to pop in like, dare I say it, a non-executive director in rather more casual circumstances—this is not always a good idea—who has fiduciary responsibilities but little power because he or she does not have access to the detailed executive and management accounts.

The oversight will therefore be quite a tricky operation. It is experimental in the sense that it is a new system. I do not mean that it is experimental in the sense that it will be temporary. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on the boldness of his thought in tackling the matter.

With his usual persuasive elegance, the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) said that we should go the whole hog and have a Select Committee. But that is something completely different in philosophy and design from what Ministers had in mind. There may be a case for it, but a Select Committee is completely different. I was previously a little doubtful about Select Committees. It will surprise no one to learn that I am now rather an enthusiast about the way in which they have developed. I certainly do not hold the view that one of my senior colleagues held when we were constructing the predecessors to the Select Committees back in the early 1970s. He thought that they were merely a useful device for keeping people out of mischief and giving work to idle hands.

Select Committees are rather effective, but they report to Parliament. We are driven—I speak for the Select Committee on which I serve—in directing our work and questions by what we have picked up by a process of osmosis from the House as a whole. We pick up from all parties what Parliament is interested in and concerned about. We report to Parliament. We are staffed by servants of Parliament. Although one has to exercise some restraint, we are open to outside comment and views and accessible to outside lobbies. Of course, we are also open to the press, which is bound, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) to badger the committee once the identities of the persons involved are known. The press will constantly ask questions which the members will not be allowed to answer.

The committee's report will not be a report to Parliament. It will be a report to the Prime Minister, who will be able to excise any necessary bits before he presents it to the House of Commons. So it will be a tough line to hold. That is why I am worried about all this talk of steps. The committee's responsibilities will be considerable. Like other hon. Members, I am not clear about the nature of its powers. Expenditure, administration and policy are enormous areas. One wonders how the six good men and women will tackle the vast budget, which will be as big as that of many medium and large-sized companies.

If the committee had powers to send for persons and papers, which it does not have under the Bill now, which ones would it send for and how would it know what to send for? It is a difficult matter. Those who are appointed will have a hard and unfamiliar path to follow. They will need a great deal of support and encouragement from Ministers if they are to do their work effectively.

In principle, I welcome the Bill. It is a real attempt to achieve a balance between two almost irreconcilable things —the absolute and overriding need for operational secrecy, so that we can have an effective intelligence service to protect this island in an increasingly dangerous world, and the prefectly natural desire of a free Parliament to call to account people who act in the name of the state and spend taxpayers' money. There is no solution. If one went the whole Select Committee way, one would go too far into the, to my mind, enjoyable area of accountability and I am convinced that that would undermine the effective secrecy of the operation. If one took the attitude that nothing could be done—that no parliamentary figures at all were to be involved—we would remain where we are now, but that is not what the House wants. People want movement and it is to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's great credit that he has produced movement and come up with a new idea. However, very careful and energetic establishment will be necessary. This should not be paraded as just a step to something else: it is a balance, which will have to be kept with the utmost skill.

6.59 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I welcome the production of this important Bill, which will lead to greater openness. I believe that the Prime Minister has got it right by making the move at this time, and the structure of the Bill is about right. The idea of a commissioner, a tribunal and a parliamentary committee was debated at great length by some of us during the passage of the Security Service Act 1989.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is not a parliamentary committee.

Mr. Randall: I accept that. Indeed, this committee is unique. Part of its uniqueness lies in the fact that there must be a balance between the openness that so many hon. Members have called for and the effectiveness of the Secret Intelligence Service. That is what this is all about.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) talked about steps. I believe that that is indeed what we are discussing. The first step must be all about confidence-building. This subject must be looked at from the point of view not only of parliamentarians but of those who work in the Secret Intelligence Service, GCHQ and the Security Service. Our top priority must be to ensure that the confidence of the people working in these services is retained. We must not rush fences. At heart, I am a fairly liberal person and I normally like to rush fences. However, in this case, confidence-building is the road which we must take.

There will be so much to learn. This is a brand new exercise, and there will be many responsibilities in the provision of parliamentary oversight. At this stage, I am happy that the step-by-step approach should involve saying yes if, for confidence reasons, the Prime Minister has to carry out a vetting operation. I shall live with that. I hope that, in practice, the committee will be sufficiently mature and professional to make it unnecessary for the Prime Minister ever to intervene. However, this is a necessary start.

I have skipped through some stuff about Canada, which has a system slightly similar to ours. The Canadians' steps towards democratisation and accountability have lowered the performance of their intelligence and security services. That is something which we in this country must not allow to happen.

I believe that the new committee will be able to establish its own procedure. On the question of its being able to call for persons and papers, my interpretation of the terms of reference is that that will be possible in special circumstances, but we are not talking about operational matters. It would be absurd to think for one moment that

[Mr. Randall]

the committee should delve into such matters. Its concern must be the three areas—policy, administration and expenditure—that are highlighted in the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) made a good point about the Comptroller and Auditor General—one that I had not thought about. We are talking about a very large organisation, with a massive budget. If one of the priorities of the new committee is to look at the whole question of expenditure, it will be necessary to have mechanisms for appropriate auditing work.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend talks about this committee as if it will be able to assume that it has a right to call upon Ministers or civil servants to provide information. I cannot see where in this legislation that right is enshrined. If my hon. Friend can point to such a provision in any of the schedules, I shall be prepared to concede.

Mr. Randall: I refer my hon. Friend to schedule 3, which refers to what the new committee will be able to do, including the setting of its priorities and procedures. One procedure could be that of calling for persons and papers. I do not know the detail. I have referred to what I think is implicit. We ought not to guess, but, instead, should ask the Minister of State to explain the Government's thinking. However, this is how I look at the matter. I very much hope that there will be flexibility, so that the committee may be as effective as possible.

Mr. Rogers: I hope that my hon. Friend will not go much further down this road. Although he is quite right to say that the second part of schedule 3 provides that

"the Committee may determine their own procedure",

the part of the schedule dealing with access to information says that information can come to the committee only with the permission of the director-general of the Security Service, the chief of the intelligence service, the director of GCHQ and the Secretary of State together.

The only material that will go to the committee is that which has been—if I may use the term—positively vetted and which the Secretary of State determines can be disclosed. If the Secretary of State says that information cannot be disclosed, it will not be disclosed, and the committee will have no right to aquire it. This is one of the Opposition's main objections to the Bill.

Mr. Randall: I can see that my hon. Friend is referring to the part of schedule 3 that is entitled "Access to information" and to the part entitled "Sensitive information". When one reads these provisions, one sees that there is discretion. I should like the Minister of State to tell us how he sees the powers. I do not want to speculate, but it seems to me that there is a good deal of discretion.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Randall: I must proceed, as other hon. Members want to contribute to the debate.

I believe that the Bill will pave the way to correction of the massive errors that the Government made when they imposed their restrictions on trade unions at GCHQ. The assertion that trade unionism is incompatible with national security caused deep offence to many trade unionists—people who are as loyal and patriotic as anybody in the House.

It is a disgrace that 14 people were dismissed for insisting on retaining the right to trade union membership. I hope that those men will get redress before too long. The Government are a signatory to the International Labour Organisation's convention 87, which deals with freedom of association. It is therefore unacceptable that this anomaly should be allowed to continue. At that time, it was important to recognise that what was happening at GCHQ was not in any way damaging to national security.

I should like to deal briefly with the question of the committee. A membership of six seems rather on the small side. Indeed, it is very small. However, I agree with the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that we must be careful about leaks, which could take place through the committee. The security of the committee must be handled properly, and I want the Minister to tell us how that can best be done.

Perhaps it is a good idea that we are not restricting the committee to Privy Councillors. There is one practical reason why we should not do so. The Labour party has been out of power for 14 years, and has created a mere handful of Privy Councillors, so it would create some problems for us. Also, why would we need to restrict membership in that way? If the work of the committee is to be covered by the Official Secrets Act 1989, there is a mechanism to provide that protection. The oath one takes when one becomes a Privy Councillor is not as secure as signing the Official Secrets Act.

Perhaps this is a matter for the committee, but the quorum of three, including one peer—although only one member might be a peer—does not sound practical. What do the Government think about that? Surely we must consider changing it.

The role of the committee is to scrutinise expenditure, administration and policy. I jotted down a few policy matters that it might need to look into. For example, what role does it have now that the cold war is over? I do not know what has been happening in the various organisations. Since the end of the cold war, we have had "Options for Change" and other defence reviews. Have we carried out a comparable review of our intelligence and security services? I do not know the answer, but perhaps that would be one area for work.

In a debate in another place, Lord Callaghan criticised the size and bureaucracy of Government communications headquarters, Cheltenham. Presumably he knew what he was talking about, as he had served as both Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary. The only other question is whether £900 million is a true figure. It seems to be a large amount, and that is another possible area for investigation.

Russia still has a massive military capability, which is under questionable control. We knew where we were with the old Soviet communist system, but that has been replaced by fanatical nationalism and by defence policies which are nothing short of a muddle. As a consequence, there may be instability, unrest and disruption in that area—possibly even war.

Hon. Members have mentioned terrorism, but I shall skim over that subject because I think that Ministers understand it.

We know that there is much co-operation between various agencies in this country and their sister organisations in the European Community. Now that we have joined the European Union, how far has that co-operation gone? I do not know. I spent five years shadowing the Minister with responsibility for the security services, so my experience of such matters is theoretical, to say the least. I usually deal with complaints by taking them to the Minister concerned. I do not know the extent to which the security services are co-operating.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend spent five years shadowing on such matters. I cannot grasp why it was so vital for members of the security services not to mix with Members of Parliament. Why would that have been wrong in principle? The Foreign Office invites people here for social functions, where we can meet and discuss matters. Why should it be wrong for my hon. Friend to be invited to the Departments to discuss aspects of such matters with members of the security services? I do not see anything wrong with that.

Half the problem is that many hon. Members are suspicious of the security services, and people in those services are suspicious of Parliament. The relationship has broken down because of mutual suspicion. I cannot believe that it is beyond the wit of man and woman to devise a system based on a little more contact between the two.

Mr. Randall: I do not want to answer that intervention, except to say that I used to have useful discussions with Ministers and other officials, often on Privy Councillor terms. That procedure had to be followed, and I cannot add to that.

People are not quite so hung up as the newspapers make out, provided that such matters are dealt with reasonably reliably. Retired Labour Cabinet Ministers say that, in the main, the agencies—the main ones are MI5 and MI6—employ people who have very good reputations. Of course, there have been a few rotten apples—there are a few in every barrel—but those Labour Ministers always expressed great admiration for the people they dealt with, and said that they had great integrity.

A former Minister with responsibility for security in Northern Ireland is present. It does not take much imagination for any hon. Member to guess at the work going on there. We have a lot to thank the people responsible for as they are providing protection. Security is about the bombs we do not hear about, not those that go off. It would be wrong if hon. Members did not take that into account and recognise the brilliant work going on.

A free and open society becomes susceptible to abuse and subversion. That is why we need the security and intelligence services—to ensure that our society is as free and open as possible. Those people who threaten Britain's political and social interests and who attempt to destabilise our society do not operate openly, but in secret. That is why our intelligence services must also operate secretly. We must accept that, and we must not attempt to undermine that secrecy.

We are debating the introduction of a parliamentary system of accountability, monitoring and oversight. Government govern, and Parliament must oversee; that is what we are attempting to do.

Attitudes have developed. In 1987 and 1988, when we debated the security services, I was frustrated by the way in which the then Home Secretary responded to us. His responses did not seem to hang together. However, there has been some movement, and hon. Members must welcome the steps that we are taking in the Bill.

The key is to start by recognising that there must be a confidence-building exercise. We cannot go at it too fast: it must be measured and careful, because this is a very important matter. It we make mistakes, the consequences could be serious. The intelligence and security services are too important for us to make mistakes, so we must go about the process in the right way. The Bill paves the way for that progress.

7.18 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): I join other hon. Members who have welcomed the fact that the Government have introduced the Bill, although it is not the route that I would have taken.

The Executive must account to Government and Government must account to Parliament. I have long advocated that there should be a Minister responsible for the oversight of the security services, who should report here on what they are and are not doing. However, that is not the way that we have gone. Perhaps it is too late for that because of events and our experience of the Security Service Act 1989, which we have been living with for four or five years. That said, I welcome what the Government are doing.

I could make some wide-ranging remarks about the Bill, as other colleagues have done, but I want to be brief, so I shall confine my comments to clause 10, particularly subsection (3). I understand and fully accept why the proposed committee will not be a Select Committee. The Government could not have given the committee the powers rightly held by other such committees because of the sensitivity of the information involved and the need to maintain the security, and confidentiality of almost all the work that is undertaken by the three agencies. I accept that.

That said, I beg my right hon. Friend and the Government, when they consider the matter more closely and scrutinise the Bill in Committee, not to be afraid of many of the ways in which Select Committees operate. It is fine and acceptable that the committee will not be a Select Committee, but the Government have decided that they must not give it a Select Committee's powers or it will look like a Select Committee. I can draw on my experience of serving on a Select Committee that dealt routinely with top-secret information over a wide range of highly sensitive subjects. The Government may be fearing unnecessarily the consequences of what some of us are asking them to do.

The committee should be appointed and discharged by the Prime Minister, not the House, through the Committee of Selection and a motion—as happens routinely with all departmental committees. Such a motion can be debated. To try to remove an hon. Member other than with his or his party's consent, which has not happened during the course of a Parliament, would be very difficult. I acknowledge that.

The appointment of the chairman needs to be discussed. In all other Committees of the House, the Chairman or Chairwoman is chosen by the members. The chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee is to be appointed. I do not quarrel with that——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It will not be a Committee of the House.

Mr. Mates: I know that, but——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Seated interventions are not helpful.

Mr. Mates: The committee will be different in that its chairman will be appointed by the Government. If we are not careful, the chairman's relationship with the members of the committee will be different from that of a Select Committee Chairman, who serves at the pleasure of his colleagues.

Many hon. Members have mentioned that the committee will have six members. Whether it contains one or two members from the other place is a detail. I do not know why that element has been introduced, but it has and I accept that it is now there to stay. A committee of six is marginally too small for the workload that will be involved, although I accept the need to keep the committee small because of the circle of secrecy, to which the Foreign Secretary referred, and which I endorse.

The membership needs to be an odd number because there is provision in the Bill for the chairman to have a casting vote. I do not think that the committee will take many votes—most sensible Select Committees do not. But there are the odd Committees where the Chairman constantly makes the casting vote in favour of the Government of the day, because that is where the majority lies. That would not make for a good working relationship in the committee. At the very least, the committee should have seven members so that we do not face that problem.

The committee must also have a clerk who comes from this place because the procedural advice given has to be professional and professionally delivered. If the staff of the committee were to come from outside the House, it would not work. I commend that course to my right hon. Friend.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) talked about leaks. That is not something that the House or Government need to fear. There have been leaks from Select Committees, but they have never involved security. I shall tell the House an anecdote. In my 12 years on the Select Committee on Defence, nothing of a sensitive nature was ever leaked. I was present when the Committee system began in 1979. Initially, the Ministry of Defence was a little suspicious about letting us see things here and there, but we worked our way through that and by 1987 there was nothing that we did not see. On a cross-party basis, we were shown information of the most highly sensitive nature because we had shown ourselves to be trustworthy. The Labour party, in its wisdom, then decided to submit for appointment two members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. An enormous frisson went through the MOD as if things could never be the same again, and its good working relationship with the Committee was going to stop.

A very senior person in the organisation, who had better remain nameless, asked me what we should do. I said, "You must carry on as before until the trust is broken. That is the only way in which we can proceed, and if we do not a number of members of the Committee will explain vociferously." We went on sharing the most sensitive and highly secret information and there was never any form of leak.

Some of my hon. Friends may have been nervous about the information that was passed over, and it was not always done with the best grace, but it was passed over and nobody was let down. *[Laughter.]* I am glad that the jovial reaction of my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) confirms that. The Government might be being unnecessarily fearful about the nature of the information that they will have to share with the members of the committee. I hope that they will put those fears behind them.

The powers to send for persons and papers and to summon witnesses have been excluded from the Bill because they would make it look too like a Select Committee. The Government had better give the committee the right to make such requests, or there is little point in setting it up. It will lose its credibility before it has began its work. If members of the committee have the power to make such requests, it will cause some chagrin in official circles, but the Government always have the power not to respond. The Government and Ministers may refuse to answer questions.

There have been celebrated occasions in the Select Committee on Defence when distinguished hon. Members have come before it and refused to answer questions. Whether that did the individual more harm than the Committee is another matter, but it happened and it is everybody's right so to act. The powers of the committee are not something that anybody needs to fear, particularly as I cannot imagine that the committee will very often sit in public. Its public session would probably be confined to once a year when it announced its report and published details of its work. For the rest of the time, it would sit in private, as the Select Committee on Defence did for much of the time. It would ask questions in private, its proceedings would be private and its report to the Prime Minister would be private. There will follow a process with which those who have served on the Defence Committee will be familiar. It will ask how the exclusion of particular information can be considered when it is published elsewhere. The argument will go backwards and forwards before a solution is reached, with the Government always having the final say.

The fears that I suspect have caused the Government not to give the committee the powers that it needs are groundless. I ask the Ministers to consider the matter in a far more realistic way when the Bill is scrutinised in Committee. While the committee will not be a Select Committee, for the reasons that I described earlier, it will nevertheless function like a Select Committee. The Government do not need to be afraid to give it the powers that no Select Committee has misused to the detriment of national security and secrecy in the 14 years that the Select Committee system has existed. I am certain that the committee would not misuse those powers.

I hope that the Government will listen to the constructive remarks that have been made in the debate, take them into account and get the committee, which is not a Select Committee, off to the best possible start.

7.29 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I accept that, despite the historical changes that have taken place in eastern Europe since we debated this matter some five years ago, work clearly remains to be undertaken by the security services. As I have pointed out in previous debates, some of which I initiated, I know of no democracy, let alone dictatorship, that does not find it necessary for such activities to be undertaken in some form, quite apart from what is necessary to deal with the continuing curse of terrorism. Whether those activities are carried out by MI5 or what is usually referred to as MI6, they must be undertaken for the defence of this island.

Many people, particularly Opposition Members, are worried about political bias. Long before the Wright affair, people felt that far too many senior members of the security services were not only right wing but extremely so. The Wright affair showed that the opinions of a few —I hope that it was just a few—were more than extremely right wing. During the 1970s, some officers in the Security Service were outright disloyal, subversive and out of control. To them, the enemy was here in Britain—it was the Labour Government and much of the Labour movement, if not the entire Labour movement. That is why they did tremendous harm to the reputation and work of the Security Service.

It is not just me who says that. On Second Reading of the Bill in another place, Lord Callaghan said that such officers chose the wrong side of the line between right and wrong and that they damaged the Security Service and democracy. As Prime Minister of the day, he was head of the Security Service, so I presume that he knew precisely what he was talking about.

Hence the campaign over many years for parliamentary scrutiny of the security services. Every time that this matter has been raised, the standard ministerial response has been that parliamentary scrutiny was unnecessary and that ministerial control of the security services meant that Ministers were answerable to Parliament. We were asked what we were concerned about. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said earlier, when we debated a previous Bill that would have put MI5 on a statutory basis the Government were strenuously opposed to any form of parliamentary scrutiny. They said that it was totally unnecessary and irrelevant.

It is simple to judge our ability to monitor the Security Service. If we go to the Table Office and try to put down a question about it, we find that we cannot even get to first base. I criticise neither officers of the House responsible for the Table Office nor the other Clerks. Once Ministers have decided that they will not answer questions on the Security Service, future questions are blocked and that is the end of the matter. In the main, Members of Parliament cannot pursue such questions on the Floor of the House, although they can initiate Adjournment debates.

Allegations of bias come not only from the wretched Wright. What sort of person can he and others like him have been to have been recruited to the security services in the first place and to have remained in a senior position for so long? In addition to the Wright affair, I have mentioned in previous debates how some members of the security services dealt with CND. Although many hon. Members accept that Britain should have nuclear weapons, the current Prime Minister has accepted that it is a perfectly legitimate argument to oppose that. The Security Service, however, pried into the private lives of senior officials involved in CND. I have raised such matters on the Floor of the House and they have been well publicised on other occasions in the press.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) and Patricia Hewitt were also targeted. Were they subversive? They must have been considered subversive by those who held positions in the security services at the time. They were targeted because they held senior posts in the then National Council for Civil Liberties. No Conservative Member could say that that was justified.

Mr. Allason: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the National Council for Civil Liberties was an organisation prescribed by the Labour party at one stage.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right. I have not read his books on intelligence matters but I hope that before he writes them he does his research or gets someone else to do it for him. Some 30 or 35 years ago, or more, the National Council for Civil Liberties could have been described as closely allied to the Communist party. Although there may have been a case to argue then, that has not been the case since the mid-1950s as it was not prescribed by the Labour party from the mid-1950s onwards——

Mr. Allason: I did not say that it was.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. My remark about seated interventions applies to both sides of the House.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman puts forward the weakest possible argument. I said that I did not think that any Conservative Member would try to justify prying into the lives of my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham and of Patricia Hewitt, but the hon. Gentleman tries to justify what the Government are ashamed and embarrassed about. Those two people were targeted by the security services under this Government simply because of their senior positions in the National Council for Civil Liberties. I am pleased that they took their case to the European Court.

The Scott inquiry will no doubt refer to the role of the security services, but will be far more critical, I am sure, of ministerial conduct, including ministerial responsibility for the security services.

Much of the emphasis in this debate has been on clause 10. I am particularly unhappy about it because it will not provide the genuine parliamentary scrutiny that is needed. The clause sets up a committee of six members, but what does it add up to? As I said in an intervention, there are unlikely to be any non-Privy Councillors serving on that small committee. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Kinston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) will not mind my saying that, given his defence of the arrangements, he may be one of the few non-Privy Councillors invited to join it. We shall wait and see. Moreover, it will be a joint committee with the House of Lords.

When the Home Affairs Committee, with a Conservative majority, reported at the end of 1992, it recommended that that scrutiny of the security services should be by the Committee and criticised any joint committee with Members of the House of Lords. It said:

> "We believe that it would not be appropriate for a Committee containing Peers to consider matters of expenditure."

It then went on to say:

> "We do not believe that there is any general right or need to know what the service does on a day to day basis. But we do believe that establishing a form of parliamentary scrutiny of the service would meet an important public interest and help to protect against any possible future abuse of power."

Not surprisingly, I agree with those recommendations.

The Prime Minister will be responsible for appointments to the proposed committee after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition. The Prime Minister may also decide who will be its chairman. That is most inappropriate. Even on the basis of what is being proposed, the Prime Minister should not have the power to decide who out of the six should be the chairman, but no doubt that will be pursued in Committee. The committee will report not directly to the House but to the Prime Minister,

[Mr. Winnick]

who will then decide what should be left out of its report. How on earth can all that be described as genuine parliamentary scrutiny? That is why I remain critical of the Bill.

Schedule 3 makes it quite clear that information can be withheld from the committee. I can draw many examples from the recent past, such as the arms sales to the criminal regime in Iraq. It could well have been argued that had such a committee existed at the time, there would have been a feeling among Ministers and senior officials that the information was far too sensitive to be given to that committee. Therefore, we should be on our guard about what is contained in schedule 3.

What we are debating tonight will not end the controversy. Had the committee been anywhere near what was recommended by the Home Affairs Committee, to a large extent the political controversy would be over. What is now being proposed will mean that, in effect, the issue will keep returning.

When the committee has been set up, those of us who are not satisfied—that will be the case if no major modifications are made in Standing Committee—although we may not be as persistent as previously, will not say simply that, although we did not get what we wanted we achieved a halfway house and that is the end of the issue. We do not believe that it is a halfway house. If the Government believe that a controversy is being concluded as a result of the committee being established as set out in clause 10, they will discover that that is not the case.

Finally, I raise two other matters. I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland mentioned GCHQ. On 25 January, I introduced a ten-minute Bill—no Conservative Member voted against it—to lift the ban on trade union membership at GCHQ. The Government's decision 10 years ago was quite wrong and shameful; it brought into question the loyalty of the people at GCHQ and there was no justification of any such questioning.

Ministers may have taken the view 10 years ago that the controversy would simmer down after a while, so it is interesting to note that nothing of the kind has happened. The controversy has continued. Some three or four days after my speech, there was a rally in Cheltenham where my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition made it perfectly clear that a Labour Government would remove that ban. There is no possible justification for what was done on 25 January 1984. The sooner the ban is lifted the better.

Mr. Robathan: First, let me correct the hon. Gentleman. I was a Teller on that occasion and about 85 Conservative Members voted against his Bill. I know that the hon. Gentleman is particularly concerned about the GCHQ dispute in which a large number of working days were lost. The whole purpose of GCHQ—to defend the national interest—was negated because working days were lost. GCHQ might just as well have closed down because of industrial action. If the hon. Gentleman believes in the need for national security to be paramount, he should agree that it was necessary to ban trade unions at GCHQ. Otherwise, we might not have bothered to spend the money on it.

Mr. Winnick: First, I must apologise to the House. I agree that some Conservative Members voted against my Bill. As I kept a note in my diary of the vote, I apologise for misleading the House. My Bill was carried by a majority of 222 to 69. I should have thought that was an overwhelming majority but I am sorry to have given the impression that no Conservative Member voted against it.

The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) had the courage to speak against it. Although I disagreed with him profoundly, he is to be congratulated on doing what many Conservative Members would not be willing to do. It was interesting to note how few Conservative Members, even those in no way involved in the Government—69 in all voted against my Bill—were willing to go into the Lobby against it.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's second point, some working days were lost, although the number has been much exaggerated. It was before the Falklands war. On 25 January, I quoted the then Director General of GCHQ congratulating every single employee on the excellent work undertaken during the Falklands war. That was after the days had been lost as a result of the industrial dispute.

The trade unions have gone out of their way to offer every possible compromise in an attempt to get the ban lifted. Had the Government shown any genuine willingness to agree to any such compromise, agreement could have been reached by the end of last year. I hope not only that we will try to improve the Bill in Committee but that if no major amendment is carried and my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition is invited or consulted by the Prime Minister, he will not simply comply with the Prime Minister's request, be it over names or other matters.

As regards calling for papers, my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition has a perfect and legitimate parliamentary right to pursue with the Prime Minister, if the Bill becomes law as it is, matters that have occupied the attention today of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I wish that I could conclude by saying that while I am not entirely happy with the Bill, it is a happy compromise. I cannot draw that conclusion, hence the controversy will continue until we establish the same adequate form of parliamentary scrutiny that has been established in so many other western democracies.

7.47 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): GCHQ is the wartime successor to the Government code and cipher school, and it has had a long and honourable tradition dating back to the second world war. Certainly Eisenhower judged that the second world war had probably been reduced in length by a year, and many tens of thousands of lives were saved as a result of the work carried out at Bletchley Park. The work undertaken there remained secret until 1974 and the publication of "The ULTRA Secret". In the post-war era, there has been only one case of hostile penetration, and that was the case of Geoffrey Prime.

GCHQ is the jewel in the crown of the British intelligence establishment. I am disappointed that their Lordships were so preoccupied about the union ban. We should be clear that the 1984 ban was not imposed by the Government; it was requested by the director-general of GCHQ. Some 10,000 days were lost in total, and that was during a critical time for Britain—the imposition of martial law in Poland and the invasion of Afghanistan.

The Secret Intelligence Service, on the other hand, has not been so successful, and has sometimes been described, perhaps unfairly, as the second oldest profession.

When one is working at the coal face, hostile penetration is almost inevitable. We have the cases of Kim Philby, George Blake, John Cairncross, Dick Ellis and the unnamed victims of the mole hunts in the 1970s. All those cases are occupational hazards of secret intelligence.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman has just given us a catalogue of traitors to Britain. How many of them were GCHQ trade unionists?

Mr. Allason: I have no idea. I have described only one case of hostile penetration of GCHQ—the case of Geoffrey Prime. It has been argued that the information that he betrayed over a long period was probably more damaging than anything that was betrayed by the other individuals in the secret service.

Let us not suppose for one moment that the threat of espionage has come to an end. When right hon. and hon. Members open their newspapers tomorrow, they will read about an espionage case in the United States that has been brewing for some weeks and which is regarded as one of the most serious Russian intelligence service penetrations of the American intelligence establishment. The fact is that the cloaks and daggers were not put away at the end of the cold war.

There is a continuing role for the SIS and GCHQ. One sometimes wonders how one can judge whether one is getting value for money from an intelligence agency, because Ministers invariably ask the director-general of the Security Service and the chief of the SIS how they are doing, and are told, "We are doing tremendously well. We are doing so well that we cannot tell you all the details, because, quite frankly, you do not want to know them. But, yes, you are getting value for money."

I suggest that there are ways in which one can judge the performance of a security or intelligence agency. A classic way is by the receipt of defectors. The SIS has a long and impressive record of receipt of Soviet defectors, particulary during the latter part of the cold war. If an intelligence agency is not trusted, it is unlikely to receive defectors. That one criterion is useful.

In the past 20 years, we have received Vladimir Kuzichkin, Ilya Dzhirkvelov, Oleg Lyalin, Vladimir Rezun and, in 1985, Oleg Gordievsky. Whatever one says about the bad old years, if one can run an agent for between 12 and 14 years—up until Oleg Gordievsky's defection in 1985—that says a tremendous amount about that agency. It means that it can keep a secret for that length of time. It means that, operationally, it can run an agent for that length of time. All that is to the credit of the intelligence agency and goes a long way to demonstrating its integrity.

The principal role of an intelligence agency is to avoid being taken by surprise. That is a problem for all great nations. There have been appalling examples of nations being taken by surprise, the classic being Pearl Harbour. Israel is often credited with having a tremendously impressive intelligence service, but it does not deserve that reputation. The 1973 Yom Kippur conflict is the classic textbook example of how a nation can be taken completely by surprise. The Americans were taken by surprise in Korea, and by the Tet offensive in Vietnam. The collapse of the Soviet bloc was predicted by nobody, least of all by the Central Intelligence Agency.

We were taken by surprise in the Gulf war. No amount of overhead surveillance or satellite system can penetrate the thoughts of Saddam Hussein or get close to his cabinet and discover his intentions. We were taken by surprise there in a way that we were not a decade or so earlier when troops and HMS Bulwark were deployed in the Gulf to prevent and deter aggression.

We were taken by surprise in exactly the same way during the Falklands crisis. We had few assets in south America.

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman says that we were taken by surprise in the Falklands. Is that strictly true? Many people realise that the wrong signals were being sent to Argentina. Surely the problem was more or less the stupidity of the Government rather than being taken by surprise.

Mr. Allason: I would concede that the scrapping of HMS Endurance was one of the most appalling decisions. It was misunderstood by the Argentines.

It is worth explaining one of the reasons for the Falklands conflict and the heavy reliance on GCHQ as opposed to the SIS. On that occasion, GCHQ assured the Joint Intelligence Committee that it would be able to give a considerable lead time for any planned amphibious landing on the Falklands, because it was intercepting and reading the signals of one unit—an amphibious commando unit—stationed on the Andes, overlooking the Chilean frontier.

It was judged that that unit, which was the only one that had been trained in amphibious landing by the Americans at Fort Bragg, was the one unit that would be likely to be deployed against the Falklands. On that occasion, GCHQ gave that assurance to the Joint Intelligence Committee.

But, of course, during and even after the landing at Port Stanley, only conscripts were used, and the unit remained in its position on top of the Andes throughout the conflict. So, by a reliance on technical sources of intelligence, one can disadvantage the human sources. That is where the SIS comes in. That is one of the classic reasons why intelligence is so enormously important.

The question for the House is whether the Bill will help the services to be more effective and efficient. Will it mean more financial support for the organisations that are strapped for cash at the very time when the defence intelligence staff is being chopped?

It is my belief that this is an opportunity for the House to give full support to the SIS and GCHQ, because the fact is that this is the first time, as far as I know, that there have been compulsory redundancies in the SIS. It is bad for morale and bad for this country. If we are intent on dismantling our armed services at the rate we are, it is all the more important that we should have an effective trip wire overseas to alert the Joint Intelligence Committee and the Cabinet, so that the appropriate decisions can be made in time.

I hope that one of the messages that the House will give to the SIS and GCHQ is that they are doing an extremely important job and that the resources will be available to monitor the kind of disruption that has taken place in eastern Europe, the activity of the Islamic fundamentalists right across the continent of north Africa, the near east and middle east, and to monitor our own interests in central America and the Falklands, and even in the South African continent.

[Mr. Allason]

The truth is that the CIA pays only lip service to oversight. It is an unwieldy and difficult system in the United States. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have their own separate committees. They are trusted, but only because they have to be.

It is worth examining why Congress introduced oversight in the first place. It was as a result of the appalling embarrassments and misconduct that were exposed by the Pope and the Church committees. I would not want the American example to be followed. There is no reason to in this country.

As for the Canadian model, it is worth pointing out that there is no external intelligence collection service in Canada. There is, however, an effective security agency—the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service. If the Minister wants to look at a model of how a report about an intelligence agency can be published annually without giving away secrets, but with some sanitised case histories that will educate the public and politicians, I would recommend that document as good reading matter.

There have not been any significant leaks from the oversight committee in Canada, or, for that matter, from those in the United States. There has been one resignation from one of the committees in the United States because of the premature release of a report. Apart from one allegation of one CIA asset being lost in the old Soviet bloc, it is widely believed that the trust has been reciprocated and well earned.

Back in 1989, when we debated what was then the Security Service Bill, we were told that the reason for the Bill was the fact that "it was about time". We now recognise, however, that the real motive was to satisfy the European Court. I do not know the precise motive behind this Bill; perhaps my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy will explain when he winds up. I do not know whether there is any really compelling reason for its introduction.

The fact is that there have been no scandals to act as a catalyst. There have been no murders; there are no dead bodies hidden away. There has simply been a lengthy police investigation of the Hilda Murrell case, after which the police clearly concluded that the Security Service had played no part in it. People on the fringes are making a good deal of mischief. Gary Murray—who served as a dog handler in the RAF police—wrote a long and mischievous book about the Hilda Murrell case, and made a series of other allegations about the Security Service. That man operates in the world of fantasy.

This country has a proud and honourable record of intelligence gathering. That is because there has been considerable ministerial oversight. It was introduced at quite a late stage in the 1940s, when a Foreign Office adviser was attached to the Secret Intelligence Service. No sensitive operation was undertaken without the consent of that adviser—who was not an SIS career officer, but someone seconded to the SIS on a temporary basis.

The one occasion on which something went wrong occurred in 1956, and involved the Buster Crabb case. Curiously enough, the system appeared to work well; but on the morning that the Foreign Office adviser received a telephone call asking for authorisation to send a diver under the Russian cruiser the Ordjonikidze in Portsmouth harbour, his father had died. When he received the call, a short time later, he was in no condition to examine the case in detail.

The Prime Minister was severely embarrassed, and considerable effort was made to ensure that there would never again be a lack of political control. Since 1956—when the director-general of the Security Service was imposed on the SIS to prevent any recurrence of what was described as misconduct—virtually all operations of that kind have involved a large element of ministerial approval.

Evidence about the Matrix Churchill case that has surfaced so far—during the trial of Paul Henderson, and at the Scott inquiry—clearly shows that both the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service have conducted themselves in an exemplary fashion. I am not sure that I can say the same of the Ministers who signed the public interest immunity certificates, but this may not be the appropriate time and place to refer to that aspect; Lord Justice Scott is bound to pursue it over the next six weeks.

My concern about the Bill relates to the inclusion of the Security Service, which—by its very nature—is heavily involved in political judgments. About two thirds of its operations now take place in anti-terrorism and—because it is now so firmly integrated in the criminal justice system—I wonder whether it might more appropriately be subject to the scrutiny of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, and perhaps an annual visit.

I am worried about the relationship between intelligence and security agencies—and the officers responsible for collecting the information—and the criminal justice system. Members of the special and counter-terrorist branches are all police officers; they all hold warrant cards, and they have all given evidence in the courts at one time or another.

I find it an unattractive proposition for this country's courts to be presented with evidence by Mr. A, Mr. B and Mr. C from behind screens. That is not part of our criminal justice system, and it is not understood abroad: it represents a propaganda coup for the Provisional IRA.

Mr. Rogers: What did the hon. Gentleman mean when he said that operatives were heavily involved in political judgments? Earlier in the debate, the Foreign Secretary said that the secret services did not "invent their own agenda". Surely there is a conflict between what the hon. Gentleman said and what the Foreign Secretary said.

Mr. Allason: No, there is not. One of the responsibilities of the Security Service under the 1989 Act is counter-subversion; one definition of counter-subversion was given in the other place, and another—lengthy—definition was given by the present Foreign Secretary, then Home Secretary, during the passage of that Act.

There are bound to be political judgments about whether a political organisation is determined to undermine parliamentary democracy, but they are political only to that extent. Targeting is a matter for the directorate of the Security Service and the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Rogers: I am sorry to press the hon. Gentleman, who demonstrates considerable knowledge of these matters. Perhaps he can pass that knowledge on to the House, however. Is he saying that part of the function of the secret service is to subvert political parties in this country? That is what it sounded like. I know that my

Welsh dialect may be slightly different from the dialect of Torbay; but the hon. Gentleman did say that the service was involved in subversion, and made political judgments in relation to political parties.

Mr. Allason: With respect, I referred the hon. Gentleman to the 1989 Act, under which counter-subversion is one of the responsibilities of the security service.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I do not mean to nitpick, but the Act does not use the term "counter-subversion"—although I accept that the remit involved can be interpreted in a number of ways. One of the purposes of the service is to prevent the undermining of parliamentary democracy

> "by political, industrial or violent means."

That tallies with the comments of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers): the service is precluded from interfering in the political process.

Mr. Allason: The Security Service does not make political judgments, except to the extent that it must deal with counter-subversion. The definition of "subversion" is the definition in the 1989 Act. To that extent, the service is responsible for counter-subversion—for countering the undermining of parliamentary democracy by non-parliamentary means.

According to my interpretation of the Bill, the tribunal will be, in effect, a permanent security commission. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will explain whether the Security Commission will continue to exist. At present, it is composed of a panel, some of whose members can be called upon to conduct investigations.

Will the commission still be needed, or will the tribunal take over its role? Certainly, the panel has been made up of the great and the good, but not one of its members has a day of intelligence experience. In the past, the membership has been derided in the intelligence community as a stable door operation; it does not carry much weight. If the right people are selected for the tribunal, however, I believe that they will have a powerful role to play.

I would refer anyone who has any doubts about the way in which the Security Commission can be misled, to the Bettaney report, in which, in order to protect Oleg Gordievsky, who was a current source, the Security Commission completely misled the public about the tips that had led to Michael Bettaney.

I must also express some concern about the term "taking in washing", which in effect is what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary described when he told the anecdote about an SIS officer being deployed abroad on a drugs surveillance operation. That causes some concern, because there is a national drugs intelligence unit and its sole function surely is to undertake and to collect intelligence of that type.

There are also implications for the criminal justice system if SIS personnel are to be deployed abroad and to supply information that will be used in the prosecution. Are those individuals to appear in court? Will they be called as witnesses and, if so, under what circumstances?

I very much hope that the role of the commissioner will be a strong one. I hope that he will not be governed by a statutory deadline of the type that has handicapped the security commissioner in the 1989 Act. I said in an intervention that he declines to participate in the investigation of any case initiated before 10 December 1989. That precludes his investigating a very large number of complaints. I see no reason why the new commissioner should not be able to use his discretion and to investigate cases about which a file has started before the Bill goes on to the statute book.

I draw the attention of the House to a number of the damaging allegations that were mentioned earlier. I do not think that in Committee we should once again hear some of the tired old allegations that have been disproved elsewhere, that have been the subject of police investigations or, in the case of the allegations that Special Air Services officers have been training the Khmer Rouge, that have gone through the libel courts.

John Pilger has made an apology for those claims, yet one still hears allegations that the Security Service murdered Hilda Morrell, and we still hear that the Walter Mittys, such as Colin Wallace, are making serious allegations that undermine the morale of the Security Service and the Secret Intelligence Service.

I very much hope that the SIS will take the tribunal as an opportunity to ensure that there is a proper system to allow former—and current—members of those organisations to get proper clearance to be able to write their books. I hold no brief for the Peter Wrights of this world, but it is preposterous for disaffected former members of the service and others—very distinguished former members of the service—to be obliged to undergo threats from the Cabinet Office, to undergo a variety of lawsuits initiated by the Treasury Solicitor, and other experiences which are unnecessary and which cost the taxpayer an enormous amount of money.

I suggest that the tribunal should have the power to authorise individual officers to be able to make the type of non-damaging disclosures that are perfectly sensible and are allowed in the United States, Canada and elsewhere.

The Bill is a pretty good one. I regret that the Security Service is included in it, but I conclude by expressing the hope that the Bill will proceed in Committee, and that it will be a Committee of the whole House.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I waited until the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) finished because I have no desire to detain the House. There has come into my possession a press release, which was issued by an organisation that describes itself as a political pressure group. What disturbs me about that press release is that it attacks Members of the House, especially members of the shadow Cabinet, and the way in which they voted last night, and it gives two contact numbers, one of a Mr. Ben Lucas, the chair of the organisation, with a House of Commons telephone number, and the other of a Mrs. Cathy Ashley, a 219 number, which is also a House of Commons number. If those people are employees of the House or hon. Members, they should not be using the facilities of the House to attack Members of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Member has made a combination of allegations. The first is a matter of privilege and I should be most grateful, if he feels that privilege is involved, if he would write formally to Madam Speaker.

As to the other matter in relation to the use of the House's facilities, the rules are quite clear. The authorities of the House will have recorded what the hon. Gentleman has said and I imagine that action will follow. I am most grateful to the hon. Member for mentioning it.

8.15 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I shall speak in support of the Bill in principle. I will not take a walk down memory lane of the murky mystery of spy novels and people who may or may not have been involved in the security services at one time or another throughout the history of time.

Opposition Members support the Bill in principle for a number of reasons, not least of which is that we believe very much in more open government. It is especially important given the record of the Government, who have consistently refused or avoided answering questions in Parliament on so many matters.

One of my worries about the Bill, however, is the role that the Prime Minister has in appointing the committee, given that he, especially, seems to be least open to scrutiny on so many occasions. Opposition Members, on the other hand, have advocated openness and scrutiny consistently for a considerable time. It is important that security services are put on a statutory basis.

I shall speak briefly about some of my reservations about the Bill as it stands. A number of hon. Members have referred to the Home Affairs Select Committee report; the Committee had considered systems abroad in which scrutiny took place. It seemed to find no reason why parliamentary scrutiny should not be extended in this country. I believe that we should play especially close attention to the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee, whose members do not come to their decisions lightly, but have taken some time and have gone into some detail in doing so. The report says:

> "it seems to us that the examples from abroad demonstrate that there are a number of ways in which parliamentary scrutiny of the Security Service in the United Kingdom might be improved".

The House should seriously endorse that view.

The new committee should have the power to make its annual report on the way in which it carries out its duties, not to the Prime Minister, but to Parliament. Parliament is the sovereign body. It is to Parliament that any committee of the House, in whatever form, should report and I believe that that is a flaw in the Bill as it stands.

A number of hon. Members have mentioned the membership of the committee. In my view, the committee has unnecessarily few members. I very much endorsed a number of the comments made by the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) when he said that the committee was not a Select Committee, but would have to take on many of the attributes of a Select Committee; for example, it should be able to call in evidence, call in individuals, ask for documents, according to its own will, setting its own agenda and not according to the Security Service or under some aegis of the Prime Minister. Why is the report of the committee to be presented first to the Prime Minister, not to the House of Commons and the House of Lords?

The number of members of the committee worries us for a number of reasons. There are to be only six members, which is very few. There may be good reasons for that, such as keeping membership tight, but, given the breadth of the work to be done, I wonder whether six will be sufficient to scrutinise the services.

I found it fascinating that the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) felt that the committee members should be House of Commons men. I am not entirely sure what that is supposed to mean. I am not suggesting for one minute that my name should be put forward, but there are a number of hon. Ladies of all parties who would do more than a good job in scrutinising the security services. If they wish to be considered, I hope that they will be.

The committee will be discussing policy, expenditure and the management of the security services. A number of hon. Members have referred to the serious problem of the dividing line between policy and operation. We should like an assurance that there will not be constant attempts to stop the committee discussing policy on the ground that it is, in fact, operational. There must be sufficient flexibility to allow the committee to get on with its work without having to look over its shoulder and hearing the Prime Minister, the heads of the security services or someone else saying that it cannot discuss a particular issue because it is operational.

I have already referred to the disclosure of information to the committee. It is nonsensical for any committee of the House, of whatever standing, not to be able to decide of its own volition what documents it wants to see, which people it wishes to question and how it wishes to formulate its report. As the hon. Member for East Hampshire said, all other Select Committees may do so. Although the committee will not be a Select Committee, it will have to work on very similar lines.

I am surprised that the commissioner will not report to Parliament at least at the same time as he or she reports to the Prime Minister. To illustrate my point, I use as a parallel, although I know that it is not on all fours, the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of which I am a member. The Commissioner comes to the Committee week in, week out, to deliver his report, respond to our questions and raise issues that he believes are of great concern in the administration of Parliament. I should have thought that the commissioner proposed under the Bill would be able to do something similar in reporting directly to the committee.

There is an omission from the Bill which my colleagues and I believe is both tragic and shameful. I refer, of course, to the reinstatement of trade unionism at GCHQ. The Prime Minister has said that he is prepared to talk to trade unions and various organisations, but, despite the fact that they have bent over backward to accommodate his concerns and those of the Government in general, he still maintains firmly that there is to be no trade unionism at GCHQ.

It is nothing short of a scandal that the workers to whom the Secretary of State today rightly paid fulsome tribute should be denied their basic right. Not one member of the Government has yet come up with a serious reason why GCHQ workers should not be members of a trade union.

It is a matter of the utmost shame for the Government and, in particular, for the Prime Minister that, after 10 years, they are still incapable of accepting that people can be trade unionists while being good patriots and professionals and able to get on with the work that the Government ask of them. You can be assured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my colleagues and I will be pressing that issue in Committee and beyond until those trade union rights are re-established.

The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) was concerned that the Bill was merely a first step. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, it is a step and there are more aspects of the issue still to be developed. We have not completed the circle and there is still much more work to be done. The Bill is to be welcomed, although it is by no means perfect and much could still be added.

Finally, I ask the Minister to define the phrase "serious crimes". We might understand it to mean terrorism and the international trafficking of drugs among other things, but I should prefer it if the Bill contained something closer to a proper definition, especially in view of what is happening in relation to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. We should know exactly whom we are targeting under the phrase "serious crimes".

Although I welcome the Bill as a first step, I regret the tragic fact that it does not reinstate the fundamental right of trade unionism for people who work on our behalf at GCHQ.

8.26 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): In a sense, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary presented the Bill as a continuum of a process enacted under the Security Service Act 1989 and reinforced by the Official Secrets Act 1989.

The House will recall that the two Acts were introduced because of episodes in our distant past. In fact, a Lord Justice advised the nation through a court judgment that we would be—I am quoting from memory—naive to suppose that a little bugging and burglary did not take place. There could be no stronger signal from the judicial process to reinforce the fact that there had been a massive breach of a concept that is important to the House and to constitutional and democratic government—the rule of law. The judge was, of course, signifying that, under prerogative power, the security services were breaking the legislated law of the land—statute—and that that was intolerable. I am glad that my right hon. and hon. Friends who were then in government moved to regularise the position and subsequently passed the Security Service Act 1989.

I put the Bill in context because it is inconceivable that, when one is dealing with the range of the necessary defence of the nation, one does not have some form of structure that can attest to the public at large that the intelligence services are run ethically in accordance with certain basic principles.

The entire House accepts the thrust of the Bill, but I wish to explain why I think that the powers of the House and the regard in which the nation is held in the world have diminished. Executive government has an incessant need to hold the formulation of all policies and all Bills entirely unto itself. There has been no discussion with the wider and informed public about what routes we should have taken to secure the objectives that the House believes to be appropriate.

In Canada, of course, there was the McDonald commission, and even in the United States before the Church commission there was Vice-President Rockefeller's report to the then President Ford. There have also been commissions of inquiry in Australia and New Zealand.

I say all that because there has been no examination of what the security services are about, what are the guiding principles that inform their operations and their work, and what are our requirements. That is terribly important, because we are among the most important servants of the state for defending the integrity of our institutions.

When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, as Home Secretary, introduced his original Security Service Bill, I argued—rightly, I believe—that the remit conferred on the security services was so wide that it covered almost everything. But I was pleased, and I still am, that one of the aspects of the remit, as I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), was the recognition that one of the most important functions was to protect us from the undermining of parliamentary democracy. That is a profound principle.

If we ask ourselves what is the purpose of all those services, we must reply that it is to protect our democracy —the democratic United Kingdom of Great Britain. That is why the enunciation of principles and the manner in which we ensure that the guardians themselves are watched are important to us. I have tried to reflect on what those principles are. They have been adumbrated in other countries, and I have tried to suggest that the McDonald commission was a good enough starting point for those who, within the machinery itself, decided how to approach the problem.

I have always found it difficult to comprehend why there is such an extraordinary diffidence on the part of Ministers regarding the nature of that vital service. I do not believe that any Army Minister has the slightest compunction about following through the operational details and techniques of the armed forces. Yet, both now and in the past, we have heard Minister after Minister displaying an extraordinary attitude towards the security services. Indeed, Lord Callaghan said on television that there were many things that he would not want to know about, and did not think it appropriate to know about.

Two principles have emerged from my remarks. First, I have mentioned the Government's attention to the concept of the rule of law. Historically, we cannot have a rule of law if people are acting under prerogative powers in defiance of the legislated or statute power in the land. The Government have therefore moved to bring activities within the rule of law. I shall consider that aspect in a moment.

There is another principle underlying a democracy—surely the basic principle, the very assertion of which is now being examined at great length. I advise my right hon. Friend and other hon. Members to read the evidence from day 63 of the Scott inquiry, given by Sir Robin Butler. That is not only riveting but deeply disturbing. Sir Robin discussed what responsible, or accountable, government meant. I cannot trace through the Bill where there is an affirmation of that, and I wonder to myself. We passed the Security Service Act, and now we are considering the Intelligence Services Bill. We see common features and commmon words across the two pieces of legislation—for instance, the concept of warrants, which is essential for bringing the activity within the rule of law.

We must remember that there is no judicial interference in any of the actions in that process. Unless there is a mistake, whereby the Prime Minister determines to set up an inquiry such as that of Lord Justice Scott, we know absolutely nothing of what is happening on our behalf, at our behest and at our expense.

Those principles are of profound importance. The rule of law required us to put matters on a statutory basis; that is enormously important. A warrant issued by a Secretary of State—from the Home Office, for instance—makes lawful that which would otherwise be unlawful, without reference to any court. Most other societies have always

[Mr. Richard Shepherd]

required judicial intervention in that process. For instance, a warrant is sought from a justice or from a judge. That can be done in a secure way, and it is done to show that the Security Service is not merely the creature and the self-serving of executive government. As with the armed forces, it should be at the service of the whole nation. That is why we have to be so careful. In the Bill, in legislated form, we are providing a continuation of the process of making lawful that which would otherwise be unlawful. That point ought to be set up on high. We believe that there should be absolute attention to the rule of law.

I try to trace through who is actually accountable for the service. Clearly it is not the commissioner; clearly it is not the tribunal; clearly it is not what is now called, in that elegant phrase, a committee of parliamentarians. We must search further. Normally in our system of accountable government we expect a Minister who is both responsible and accountable to be accountable to the House of Commons. But in this extraordinary democratic society of ours we have always accepted that it is inappropriate to speak on security matters. That was so until 1989, and the legacy of that feeling still lingers over the House.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will remember that in the defence of that secrecy the present Secretary of State for Education, who was then Minister of State, Home Office, made some remarks that were funny at the time, but which now look nothing but hysterical and deeply shaming. I am trying to trace through who is responsible for the service. There are Ministers who say, "There are some matters that I do not wish to know about." There is no traced line that is clear and certain showing us who is responsible for the efficiency and efficacy of the service, and for the matching of warrants to the proportionate needs.

Why am I concerned about that? I am concerned because it touches on the most intimate freedoms of a free society. The ability to burgle my house or to tap my telephone is intrusive at the grandest levels, yet rightly we recognise that there are circumstances in which it is necessary for the well-being of us all that the ordinary decencies and proprieties of democratic government under a rule of law are not appropriate. Therefore, we must be assured that from within the wall of secrecy, as it is called today—the circle of secrecy was the term that we used more vigorously five years ago—someone can attest to the House and to the wider nation that what is being done is all appropriate.

After all, let us be frank about the fact that no committee would be being set up unless there were an unease within the House and within a broader public context. I do not know whether the scandals that we were led to enjoy in the early 1980s, and certainly in the Wright period of the early 1970s, were merited, but they left an unease. Lord Merlyn-Rees, for example, felt that he was the victim of over-enthusiastic or perverse military intelligence operatives. That should make us extremely conscious. I notice that that is perhaps why we have the prevention of subversion of parliamentary democracy as one of the objectives of the Security Service.

I am trying to pluck out the truth about where and who is the person who can attest to us and say with authority, "We have stood and looked and we can show—or rather, say; you must trust us on that basis—that this is appropriately managed, and does not overly intrude into the lives of citizens, that the warrant issued to make lawful that which would otherwise be unlawful was appropriately issued in respect of the threat identified in it."

As I have said, the remit covered by the two pieces of legislation is so wide that it could encompass almost anything that a Government wished to do, if it were malign. There is no question about that. It is extraordinary that we do not attempt to define the essence of national security. Other societies have tried to do that, and there is a reasonable argument that it may be a moving target, because the needs of a society change from generation to generation.

Mr. Rogers: I am following the hon. Gentleman's speech with great interest, but, unless I am misunderstanding him, he is giving the impression that the issuing of a warrant legitimises that which otherwise would not be legitimate, and then implying that attached to the issuing of a warrant is some sort of judicial intervention. However, the Bill specifically says that the warrant is issued by the Government, through the Government's agent, the Secretary of State.

Mr. Shepherd: If I conveyed that impression, I was wrong to do so. I do not believe that I did. I was saying that the issuing of a warrant makes lawful that which would be otherwise unlawful under the statute law of the country. As there is no judicial review of that—it is specifically excluded—it is a matter of the greatest sensitivity and why we need attestation that the process is conducted appropriately by those outside the services themselves and not by those so closely allied to the Executive that it may undermine the confidence of the public. I think that, because of the anxiety and the question of public confidence, there has been a move towards a committee of parliamentarians. I shall comment on that committee later.

Mr. Rogers: To follow that argument, the Secretary of State would have to authorise the release of documents to the committee. If the committee is to be the overseeing body, but cannot oversee operational matters—the issuing of a warrant is obviously directly related to an operational matter—there is no purview in any way of the process that the hon. Gentleman has outlined so clearly. The committee of the House, regardless of how it is set up and what it would do, would never be able to call for the reasons for the issuing of a warrant. Perhaps it never should. I am not arguing that it should, because that is an operational matter, but it would be wrong to give the impression that the committee would have the right to do it.

Mr. Shepherd: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has tried to follow what I am saying, because I do no think that we are at odds. I am considering the reasoning behind why we construct Bills and why society at large tries to address some of those points. I do not think that the Bill addresses some of those points, as I shall say. The sensitivity of the issuing of a warrant, which makes that which would otherwise be unlawful lawful and without judicial review, is therefore a matter of great importance and of great reflection for a democratic society.

Therefore, we need the means by which we can attest. The Bill does not meet that need at all and there is a respectable body of thought that feels that it is merely a palliative to reassure the public and hon. Members that the matters are being considered.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On the operation of warrants, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, I find it extremely worrying that we have been told by Ministers in the Scott inquiry that they have no option but to sign warrants whatever they contain——

Mr. Mates: No, they have not said that.

Mr. Cohen: Yes, they have said that and they have said that they use the excuse that it is in the public interest or in the interests of national security. They are thus not accountable to the House or, presumably, to the committees for signing those warrants. Even worse, those warrants do not necessarily relate to one person, but can be a general warrant which, once a Minister has signed it, the security services may relate to many people. Is not that a worrying aspect of the operation of warrants?

Mr. Shepherd: Of course it is worrying. We are labouring a point that I was making as an indication of why we are considering the issue and why there are reasons to be not so glad-handed about the matter, as perhaps the House of Lords conveyed. The cross-bench, bipartisan approach also leads one to believe that the matter is settled. I accept what the Secretary of State said. It is a stepped approach and I do not think that the way in which the committee will be constructed will satisfy that basic test.

I was going to adumbrate, if I may, some of the principles involved in the Bill. First, I shall quote the Rockefeller report to President Ford about the balance, which is not evident in most of what has been said, certainly not today and certainly not in the Lords, and which is the essence of concerns to many people. The report states:

> "While it is vital that security requirements be met",

with which the House absolutely agrees,

> "it is equally important that intelligence activity be conducted without impairing our democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms".

I suggest that that is a principle which should inform all such matters. It is the most difficult balance to strike, which I accept. The Executive has real difficulty in trying to balance the needs, which often seem of the absolute imperative, for defence and security against those of the rights of a democracy. If we employ such draconian measures, as is possible and as has been alleged in the past, we impair the democracy.

That is why the debate is tremendously important; the essence of it concerns our freedoms, our liberties, our rule of law and the accountability of Ministers. In reconciling the security of the United Kingdom with the requirements of democracy, we should emphasise that we hold certain things to be absolutely fundamental to our understanding of democracy: first, responsible or accountable government; secondly, the rule of law; and, thirdly, an aspect of which we have not heard anything this afternoon, but which is important and over which we fought in the Official Secrets Act 1989, the right to lawful dissent. That is an essential and basic requirement of our democracy. It is not in the Security Service Act 1989. No allusion is made to it in the Bill. It is important that, in setting out the statutes relating to the conduct of matters which must be of a secret nature, there must be, in a declaratory form, an explanation of the principles on which we operate.

On the question of responsible government, I again refer to day 63 of Lord Scott's inquiry where there was a rehearsal of those arguments that I held dear and had learned from Wade and Phillips and Ivor Jennings among others, about responsible and accountable government. It means that a Minister must, if he wishes, know absolutely everything that is happening—the details of any operation if necessary—because he is accountable to the House. It does not mean that he will tell us the details of that operation, but anything of a political sensitivity must be by some mechanism instantly referred to him. That is one of the conditions that I am setting out as necessary. It does not seem to be accepted on the Floor of the House and it is certainly not accepted in the Lords.

Ministers are also proud to declare that certain things are either too secret or too important or too tendentious for them to wish to know. They may endanger the security of an act by the security or intelligence services. That self-abnegation reduces accountable government to a nonsense. If one is to have accountable government, Ministers must know everything that is happening if they wish. The principle is that they should know everything that is sensitive and likely to beg questions relating to the greatest sensitivities of our personal freedoms in this democracy.

That principle is held at arm's length and is not yet regarded by the House. I do not understand why that is, if we examine our function here to hold Ministers to account. Those Ministers control and are responsible and accountable for a service that may move into the most important facets of our liberties, freedoms and privacy. That is not outside the circle of secrecy or telling the public or even hon. Members what an operation is, what its nature is or about its details. There is no possibility of a leak.

I was trying to identify what I understood by responsible government. Lord Scott will give us another view of what it means, by the non-responsibility of Ministers for so much of what they have done over recent years.

The rule of law as the other principle is important because until the Security Service Act, unlawful acts took place. It is as simple as that. I have given the expression of a judge and we know why we had to address that issue. The McDonald commission report said:

> "Responsible Government must mean that responsible Ministers can know about all the practices and policies of security agencies and about any of their operations which raise policy or legal issues. The security system must be an open book to responsible Ministers and to the Prime Minister. No pages in that book should be sealed because security officials think they contain information too sensitive for Ministers' or Prime Ministers' eyes or ears. Responsible Ministers cannot be expected to know everything a security agency does but they can and must be expected to know the policies governing the operations of the security agency and to establish procedures for ensuring that operations raising difficult policy issues are brought to their attention."

On the rule of law, the McDonald commission says:

> "Nor is the rule of law a principle that should be compromised for the sake of national security. Government agencies, including a security service, should not pick and choose which laws they will obey. We do not accept the idea that there are some 'minor', regulatory, laws which security agencies should be free to ignore when they stand in the way of security investigations. There may well be a need to change the laws so that exemptions are provided for members of a security agency or police force, but it is not for security agencies, or police forces, or even for the Ministers responsible for these agencies, to decide which laws apply to them and which do not. Under the rule of law in our system of government, the legislators . . . determine general rules of law, and disputes about the applications of the laws to particular cases are decided ultimately by the judges and juries."

We have ruled out the judges and juries element, so we are dependent on Ministers.

[Mr. Shepherd]

Under the construction of an umbrella, as we got in these two Acts, we have learnt—the Minister of State was kind enough to tell me yesterday—that the commissioner will be the same commissioner for both services and GCHQ. Similarly, the members of the tribunal will be the same for the security services, GCHQ and the intelligence services. The committee of parliamentarians which the Government envisage will also have common responsibilities across the services. I welcome that. It is cohesive. There is an understanding that this is an intelligent way in which a body of knowledge and facts grows.

I shall mention in passing the right to lawful dissent. I should like to see that emphasised—it should be included in security services legislation. I do not understand why the legislation was not consolidated so that we had a clearer expression of what we wanted.

As I said, liberal democracies face a unique challenge in maintaining security of the state. The challenge is to secure democracy against its internal and external enemies without destroying democracy in the process. It follows the requirement that all security measures must be authorised or provided by law. In a sense, the Government's Bill meets that requirement. We must ensure that the investigation of subversive activity does not interfere with the freedoms of political dissent and association which are essential to a free society.

What we have is a structural edifice of law—some institutional arrangements and administrative practices. By and large, we know nothing about the administrative practices, because they are not within the public view. The tribunal and its functions and workings are not subject to judicial review and the commissioner is not subject to judicial review. Therefore, the practice must be within the circle of secrecy.

The test that I make is how well we reconcile the requirements of security with the requirements of democracy. That can be done within a parliamentary system—other countries have done it. The Government have not invited the views of hon. Members and the wider public on the construction of this structure, and there is no commission to look at the objectives that we should have. Therefore, this Bill undermines the integrity of these systems.

By and large, the Bill has the support of both Chambers. But what is this committee of parliamentarians? It is extraordinary. We have been told that its members will be notified people. That means that anything that they say is an absolute offence when it relates to the security services or matters that come into their knowledge. I was always happy that they should be Privy Councillors because it reinforced the concept of the circle of secrecy. I am well aware that many hon. Members are nervous that matters that are vital to the state's security could in some way slip out.

We must still reconcile how we can have an account from within that is independent of the Executive, the commissioners and the tribunal, but can attest to us that this is appropriate and proper. That is why any committee that is set up will meet the circle of secrecy, whether through the Privy Councillorship route or not. We know that members of the committee will be notified as well. That degree of trust is not extended to many members of the services.

We talk constantly as though we will leak information, or that those members who are designated and perhaps Privy Councillors who are looking at this will do so. However, they are denied the means to test whether the action taken or the operation was historically appropriate and effectively run. It is a self-denying ordinance that is remarkable in a democracy. The deference that is extended by Ministers and hon. Members of the House to the services for our freedom is extraordinary. In the end, it will be self-defeating. We should have a little more courage about these matters. These are decent and honourable citizens who struggle to do their best by their duty and towards their country. We should respect that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) made an important point about publication, whether it is by "russet-coated" gentlemen or those "with little eyes". Nicholas Elliott has given a valuable oversight about the value of those services. He lists at the back of his very short book—I do not mean to do a paean of praise for it—some of the tasks identified by hon. Members that must be done in an uncertain and shifting world.

Like all other hon. Members in the House, I give a reluctant or half-hearted cheer, because this measure is not as worthy of this nation as we expect. What I am saying is that we should stand up for the people in the services. They are our servants and servants of the public, just as we are servants. We respect them and want to help them.

However, we must be able to attest to the public through some form of proper oversight committee, not the neutered committee provided for in the Bill, that these people are working effectively and efficiently on our behalf with the large sums of money that they command for that vital purpose. In many ways, what they do is more vital than some of our armed forces today in the wars that are important to us—the wars against terrorism, drugs and those who undermine society.

The construction of this structure was approached in a typical British way. We are the darkest state for secrecy. We conceive our laws in the most secret way, deliver them to the House of Commons and then fight that the House may not change a line or comma. That has brought a terrible tension to so many issues. The proposition is clear —we want effective, efficient and secure security services across the range of activities.

The House is supportive, and there is no question about that. The Bill returns to Whitehall the absolute which it must always hold and the one thing which is now causing it to crack—the need for absolute secrecy over how it comes to its judgments. It must itself determine the shape of all the legislation before the House, including that which relates to the security services.

I wonder in my heart of hearts who conceived the Bill. Was it Ministers of the Crown working on principles that we have set out in the House, or was it a secret bureaucracy? I do not mean secret in the sense of the security services but as it relates to Whitehall, which has been opened up to us in an unprecedented manner through the Scott inquiry. The deepest and most anxious thing about that inquiry is the contempt that those involved hold towards this House. We must assert that we expect ethical and open government.

8.58 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): It is with great pleasure that I follow the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and the important values that he articulated, which, I am sure, we all share.

I cannot compete with many of the hon. Members who have spoken in their knowledge of the detail of the intelligence services or, in some cases, the fantasy that they displayed about the operation of the security services. However, I have a strong and settled view of my own, which is that the intelligence services are a necessary and perfectly legitimate part of government.

People accept the secretive and potentially dangerous interference with their freedom because of the protection which they get in return from it. Hon. Members have stated the variety of threats that are posed to our country, and they do not need further repeating. I have no difficulty and, I am sure, the people whom I represent in the House have no difficulty in justifying the operation and the conduct of the intelligence services.

The question for us is what principles and framework should govern the operation of the intelligence services. What guards and protection of our civil liberties need to be erected and strengthened through the enactment of this legislation? Specifically, what important parliamentary oversight and public regulation of the security and intelligence services should follow from the Secret Intelligence Service being placed on a statutory basis, as the Security Service already is?

The framework of the Bill offers a worthwhile set of checks and balances which should be neither dismissed out of hand, as some have implied in their speeches, nor accepted without question. There are many important questions and possible amendments to the Bill which we need to consider, and there are a number of areas that we need to probe. In responding to the debate, the Minister should give some elucidation of the Government's view.

We must ask whether the three distinct provisions for oversight which are set out in the Bill—the creation of the commissioner, the tribunal and the parliamentary committee or, more appropriately, the committee of parliamentarians—have real powers which would be capable of being exercised effectively, or whether they have the pretence of powers which could be all too easily brushed aside.

The right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) referred to the variety of arrangements that exist in different countries for providing some oversight of the security services. He offered his own opinion that in each country all the arrangements are different. I suggest that in none of the countries that the right hon. Gentleman has examined are the arrangements quite so toothless—*[Interruption.]* I am offering that as my view, not as the view of the right hon. Gentleman.

The powers set out in the Bill may be more appropriately described as circumscribed. The Government's approach in the Bill to the oversight powers which they are seeking to establish can best be described as one of positive containment of those they are setting up and to whom they are giving powers. Of course, that makes the selection or appointment of those who will fill the various positions created in this Bill all the more important. If there is a small set of timorous individuals, the powers that have been established will be all the less significant. We must have some aggressive tigers in those roles and positions if the powers are to have any effect.

Reference has been made to clause 7 of the Bill, which enables the Secretary of State to authorise illegal activities outside Britain. I question, as others have done before me, whether the powers outlined in clause 7 are too sweeping. I ask the Minister specifically whether the terms of clause 7 refer to illegal activities authorised by the Secretary of State himself or to activities authorised in his name but not necessarily by him directly or personally. That makes an enormous difference to our attitude to that authorisation. I hope that the Minister will refer to what level of decision-making might be envisaged in the authorisation.

Thirdly, I question whether the powers of intelligence chiefs and Ministers to block information and restrict access are too great. My right hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) referred to schedule 3. Paragraph 4 of schedule 3 refers to "sensitive information", which is by any measure extremely embracing, not to say draconian, in its sweep. I wonder whether there should be some override mechanism or some means of arbitration between the individuals and bodies proposed in the Bill. I should like to know the Minister's views on that.

Next, we should go in some detail into the issue of search and tapping warrants and ask whether it should be left exclusively in ministerial rather than judicial hands. Presumably the Government have thought the matter through and have good reasons for wanting to remove judicial hands entirely from the issue of warrants. Perhaps the Minister will explain why. I wonder whether the Commissioner should be empowered by the Bill to intervene at a slightly earlier stage than is envisaged in the Bill in the issue of such warrants.

I also wonder whether there should be greater and earlier disclosure of records if no threat to national security is involved. I wonder what criteria the Government have in mind for the disclosure of those records and what definition of national security they have in mind. A definition was set out in the Security Service Act 1989, but it is not in the Bill. We should know why and what definition of national security the Government have in mind.

An inportant matter that is of great concern to me and my hon. Friends is recognition of trade unions at Government Communications Headquarters. It is unfortunate that, following a meeting between trade union representatives and the Prime Minister before Christmas, at which possible means of resolving the disagreement involving the the creation of no-strike arrangements were floated, the Prime Minister decided to dismiss the proposals out of hand. That decision would need considerable justification by the Minister in our consideration of the Bill.

If the trust of the public in the intelligence services is to be cemented, the provisions of the Bill should be strengthened in several areas, some of which I have mentioned. Above all, if oversight is to mean anything —I do not confuse it with operational supervision, which I shall come to in a moment—I agree with the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills that the Bill should provide clear principles for the operation of the security services. It should set out clear standards below which the services are not expected to fall.

The hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills referred to the Canadian royal commission, which set out some clear

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

guidelines, and he has referred to some of those guidelines. Time does not permit me to describe others, but they commend themselves. Obviously, a great deal of thought has been given to the subject in Canada. The guidelines set out by the Canadian royal commission provide a useful rubric which might be employed by the Intelligence and Security Committee when it is set up as a result of the enactment of the Bill.

For me, the heart of the issue is not simply the external oversight of the security services, but the operational supervision—a term which I use advisedly. I share the views of my colleagues who do not believe that oversight means involvement or dabbling in the day-to-day details and activities of the security services. But operational supervision is very important indeed. Day-to-day control of the security services is not, and should not be, a function of any parliamentary committee; it is a function of Ministers, and Ministers alone.

The central and last point of my speech is that, in my view, it is a question not whether the Bill properly makes a shift from a presumption of secrecy to accountability in the operation of the security services—in theory it obviously does, and that is welcome—but whether, as a result of the shift, the intelligence services, in their day-to-day operation, will be better directed, more capably managed and more efficiently controlled by Ministers. I believe that this will depend, above all, on the performance of Ministers, the attitude they bring to their work in this crucial area of government, the discretion that they exercise and the scrupulous use of their powers and on the attitudes that are passed on to the heads of the security and intelligence services. For me, this is of paramount importance.

At the beginning of the debate, the Foreign Secretary said—I paraphrase his remarks—that the security services do not work to their own agenda, that they do not work without direction and instructions from Ministers, that they carry out their tasks in relation to specific policies. It is immensely difficult, but extremely important, to ensure that when the Intelligence and Security Committee approaches its work it will not be unduly frustrated and obfuscated by a fussy and pedantic ministerial distinction between tasks and policies. This afternoon, the Foreign Secretary established clearly that they are the two sides of the same coin. It is very difficult to disentangle from the policies laid down by Ministers the tasks that are carried out in pursuit of those policies. Both must be subject to questioning and scrutiny by the committee made up of hon. Members.

This is a crucial and central issue, which I hope that the Minister will address. The Foreign Secretary did not go into it in sufficient detail. Recorded remarks of a previous Home Secretary indicated that it was impossible to make a distinction between operation and policy. That was his argument against having any oversight at all. In moving away from that view, we need to ensure that hon. Members understand much more clearly how tasks and policies will be understood and disentangled, if at all. It is on the impact of greater openness and of opportunity to question the political control of the services that success or failure for this legislation hang.

In other areas of administration, the scrutiny and accountability of Ministers afforded by parliamentary oversight results in better government. Exactly the same applies to the intelligence and security services. A principal aim of the Bill must be that the creation of checks and balances will focus Ministers' minds and help to ensure high standards and effectiveness in operational supervision. The oversight for which the Bill provides is the means by which we shall drive Ministers to achieve those high standards and that effectiveness. If that is not achieved, the legislation will be worthless.

The intelligence services only collect information. The Joint Intelligence Committee analyses it and Ministers must decide what to do as a result of that analysis. Ministers are therefore crucial. It may well be, as some hon. Members have suggested, that before the Falklands war or the invasion of Kuwait the intelligence services were somewhat at fault. I do not know—I do not have enough knowledge to say—but I hazard a guess that if the services were at fault on those occasions they are certainly exceeded by the number of occasions, areas and subjects on which the services got it right, averted conflict and secured our country's national interest.

Ultimately, Ministers must take responsibility for their own and others' actions. Throughout the Scott inquiry, we have witnessed the ability and inclination of some Ministers to overlook matters from time to time that it would be expedient for them not to see, to react and act expediently when they so wish and when it would be politically embarrassing for them to do otherwise, and even to mislead Parliament when it suited them and then to try to shuffle off responsibility when they were found out. The Bill should guard against that happening in relation to the security and intelligence services and prevent such sloppy and cavalier attitudes on the part of some Ministers. I believe that the Bill will be extremely important, once enacted, as a means of guarding against such behaviour and arresting it.

9.16 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Earlier in the debate, my right hon. Friends the Members for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton) and my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates) were able to speak from their direct experience of the service that the security and intelligence services have rendered.

In the days when I served as a bag carrier and general factotum to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, I was rightly never privy to the working methods of those services or to details of the information that they gained. However, I knew enough about what was happening in the Foreign Office to know this. In 1990, when British subjects were in hiding in Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion and other British subjects were being detained as hostages within Iraq, the information gleaned by our security and intelligence services helped the Government to advise and reassure relatives waiting in distress at home and to shape the diplomatic initiatives that enabled real help and comfort to be brought to those British citizens in need.

I certainly agreed with the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) when he spoke of the necessity for intelligence and security services in the British state today. I must confess that when I first studied the Bill and realised that the Government had agreed to some measure of parliamentary scrutiny of the work of those services I thought that perhaps they had gone too far. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) very fairly drew attention to the paradox that one could have two kinds of committee. One could have a committee that was privy to the innermost workings of the security and intelligence services and, for that reason, could never divulge its findings—for good or for ill—to those in a position to take the appropriate action. Alternatively, one could have a committee whose members would be excluded from detailed knowledge of the workings of those services and therefore incapable of carrying out their task.

Having listened to the assurances given by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and studied the Bill in more detail I am somewhat reassured, although I would always want to be satisfied by Ministers that they are striking the right balance between desirable openness and the very necessary secrecy that must still apply to the work of the British security and intelligence services.

I listened particularly to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater, who talked about the need for greater supervision: of the budgets of the security and intelligence services. Anyone who has in recent years watched Vauxhall palace rise brick by brick over the London skyline would support the need for such scrutiny and the need for it be rigorous.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) and my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills talked about accountability. I found myself unable to support the hon. Lady's argument that the Intelligence and Security Committee and the commissioner should report directly to Parliament rather than to the Prime Minister and to the relevant Secretaries of State. The security and intelligence services are part of the central core of what constitutes the state and, therefore, it is right that they should report to the relevant Ministers and that those Ministers be held accountable to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills spoke, as always, with passion and eloquence and from the noblest of motives. I differ from him in that he gave insufficient weight to the safeguards that are provided by the institutions and political culture developed through this country's history and tradition. He put too much confidence in written constitutions and statutory rules and regulations, which will prove worthless in the absence of the right culture in government, as has been shown in the histories of other states during this century.

The Government have sought correctly to strike a balance between openness and secrecy and they have displayed caution in striking that balance. Because of the nature of the services that we are debating today, that caution is amply justified and therefore I am very willing to support the Bill.

9.21 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The debate has been extremely interesting. Throughout the afternoon, a large number of hon. Members have been present and, for myself, it has been an education. I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and I shall refer to it later. His speech, as much as anyone else's, touched on some of the fundamental questions that face us when we deal with issues such as security, the balance between security and the rights of individuals, and the general concept of parliamentary democracy.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the shadow Foreign Secretary, said in his opening remarks that the Opposition support the Bill and will not divide the House on Second Reading. We support it because we believe that it is necessary to put the secret service on a statutory basis.

I also pay tribute to and thank the men and women of the intelligence services who, over many years, have played a crucial part in the protection of British interests and citizens around the world. Other hon. Members have alluded to the fact that we are a secret and secretive society. That secrecy pertains not only to the matters under discussion today, but in general to the Government. Regardless of the fact that the Government have appointed a Minister with responsibility for open government, day by day, they continually, whether because of arrogance or incompetence, or because of a combination of the two, close up and become more secretive. Indeed, as some Conservative Members have said, the Government have compounded the position by subverting the parliamentary process.

We recognise that the effectiveness of the country's security and intelligence services depends on a degree of secrecy that would be unacceptable in other institutions. But that very latitude puts them in a unique position to abuse their powers and, on behalf of their political masters, to use them in ways that are no longer acceptable in a democratic society. It is therefore crucial that the need for complete secrecy is carefully considered and that all other options are explored before it is accepted.

Over the years, British society has shown that it is perfectly prepared to accept limitations on personal freedoms where those are absolutely necessary, and even the abrogation of principles of political, financial and legal accountability. Even where full accountability is not possible, the people of this country have accepted other democratic options. If the presumption of accountability is not adopted but, instead, a presumption of secrecy continues, can society be satisfied that the secret services exist to protect it, not to threaten it?

There are now too many examples of the complacency of the secret service in this country and in other countries. That matter was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and other hon. Members on both sides of the House. Inevitably, the nature of the service is such that many of the stories put about —I shall refer later to the contribution by the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason)—are false, exaggerated or rely on fantasy. But because of the present position of the security services and the fact that they have been avowed in the past, they cannot correct those stories. That difficulty adds weight to the argument that the maximum political and legal control should be exercised and be seen to be exercised to convice society that a demand for secrecy is made only when secrecy is absolutely necessary.

Although the effectiveness of the security services depends on secrecy, our acceptance of the Bill depends on parliamentary scrutiny of the secret services. We are convinced that the Bill is not only badly drafted but does not provide for proper parliamentary scrutiny. After even a cursory reading of the Bill, we can see that its construction is such that it poses more questions than it answers. That fact has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. For that reason alone, although we shall not vote against the Bill this evening, we shall

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

seek substantial clarification and amendment in Committee. I was pleased to hear some Conservative Members say that they, too, want that to happen.

Besides its bad drafting and the many ambiguities that it contains, the Bill introduces some novel legal and constitutional concepts that are not elucidated or explained. We shall want to explore those in Committee. For example, the activities of the Security Service on mainland Britain need to be defined. We may find that, on further examination, the activities that the Bill allows in overseas countries might breach international treaties and obligations. Those are all matter for serious consideration.

Will the Minister clarify in his winding speech what is meant by "the British islands" mentioned in the Bill? As far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no legal or constitutional definition. I should like to know what exactly is meant by "the British islands". It would be extremely useful if we had a definition before we reached Committee.

The Foreign Secretary has now joined us. I enjoyed his opening remarks this afternoon. On certain occasions, I felt that he was not quite sure about the substance of the Bill that he was introducing. *[Interruption.]* It was fairly obvious from some of his remarks that were picked up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland, who asked the Foreign Secretary some questions that he was unable to answer, but perhaps that is not unusual.

One point that the Foreign Secretary made which I found perhaps not laughable but rather sad was that we needed the secret service because of weapon proliferation. I should have thought that the easiest way for a Foreign Secretary to overcome weapon proliferation was actively to pursue the control of arms and the arms trade and to introduce an arms register that could be properly supervised rather than to say that we must have a secret service to control the movement of arms. The mechanisms exist so long as the Government are honestly prepared to subscribe to them.

Mr. King: Quite apart from the question of treaty control and arms treaties—and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister instituted the proposal of a register for the sale of arms—a real problem is what might be called the free market. There is a real problem of gangster groups and others stealing weapons and seeking to sell them to the highest bidder. It is not a breach of confidence to say that out intelligence services and others have already done some important work in preventing that illicit trade.

Mr. Rogers: I accept what the right hon. Gentleman says. He brings his vast experience as an ex-Secretary of State for Defence to the debate. I am sure that he will also accept that, if the Governments of the western world applied themselves to implementing an arms register and properly controlling arms, we would be well down the road towards preventing the proliferation of weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction—and I do not mean only nuclear weapons.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to emphasise that Russian arms, for instance, are freely available in many parts of the world. However, I am not sure that we need a secret service to tell us that. Such facts are fairly obvious, even to the Conservative party.

The Conservative party has a fairly bad record in such matters. Over the past five or six years, as the ex-Secretary of State for Defence will know, I have been asking questions about the export of arms to Iraq. As many hon. Members have said, the Scott inquiry is looking into the matter, and some right hon. and hon. Members have threatened to resign if they are criticised by the Scott inquiry. The inquiry certainly has grounds for substantial criticism of the Government.

As for weapon proliferation, perhaps it would be better if the Foreign Secretary put his own house in order before suggesting the prescription he put forward today.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have raised important points about the substance of the Bill. The whole process of accountability, for example, was rehearsed by many hon. Members, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland spoke of our general unhappiness with the Government's minimalist approach to the process of reporting to, scrutiny by and accountability to Parliament. If there is to be anything other than a charade of parliamentary accountability, a different mechanism must be introduced.

Almost every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate has said that the mechanisms in the Bill will not be adequate for proper parliamentary scrutiny and proper accountability. Accountability to Parliament is an important aspect of the Bill and of what we are all about. But there is also accountability the other way—to society and the law, not only the law of this land, but when we are talking about a foreign intelligence service, as MI6 is, accountability to the laws of other lands. The Bill does not give real and substantial control over the work of the services to Parliament. Accountability is necessary, because agents of the state who act on its behalf must be subject to adequate control by the electorate, the people of this country whom, as the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills said, we serve. Although there was some misunderstanding across the Dispatch Box this afternoon, we agreed that just under £1 billion a year is spent by the secret service agencies. The three services must be accountable to ensure that those large sums of money are properly accounted for so that they are used efficiently and effectively. Secrecy encourages inefficiency.

Other issues of accountability that emerged were membership, structure, functions and the role of the committee itself, which will be set up in the House under the proposals in the Bill. The appointment system will be carried out after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, but will be solely in the hands of the Prime Minister. It is specifically provided that the Prime Minister also has the right to remove a person whom he does not want to serve on the committee. It will not be a committee of the House; it will not be responsible to the House. It will be a committee of the Prime Minister. The idea that some form of parliamentary accountability is being introduced is complete nonsense.

It is presumed that the security services will vet the members before they are put on the committee. I do not know how many hon. Members, from both sides of the House, put in their bids to be members of the committee, or for chairmanship of it, but whenever I have looked up into the Galleries and into the Box, some faces have been fairly constant. I presume that hon. Members are presently being vetted for their membership of the commitee, even as they speak. I am sorry to have to tell those hon. Members who have been absent all day and have just come in that they are non-runners. They will certainly not be joining the starting line-up. I am sure that everyone who aspires to membership of the committee recognises that its role, as the Bill says, in examining

"the expenditure, administration and policy"

will need to be defined. I think that it was the right hon. Members for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) who said that membership of the committee would involve a lot of hard work, that it could not be someone dodging in and out and saying, "I'll do half an hour here and half an hour there." To have any form of scrutiny in this poorly constructed committee, it will be necessary for people to dedicate themselves to the job in hand.

When the Bill is in Committee, I hope that we will be able to get clear definitions of what we are about and the matters that we are to address. One issue that we will want to address is the committee's access to information. If what is to come to the committee will be vetted by the Prime Minister, the director-general of the relevant service and anyone else who wants to chip in before it even comes to the committee, it will be a charade; it will be nonsense. Not only will the Committee have not much of a role to play; what role it has will be worthless in any event.

If, as we have heard today, the culture of the services restricts the provision of information to a need-to-know basis, it seems to me that the committee will need to know nothing; any information that is likely to be contentious will be sidelined or removed by the Prime Minister before it can even reach the committee. Even if it percolates through that sieve, by the time the committee reports to the Prime Minister—it will not be reporting to Parliament—the whole concept of parliamentary scrutiny will have gone by the board.

I am not sure whether the Secretary of State is present in his role as Minister for open government or in his capacity as Minister for the Cabinet Office. Perhaps he or the Foreign Secretary can assure us that they are prepared to examine the serious arguments advanced by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I could deal with many serious issues that have been raised, but, because of the agreement between the Front Benches, I must close my speech. Let me end by referring to a matter that has been mentioned more by Opposition Members than by Conservatives.

I welcome the return to the Chamber of the hon. Member for Torbay. I found his "Book at Bedtime" extremely interesting.

One of the most important issues with which we shall deal in Committee is the question of trade union membership at GCHQ. I know that the former Home Secretary—who was involved in the decision about GCHQ, and who is again involved as Foreign Secretary—has a particular view, and much has been said about the matter. The Labour party, however, is completely and consistently opposed to the Government's continued stubborn refusal to see sense. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said, when the Labour Government are elected we will end that abuse of human rights and democracy.

9.42 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): I may not be able to do full justice to the many good speeches that have been made, partly because I have been left with slightly less time than was planned.

The Bill has received a broad welcome from a variety of quarters in the House. Serious speeches were made by, for instance, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) and the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Although the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) ended his speech in a slightly eccentric way, he began by saying, "We support the Bill." The right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert)—to whose speech I shall return several times—made a formidable contribution, as did a number of my colleagues. My right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Sir A. Hamilton), along with my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), touched the tiller in the other direction, expressing anxiety lest we go too far.

There was universal support for one aspect of the legislation. In this regard, I have the backing of both my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin)—who, at one point, made me a little nervous by saying that we were taking a small step in the right direction: he does not often say that to me. Both agreed that—in the words of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale—there was no lack of targets in the new world. Fortunately, there is no lack of new targets for serious, well-organised and well-tasked intelligence services.

I echo the tributes that many hon. Members have paid to the service provided by those whom the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) rightly described as public servants like any others—public servants, however, who often live in dangerous and hazardous conditions, and serve us very well. Given the strengths of this country in the new world—given the cards that we must play and the pieces that we can deploy on the international chess boards—our intelligence services are a major asset to the country and the free world. We should preserve and honour them.

We should therefore oversee them properly. It is to their credit that they now strongly believe that there should be proper oversight, and that they especially believe that all the services should be put on a statutory basis, which is now right.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) rightly paid tribute to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, one of whose many achievements has been completely to change round the way in which we approach those matters in this country—first the Security Service, now the other two agencies. He did so under the leadership of the present Prime Minister, but I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

As to the operational details, there has, with one or two exceptions, been unanimity about the fact that any sensible democratic assembly will exercise, in the phrase—although he approached it with some care—of my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, a self-denying ordinance about the investigation of operational details.

[Mr. William Waldegrave]

The right hon. Member for Copeland made a good analogy in a sense—it is only an analogy—with police affairs. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills is right to say that the House has the power to inspect everything, but it is the sign of a mature democracy that it sets itself some self-denying ordinances. There are many others, in less sensitive sectors, but it is right to do so in the intelligence sector above all.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), in what I thought was an impressive speech, said that we should consider the Bill from the point of view of people working in the services, and he is right to say that we should have that perspective.

I would add another perspective. One should consider the Bill also from the point of view of someone who might, at considerable risk to himself or herself, perhaps in a totalitarian or fascist country, be considering working with one of our agencies. That situation occurs regularly, and such people do great service to freedom, and to their own countries in the end. The agent who is working with him has to be able to say that his life is secure; that there will not be too many people poking about in the works of the thing, and that the thing is properly secure.

I believe that those people who said that we should be careful about operational details were right. I believe also—in this respect I agree with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), on one point if not on others—that there has been an atmosphere, to some extent, of mutual suspicion. If we can now get arrangements right, as I believe we are doing, that mutual suspicion, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills also referred, will diminish and—of great help to the people who do that serious work—the atmosphere of fantasy in which the work of the services is so often written about will dissolve.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is probably doing a great disservice to a productive British industry—the production of fantastical spy stories, on which we are experts. My right hon. Friend is an author of distinction, so he may damage his own sales. I hope that he will not damage the sales of the works of my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay or anyone of that type. The more openness and sensible accounting we do, the less absurd stories are generated, the less fantasy develops, the less nonsense is talked.

An argument was made about the money. One of the best ways of hiding information is to publish it in *Hansard.* My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister answered a written question in *Hansard* on 30 November 1993, which said that the budget was about £900 million at the moment, so there is no great mystery about that.

Before I discuss more important matters, I shall reply to some minor arguments. The right hon. Member for Copeland quoted from the report of the Security Service Act Commissioner, Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, and chilled our blood for a moment with the first part of what he said. The commissioner said:

> "I cannot answer the question categorically"

as to whether there are illegal operations

> "because it is not my function to review the operations of the Service and in the nature of things such operations"—

this was the point on which he put emphasis—

> "if they existed, would be concealed".

For some reason, the right hon. Gentleman stopped reading at that point, but Lord Justice Stuart-Smith continued:

> "I consider that I am in a position as a result of my experience over the past three years to express an informed opinion on this question. It is my opinion that such operations are not undertaken."

He then cited four reasons why he believed that to be the case. I therefore think that the right hon. Gentleman was expressing an unnecessary anxiety.

The British islands, which confused the hon. Member for Rhondda are statutorily defined. They are outlined in the Interpretation Act 1978 and are standard in legislation. They include the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

The structure of the Bill has general support, but I shall come back to the aspects over which there is straightforward disagreement. I should not have expected the representatives of the Labour party to abandon their previous view in relation to a Select Committee. They have, quite fairly, put it to the House again today, and I make no complaint about that.

However, the structure of having a commissioner and a tribunal and an oversight committee—the right hon. Member for Copeland then argued about the nature of such a committee—has broad support. That is a considerable step forward and I hope that it will form the basis for a good deal of further agreement if we can work out some of the details in Committee.

Many of the details are technical. We must discuss in Committee the question of privilege, which was raised by the right hon. Member for Dudley, East. It is not for me to define privilege, but we must ensure that the reports from the committee can be handled properly, and that the people who come before the committee are properly protected. Such issues are exactly those which the Committee must discuss. I shall deal later with the committee, which has caused the most argument.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool made foreign comparisons, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater in his excellent speech. Everyone says, as a cliché that needs no further proof, that Britain is the most secretive society in the world. However, if the Bill is passed, as I hope it will be, we shall be far from the most secretive.

It is impossible to find any reference to the French security services in French statute, and there is no oversight of their proceedings. The French are at one extreme and the Americans at the other. If the Bill is passed, we shall be in a position not unlike that in Australia and Canada. There will be differences, but the positions will be comparable. Right hon. and hon. Members need not think that we are far out of the sensible pack in this respect.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said that he hoped that we were offering the Bill as a considered view by which we would stick, not as a first step to something else. We have thought long and hard about the balance we needed to strike, and we believe that we have arrived at a solution which once it has been put into practice, will be seen to work, will gather authority and respect in the House and outside and will not be only a temporary change leading to something else.

The right hon. Member for Copeland teased us that we had changed our minds on some matters. That is so, but there is nothing dishonourable in our changing our minds. The Labour party should not use that argument without some care, because, as I understand it, the Labour party's present position is that it has changed its mind about everything in which it believed in the early 1980s, so it is now a different party.

That appears to cause some tension in various part of the party, but the right hon. Member for Copeland is now much more comfortable with his party's policy than he was in the early 1980s. I suspect that he believes the changes have been a good thing, but some of his colleagues may have forgotten they have changed their minds.

Let us consider the arguments for a Select Committee versus the committee proposed in the Bill. It is perfectly right to say—and best to make it absolutely clear—that the proposed committee is not a committee of Parliament in the usual sense, but a committee of parliamentarians.

It is better to be entirely clear about that. We propose to introduce a more or less unique committee. I can find no exact parallel. It was eloquently argued by the right hon. Member for Copeland and by several of his colleagues that the committee should be a Select Committee. We have considered the case for doing so, and I shall now examine the arguments.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East put out a seductive stall, saying that we could have a Select Committee under such controls that its members would effectively be nominated by the Prime Minister, by a resolution put before the House of Commons, and its publications could be controlled by the Prime Minister, as could the sidelining. By the end of his argument, the right hon. Gentleman had persuaded himself that there would be little difference between his Select Committee and our committee, except in the timing of its publications.

In that case, I believe that those who are dissatisfied with our committee, such as the hon. Member for Workington, would soon become dissatisfied with the Select Committee suggested by the right hon. Member for Dudley, East, too. They might feel that a Select Committee should not be trammelled in that way.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East was fair in a way, because he said that we were missing a presentational trick. However, in order to gain in presentational terms, we would run the risk—which was mentioned by several of my hon. Friends and by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale—of losing the significant elements of control. We should not do that simply for presentational gain; I agree with the right hon. Member about that.

I have little time left, and I cannot cover many points that I should like to have discussed. I shall write to hon. Members about those. The other crucial factor concerns the committee's access to information and its powers to summon other people. We shall need to examine those matters closely in Committee.

I believe that some hon. Members have made themselves unnecessarily nervous about the Secretary of State's powers under the Bill. The provision in schedule 3, paragraph 3(1)(b)(ii), that says that he can refuse access or override information is subject to subparagraph (4), which says that he cannot do so on grounds of national security alone. He can use that power only to control the kind of information that would not be given by Ministers to a Select Committee. That does not trammel the committee, and the argument is not to do with the limitation of sensitive information, other than that limited by paragraph 4, which deals with operations. I believe that there is a broad consensus on both sides of the House on that paragraph.

The right hon. Member for Dudley, East also mentioned the Lord Chancellor's point about operations. I believe that we broadly agree that schedule 3, paragraph 4, restricts the disclosure of sensitive information to the committee only when that information is about particular operations. The hon. Member for Hartlepool used the word "tasking". As I am sure he knows, that word has a proper meaning in this sphere.

The committee will be involved in very secret areas that have never before been shared with others outside the Secretary of State's responsibilities—for example, matters to do with the tasking of the services. The committee will not only deal with high-level policy in a broad-brush way; it will be able to examine the actual tasking, the money and the organisational structures.

The committee will be fully trusted, and fully inside the secret wall. I believe that the result, while it will not establish within the House the parliamentary accountability that, for reasons that I have not had time to do more than sketch out tonight, we believe would be extremely difficult to organise, will be to spread the reassurance that senior, trusted people on both sides of the House share the secrets of the services, and have a formidable power to cause trouble for the Government.

Somebody asked earlier where the teeth were. The teeth consist of the fact that the committee, staffed by very senior Members of the House, will have the right not to publish stuff that would damage national security—which it would not want to do—but to write a report saying, "We believe that things are not being handled properly, and that Ministers are not responding properly." No Government in their senses would want to risk such criticism. That is why the committee will be powerful, and that is why I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Dr. John Cunningham: There are clear constitutional issues involved in the proposals. Therefore, I beg to move, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House divided: Ayes 122, Noes 299.

DIVISION No. 138] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil

Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mudie, George
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Neill, Martin
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Turner, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Chris Mullin.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sidney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Intelligence Services Bill *[Lords] [Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Intelligence Services Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under the Act; and

(b) any expenditure attributable to the establishment of the Intelligence and Security Committee and the carrying out of their functions.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.14 pm

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): On a point or order, Madam Speaker. If my memory serves me right, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was not in the Chamber when the debate on the Bill was opened from the Government Front Bench. Surely if he had been here he would have had a full opportunity to raise the issues that he now intends to raise, undoubtedly at great length, on the money resolution.

Madam Speaker: No doubt the hon. Gentleman is correct, but the debates are on two separate Questions. We are now dealing with the money resolution relating to the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: I would very much have liked to be here for the beginning of the debate, but unfortunately I chair the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, which these days have a huge volume of work due to the record number of statutory instruments poured out by the Government. That means that, if we are to do our public duty, the Committee has to spend a great deal of time upstairs examining legislation, as required by Parliament. I hope that that makes the position clear.

I shall not follow the speeches made by other hon. Members, which were in the form of applications to join the committee that will be set up under the Bill. I am bound to follow the rules of the House and raise finance questions. The explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill says:

> "The total costs of the arrangements for administering the procedures under Clauses 5, 6 and 7, for establishing and staffing the Tribunal, for assisting the Commissioner, and for assisting and staffing the Intelligence and Security Committee are expected to be about £530,000 a year".

In terms of public expenditure, £530,000 is a small amount. I know that in people's individual experience it is vast, but for providing accountability under the Bill, it is a relatively small amount. I hope that the Minister will be able to provide some answers to questions about the allocation and calculation of what is, of course, an illustrative sum, but none the less a sign that the Government have made some calculations. In my view, they ought to justify the calculation because it does not seem to me that sufficient money has been allocated.

The right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is on the Front Bench. As a Minister, he has had the experience of having to justify a money resolution and then coming back to the House with two further money resolutions for the same Bill because sufficiently extensive authority had not been given. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure me and the House that the money resolution gives full authority for all the expenditure that

[Mr. Cryer]

the Government have in mind. I shall feel bound to examine the Minister's response critically. If it is unsatisfactory, we can vote against the money resolution.

First, the £530,000 covers all the paraphernalia and administration of obtaining warrants. On the face of it, that may not be a very comprehensive activity, but when one recalls that the warrants are for burglary and bugging, one realises that there must be careful assessment. Careful assessment involves time. Either there will have to be many people making the assessments or the officers will have to be used for long periods to produce the information that the Secretary of State will require for authorisation of warrants to enter property, bug telephones and undertake operations of the sort about which Peter Wright wrote in his book.

Peter Wright has been denied tonight. We have been told that this new and changed legislation is a departure from activities of the sort that he engaged in. It is claimed that all the people in the security services are very decent and not at all like Peter Wright. One wonders, therefore, why the Government spent several million pounds in their attempts to prevent Peter Wright from publishing his revelations. In any case, the advice that Ministers receive in connection with the production of those warrants will be very comprehensive and important. I wonder what financial provision has been made.

We are talking not about the generality of costs arising from the secret services—the so-called security services—which has been agreed at just under £1 billion a year, but about expenditure that will arise directly from the Bill. According to the explanatory memorandum, the expenditure under clauses 5, 6 and 7, which deal with the issue of warrants and their authority, is completely separate from, and over and above, the approximately £900 million that the security services spend each year.

The commissioner charged with overseeing the security services will have to be a person who has held high judicial office. Judges' salaries are in the telephone-number range—pushing six figures. If the commissioner receives a salary of £100,000—or close to that, taking into consideration national insurance contributions—that will be virtually one fifth of the calculated expenditure. It will be interesting to know whether the commissioner is to be full time or part time.

Then there will be the staff, all of whom will be dealing with highly secret matters and will therefore be paid at a higher civil service rate. Three, four or five staff, together with the commissioner, will knock a big hole in £200,000, or will they be paid out of the annual budget of £900 million? We are talking here about money authorised to cover actions under this legislation, not about the generality of expenditure. It will be interesting to know what proportion of the £500,000 the commissioner and his staff will take up.

The tribunal has an important function. It will cost a significant amount—certainly significant in the context of £500,000—and it will have to be able to direct the Secretary of State to pay compensation to people who have been mistreated by the security services. Individuals have their private correspondence opened and their telephones tapped, and people are misrepresented. We know that the security services are not above feeding misinformation to sympathetic journalists. People can be misrepresented in the press and on television, which also has sympathetic journalists. Homes are burgled, and private lives are intruded upon to a significant degree.

A welcome step is that the tribunal will have the authority to direct the Secretary of State to award compensation. Will that be authorised as part of the £530,000, or whatever the figure is—it is about that amount—or will it come from some other fund? Compensation cases must arise from activities authorised in the Bill. It is clear that two or three compensation cases could soak up the entire £530,000 mentioned in the explanatory memorandum. It would be helpful if the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster could tell us the sort of compensation that he has in mind and whether adequate compensation will be provided in the serious cases on which the tribunal can direct the Secretary of State.

Finally, the costs of the Intelligence and Security committee are not made clear. I listened to several speeches in the debate on Second Reading. Some hon. Members thought that the committee should resemble a Select Committee, which has relatively modest expenses. However, the committee will not be like that. It will be a clique of the righteous—a clique of Privy Councillors and of safe people. Do we really want safe people—safe in the sense that they will not ask pertinent or probing questions—to supervise the security services?

As the Chancellor said when he replied to the Second Reading debate, the powers of the committee members will be considered in the Standing Committee. That is right and proper, but will the £530,000 mentioned be enough if the Intelligence and Security Committee is provided with the power to call persons and papers before it as a Select Committee would do?

Will committee members be paid? Surely this clique of the so-called great and the good—I would put that in quotation marks—will include some pillars of the establishment, who are usually greedy people who want additional money when they serve the establishment that they so diligently protect. Will they be paid? If they are, their salaries and additional amounts for secretarial services will take a fair chunk of the £500,000 that the Minister said would be the sort of annual expenditure involved.

If there are two or three cases requiring compensation and if the six members of the Intelligence and Security Committee do their work properly, ask for the volume of evidence and comb through the security services when there are miscarriages of justice, the cost of running that step towards accountability will be much more than the £530,000 mentioned so far.

When we are debating money resolutions, it is important for the Minister to give a rough account to the House, so that it can be placed on the record and I expect the Minister to do so. I also expect him to be well briefed because money resolutions have a welcome tendency to be debated in greater detail these days. I dare say, therefore, that the Minister is well prepared to respond.

10.28 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Waldegrave): It is greatly to the credit of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that money resolutions are debated in greater detail. I think that he holds the record for doing so and I shall attempt to answer his perfectly fair questions.

The resolution provides for expenditure of about £530,000 a year and, as the hon. Gentleman said, that is the sum that we have estimated to be necessary to cover the costs associated with the appointment of a commissioner and tribunal, the establishment of the Intelligence and Security Committee and the general administrative provisions of the Bill.

The costs will be met from the existing public expenditure provisions for the agencies and relevant Government Departments. Where the commissioner and members of the tribunal are serving members of the judiciary, no additional salary will be payable for duties undertaken in connection with the legislation. The estimated costs include incidental expenses that may be incurred and necessary administrative support. It is difficult to be precise about such costs, but we have done our best.

The estimate is partly based on the experience of the operation of the Security Service Act 1989. It is anticipated that the intelligence service commissioner and tribunal will perform broadly similar duties to those undertaken by the comparable organisations under the 1989 Act. I can confirm that the current Security Service Commissioner and members of the tribunal have already been approached and have shown their willingness in principle to assume those duties—apart from being sensible, that will save money.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South spoke of compensation. He is perfectly right that, if compensation awards are made, the money should come out of the allocated sum. It is impossible to make a rational prediction. If there were a rash of justified complaints that won compensation and overbalanced the budget—I hope that that would not happen—I have no doubt that the committee would have to seek further resources.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Have there been any compensation claims? Has any compensation been paid under the Security Service Act 1989?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The reports from the commissioner showed that there had not been any complaints that he regarded as justified. No compensation payments have been made. That makes it difficult to predict the future. As the commissioner has said, it was likely that, in the early days, many not necessarily well-founded complaints that had been stored up would be brought to him.

The members of the oversight committee, Members of Parliament, will receive no additional salary. It was suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that members of the House of Lords should be paid, but that seems to be a divisive proposal. The committee will need suitable accommodation facilities. They will be made available in the Cabinet Office, which will also provide the support staff. Those arrangements will ensure that, given the sensitive nature of the committee's work, the necessary security considerations are met.

The public services' manpower requirement, which is needed to provide support for the commissioner and the committee and to deal with the general implementation of the Bill, is estimated at nine. The costs will be met from within existing provision.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister said that the staff for the committee would be supplied from the Cabinet Office. Is that on the presumption that the committee will stay as suggested, and will not be a committee of the House?

Mr. Waldegrave: We could not cost a different Bill. If the Bill is amended in important ways, the costs will be different.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 268, Noes 58.

Division No. 139] **[10.32 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell

Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine

Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray

Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Etherington, Bill
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John

Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Mudie, George
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Bill Michie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. David Nicholson be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Sir David Mitchell be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. Bruce Grocott be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. Nicholas Brown be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Legislation (Consultation)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10.44 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, for agreeing to answer this short debate. I am particularly grateful since I know that the luck of the draw has landed him with this additional burden in an exceptionally busy week. For my hon. Friend to have made the transition so successfully from the secret society of the Whips Office to the Department of open government gives me real hope that my arguments, which seek a substantial change in establishment attitudes, will not fall on deaf ears tonight.

I should make it plain from the start that my contention is in no sense partisan. If I appear critical of some aspects of parliamentary procedure, or indeed of Government procedures, my purpose is to put on the agenda of public debate the effectiveness or propriety of some of the ways in which this country is currently governed—ways that would be adopted by any Government of whatever political complexion, but which in my view need to be questioned. Professor Crick's book was published in 1964, and in 1976 the Labour Government set up a Select Committee for what in some ways was the last serious look at the functions of Parliament. Lord Hailsham's "Elective Dictatorship" was published in the same year. So this is hardly a matter to be laid at the door of any one Administration or party.

"Consultation in advance of legislation" is Table Office speak—distilled with all the inventiveness and courtesy of that ingenious office to enable me to use the Adjournment debate slot to raise matters that are seldom debated in this place. It is strangely hard to achieve such a debate because in practice Governments tend to control Parliament, although in theory the Members do. I believe that there are weaknesses in the ways in which Governments consult in advance of legislation, not least that they tend to ask the questions and then process the answers in ways that create no chance for the consultees to build on each other's contributions. There is a strong argument for more policy questions to be posed to the public as questions rather than as draft solutions to a problem, as is usual at present. The public are capable of making much more sophisticated contributions than they are usually encouraged to do.

My main question is this. What, in effect, is to be the role of a Member of Parliament in the 21st century? Its trigger is what contribution a modern Member should make to the formulation and communication of policy. Let me explain. In the past 40 years or so, huge changes have come over our world. Communication to any part of the world or any chosen group of people has become instant. Not only verbal, but visual messages can be shared in microseconds. As a result, our constituents no longer expect to learn of great events from their representatives, but directly from the media. That is one reason why the well-attended public meeting is such a rarity. Yet in this place we fall between two stools and, like all who do that, we end up in something of a mess. Our procedures pretend that policy will be announced first to Parliament and only then to the world outside. Yet as we all know, in practice that is increasingly rare. The first that most Back-Bench Members know of policy announcements is when they hear them on the radio or are rung up by a journalist for a comment. In the case of most announcements, the average Back Bencher can not even comment knowledgeably because the machinery for acquainting him or her with the news is so archaic. If the House is sitting, news that has been given to the media at 11 o'clock in the morning may reach a Member's pigeon hole by 5.30 pm, to be picked up if the Member happens to pass through the Members' Lobby. If the House is in recess, even that device fails. A statement may percolate through the mail to the Member's office for onward transmission via a secretary. By that time, the news story has been put to bed, and any subsequent comment is likely to appear such old hat that the journalists will not use it. That simply will not do.

I understand that Ministers—who are extraordinarily busy people, with a country to run—may well feel that they have quite enough to do in informing the media of their policies, without taking on the additional burden of simultaneously informing Members of Parliament, some of whom may be hostile to the policy. I sympathise. The burden on modern Ministers is indeed enormous. The feeling should be resisted, however. Our constituents do not send us here to be treated as second-class citizens; they are entitled to expect their representatives not only to be given prompt information about policy, but to be able to comment on it as it may affect them.

That brings me to a basic question: what is to be the role of Back-Bench Members of Parliament in the 21st century? We are confronted by a paradox. There has never been a time in the history of this ancient Parliament when so many Members have devoted such a large proportion of their time to serving their constituencies, or working in this place. The part-time Member is fading fast. Whether that is for good or bad is material for a separate debate; what cannot be denied, however, is that most Back Benchers now regard themselves as full time.

Yet it is arguable that these full-time paid servants of the public have never had less influence, and I believe that the public sense that. It is not—as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury suggested—that the intrusion of the television cameras has lowered our reputation in the country, so much as that the cameras have simply revealed to the country just how little its representatives are able to affect policy. That revelation is made more shocking each time a Member of Parliament has to confess to a journalist that the first time he heard of a policy announcement was when the journalist raised it with him.

I have one or two sugestions to make to my hon. Friend the Minister. I shall not weep if he tells me that he cannot commit himself to supporting them tonight, but I shall be disappointed if he does not take my arguments seriously. The first suggestion is simple: why, in this technically advanced age, cannot Members of Parliament be informed of press conferences at the same time as the press, and why cannot a room be set aside here in the Palace to provide closed-circuit television coverage for any Member of Parliament who cares to watch it? That would ensure that the press conference was not disrupted—or even interrupted—by Members, while simultaneously ensuring that those who were free to do so could comment on the policy announcement afterwards with as much knowledge as the media. Arrangements rather more modern than the 19th-century board on which we currently rely could be made for the distribution of documents.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

My point is that if the press can be notified, so can Members of Parliament. I believe that our constituents would like to feel that their representatives in the Palace of Westminster were given an indication of parliamentary news at least as early as they themselves in their homes in John O'Groats or Lands End.

My second point is more fundamental. Why cannot Members of Parliament be much more involved in the formulation of policy? There will, of course, be occasions when policy arises from a sudden emergency, and it would be difficult for Members of Parliament to make a serious contribution to its formulation. Yet, as we all know, in many instances policy grows incrementally in civil service files, and through years of correspondence, public or private reports and similar channels. For example, the Child Support Agency owes at least some of its parentage to the Finer committee of 20 years ago.

In many cases, there is nothing remotely worthy of a secret classification in such policy accretion; yet most Members of Parliament are kept in as much ignorance of it as would members of an anarchist movement. There is nothing remotely partisan about that. If the Labour party were ever to win an election, it would behave in precisely the same way. When I was a civil servant, one of the more entertaining jobs that I had to do was to draft replies to parliamentary questions in such a way that they were as true but as uninformative as possible. That that art is still alive and well in Whitehall is shown not only by the type of answers that one frequently elicits from Department, but by the frank admissions of the Cabinet Secretary to the Scott inquiry.

I believe that the inability to find effective ways of involving Back-Bench Members of Parliament in the formulation, execution or monitoring of policy is an impoverishment of our parliamentary system. It is demeaning to Back Benchers and, in effect, to their electorates. It also cuts Government off from a mass of experience, prejudice and representative opinion which could add considerably to its strength in the legislative process. What is the point of fighting one's way to the difficult, insecure and relatively badly paid position of Member of Parliament if, when one has got there, one's view is given no more weight than that of the director of a voluntary organisation or pressure group? Indeed, one of the changes that have come over our politics in recent years is that it is no longer especially profitable for outside organisations to approach Members of Parliament, as they commonly can make direct approaches to Ministers, who seldom share what they hear with parliamentary colleagues.

I realise that it is a tall order to ask Government to tackle such a matter. I know from my own observation just how time-consuming and frustrating it is to attempt even relatively minor changes in the way in which the establishment does its business. I also know, and pay tribute to, the very hard work put in by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster towards changing some elements in the public service culture.

What is at stake here is fundamental to the health of the nation. If we cannot find a better way of deploying the energy and imagination of Back-Bench Members of Parliament, we shall pay a heavy price. The present tendency of Members of Parliament to turn more and more to the minutiae of their constituents' grievances or to foreign travel or to concentrate on a handful of sectional interests, fuelled by the well-resourced research efforts of single-issue lobby groups, whose influence on national politics seems sometimes disproportionate to their representativeness, will become more pronounced and the quality of debate about issues that affect the whole nation will become even more attenuated.

At first, that will be welcomed by Governments. They will find it ever easier to get their policies through without effective scrutiny and will be able to divide and rule with increasing ease. In the medium term, however, they will find it less satisfactory. It is indispensable to healthy democracy for Governments to carry Parliament with them. It is not enough simply to muster the necessary votes. The scrutiny of legislation is a part of winning support and at present it is woefully inadequate.

The Hansard commission report on the making of legislation was trenchant on that point, among others. Indeed, that report deserves much closer attention than it seems so far to have achieved. I believe, for example, that both in consultation before a Bill is drafted and in such devices as pre-legislation committees after a Bill has been published, there are potential merits which ought to be explored. The other effect will be that our constituents will be ever more disengaged from what they will perceive as ineffective parliamentary procedures and into the gap so caused there may well step undemocratic elements.

Our need to define more effectively a role for Back-Bench Members of Parliament has become even more pressing as a result of our membership of the European Union. The mechanisms in the House for scrutinising European legislation, no matter how fundamental its effects on this Parliament and no matter how much power that legislation may be sucking away from us, are avowedly ineffective. Why cannot Back-Bench Members be much more effectively deployed to help in that important and difficult task?

I suggest that the time has come for all of us here including the Government, to take seriously that democratic deficit and to work on how it might be overcome. We might begin with the Hansard Society report on the making of legislation, together with the Jopling report, on which progresss is overdue. We shall need to go further, however, if we are to enter the 21st century fit to rule a modern society. I understand perfectly the argument that democratic politics cannot expect to be efficient in the way in which businesses aspire to be efficient, and I would not want our democracy even to try, but when 651 people have fought their way to Parliament against considerable odds and when they aspire to work here virtually full time it is expensive and unjustifiably incompetent to make such poor use of their talents.

10.59 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has raised a number of interesting points about the way in which we conduct business in the House. It is useful for the House to be able to debate such issues from time to time—and not only to provide competition for commentators and academics for whom the subject has become something of a light industry. I congratulate my hon. Friend on providing us with such an opportunity and on providing some fresh—very fresh—perspectives.

Some of my hon. Friend's suggestions are procedural ones for the House itself to consider, and I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will take careful note of what has been said. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, in particular, will do so. My hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not respond now to each of the points that he made, but I shall say something about the process of consultation prior to legislation, which was the starting point for the debate.

Contrary to the criticisms that we sometimes hear, consultation is in fact the norm. Ministers and Departments will often consult widely whenever it is feasible and practical to do so prior to introducing legislation. It may be by means of consultation documents published specially for the purpose, by White or Green Papers, or by meetings with interested parties and groups. I can vouch for the fact that a great deal of time and effort are spent on such consultation. I cite just two examples from my own Department: we undertook a major consultation exercise prior to the science and technology White Paper "Realising our Potential"; and the Department is even now analysing and digesting the consultation responses that we have received to the White Paper on open government.

In addition, there are examples from other aspects of the Government's legislative programme. I outline a few that are before the House at the moment. The Local Government (Wales) Bill, which is now being considered in another place, followed a full and thorough consultation process which included the publication of no fewer than three consultation documents inviting views. One document dealt with the proposed new structure of unitary authorities, another with the internal management and structures of the authorities, and the third with community councils. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales also established and chaired a special Welsh consultative council to consider those issues. All that took place well in advance of the publication of the Bill last December.

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill contains a number of specific deregulation measures which are the responsibility of a number of Departments. Individual Departments carried out consultation on their specific proposals for the Bill before its introduction. On the deregulation order-making power, the Bill requires that there should be consultation with all parties likely to be substantially affected before any draft order can be brought before Parliament. As the House knows, two new committees are to be created so that full and careful scrutiny can be given to the proposals at the draft stage.

The two main parts of the Education Bill, which is also being considered in another place, were also the subject of wide consultation. On the teacher training proposals, a consultation document was sent to all institutions of higher education and others involved in teacher training in September last. A letter was sent to all schools inviting comment.

On the proposals relating to student unions, a similarly wide consultation process was initiated in July of last year. Further consultation is now under way following the views expressed in another place, which perhaps proves that consultation does not always guarantee an easy passage.

As the Member for Mid-Kent, my hon. Friend has been closely involved on behalf of his constituents in the extensive consultation process on the route of the channel tunnel link. The consultation undertaken by Union Railways, the subsidiary of British Rail responsible for planning and operating the route, has been a major exercise involving some 650 meetings with local authorities and others, 90 exhibitions along the route and analysis of some 2,400 submissions and petitions.

I know that my hon. Friend was actively involved in pressing upon the Government the case for the mid-Kent long tunnel option. As the House will know, further consultation is now under way on the route, concerning two locations where decisions are yet to be taken—Ashford and Pepper Hill.

As I hope all that clearly demonstrates, much careful consultation takes place. It is open to any interested party to participate, either directly through the Department concerned or—more effectively, in my view—through the local Member of Parliament. Again, both as a Member of Parliament representing my constituents and as a Minister, on the receiving end, I can vouch for the fact that there is a constant flow of representation and comment on policy proposals from the Government.

It is an essential part of government to listen to what is said and to take note of it. I assure my hon. Friend that the views and advice of Back-Bench Members from both sides of the House—this is not necessarily a party political point—are listened to carefully. I have a feeling that when people complain of lack of consultation what they sometimes mean is that the Government end up by taking a view different from their own, rather than that there was no opportunity to comment or to participate.

On purely practical grounds, at a certain point the Government have to draw a line under the consultation process and to decide how to reflect the results in definite proposals or draft legislation. It is then Parliament's job to take a view of those proposals. It would be both unrealistic and unreasonable to expect further formal external consultation after that point, except perhaps the occasional consultation of experts on technical clauses. That is not, of course, to say that once a Bill has been published there is any reason why interested parties should not make their views known to Members of both Houses. They do, Members represent those views, and the process can be most effective in influencing policy.

It will be clear from what I have said about the consultation process that I do not share my hon. Friend's picture of policy growing quietly and secretly in departmental files, only to spring fully formed on to an unsuspecting world. The process is more complex than that, and involves much discussion and public debate. Hon. Members can and do play an important part in it, and it is up to all of us to ensure that we do so.

It is certainly true that, as my hon. Friend says, the advice that civil servants give Ministers in the process of policy formation is kept confidential. That is a constitutional convention of long standing which relates to the political neutrality of the civil service. But that is not to say that there is not ample opportunity for Members of the House and others to contribute to policy formation.

No Minister that I know listens only to his civil servants, important though that may be. Indeed, from time to time, I have been sufficiently awkward with my civil servants to attract the occasional chastisement, of the most delicate kind. One once said to me, "Minister, you should

[Mr. David Davis]

know that most good Ministers are difficult Ministers—but not all difficult Ministers are good Ministers." He made his point.

The business of government is a political process as much as a managerial process. Certainly we should look to business and industry for lessons on how to streamline the processes of government—above all, perhaps, in delivering public services. My hon. Friend has acknowledged the great steps forward that we have been able to take in that respect. However, when it comes to political judgment and assessing the views of the House and of the country, the views of individual Members of Parliament, informed by close and detailed knowledge of their constituencies, are of course vital.

As we were reminded only yesterday, the individual and personal views of hon. Members are paramount, and when the House considers fundamental matters of conscience and moral opinion, such as the law on homosexuality and on the death penalty, that is apparent. Similar free votes have taken place on abortion law and, more recently, on the principles of Sunday trading—the legislation on which was itself the outcome of a Back-Bench campaign that lasted a decade or more.

My hon. Friend has made several points about the way in which the House scrutinises legislation. If I may say so, I believe that he underestimates the importance and effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny of legislation. I should be the last to deny that there have been times, in the middle of a long morning's duty in a Standing Committee on a Bill, when I too have wondered whether the process could not be gingered up a little, and have felt that there could be a bit more scrutiny and a bit less political posturing. However, it is up to the members of the Committee to make their scrutiny effective, and in many cases they do.

Few Bills emerge from a Standing Committee without any definite improvement. Some changes reflect political views of what law the country needs; others can result from the particular expertise or knowledge of members of a Committee. If the process seems to have involved a lot of political speeches, it is because making law is a political process, and important matters are at stake. There are genuine differences of view, and they need to be argued out.

As a piece of machinery, our Standing Commitee system is basically sound. The Government are, of course, always ready to consider suggestions for improvement and my hon. Friend has given us some food for thought. However, it is up to Members to operate it effectively. Perhaps my hon. Friend is being too modest in describing the influence that Back Benchers have in that process, not least his own influence.

My hon. Friend spoke about press briefings and statements to the press, the burden of which was that hon. Members are at a disadvantage compared with the media. I talked to two members of the media today and they put almost precisely the opposite viewpoint. It remains a guiding principle that parliamentary papers and associated announcements are not released to the press before the House has been informed. However, it has also been a long-standing practice for advance material to be made available to the parliamentary media, but under a strict embargo to ensure that parliamentary privilege is not breached. That is purely a matter of logistics. The principle is one that the Government, as with Governments before them, take seriously and I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to uphold it.

I take it that my hon. Friend referred not so much to major announcements but to lesser matters that do not warrant a statement in the House or a written answer. I sympathise with him over the difficulty of always keeping up with events when, on any one day, there may be a number of press releases or press conferences going on which involve various Departments. Such press releases are always made available to Members and are sent electronically to the parliamentary on-line information service, the House database, and therefore are accessible throughout the network, if my hon. Friend uses it. I was intrigued by what he said about the potential for using new technology in that context, and in the context of improving our communications generally. That is more a matter for the House authorities to respond to than for me, and I know that some hon. Members are as attached to our somewhat archaic and sometimes arcane ways as my hon. Friend is enthusiastic about modernising them. There are some useful pointers in what he said for further thought on those matters.

While I would not agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said this evening—I do not think that he expected me to—I share his basic proposition that the House and the Government would be foolish not to draw on the knowledge, expertise and experience of all hon. Members. Members of Parliament are returned here on the basis of the views of constituencies of some 70,000 electors and I can assure my hon. Friend that Ministers give great weight to that and treat their opinions and views with the seriousness that they deserve.

My hon. Friend spoke at one point as if Members of Parliament were treated almost as automata, who were under the control of their party Whips. I speak carefully because there is a Whip on the Front Bench, but, as an ex-Whip, let me say that there have been times when I have been tempted to think "Would that that were so". I can assure my hon. Friend that it certainly does not feel like that from the Whips Office, and quite right too.

The House is made up of 651 robust individuals whose position gives them a powerful say in what the Executive can and cannot do. The powers of the House are sovereign and they have the ability to upset the best-laid plans of Ministers and of Government, which no Minister ever forgets, and nor should any Back Bencher.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 23 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL

Considered; to be read the Third Time.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Scottish Economy

1. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss developments in the Scottish economy

7. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I have frequent contacts with Scottish Enterprise and representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on matters concerning the Scottish economy. I last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise last Friday.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Secretary of State accept that the removal of headquarters and decision making is deeply damaging to Scottish economic interests? What representations has he personally made to British Gas about the location of its new headquarters divisions? Is he now prepared to condemn its decision to locate all five south of the border and seek to reverse it or will he follow the lead of his Prime Minister, wash his hands of the situation and do absolutely nothing while another Scottish work force is taken to the cleaners by another British company?

Mr. Lang: While it is always desirable to have company decision making in Scotland—and I am glad to see that 25,000 more companies have been created in Scotland since the Government came to power—it is inevitable that, from time to time, companies, for their own commercial reasons, will rearrange their decision-making plans. I have written to the chairman of British Gas about his recent announcement. I particularly seek clarification of his proposals to devolve operational activities. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry is shortly to meet British Gas and I understand that the chairman has invited all Scottish Members to meet him this afternoon.

Ms Squire: Does the Secretary of State recognise the vital importance of defence-related jobs to Scotland's economy and especially to that of Fife? If so, will he declare his support for the campaign to keep open Rosyth naval base and protect the 5,000 jobs associated with it because employment is threatened in a region which already has the highest overall unemployment rate in Scotland? Will the Secretary of State publicly declare his support for that campaign?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady will know my past record of support for the naval base and also the naval dockyard at Rosyth. I cannot help noticing that Labour is always calling for cuts in defence spending and is always at the forefront of calls for the abandonment of the nuclear deterrent, but complains when the consequences of defence cuts flow through. The important thing is to maintain economic employment levels in Fife and to generate new economic activity to sustain increased prosperity.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Who does my right hon. Friend think best speaks for Scotland—my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who in Glasgow on Friday was proud to speak about a diverse and dynamic Scottish economy which in many respects is a world beater, or the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) who glories in knocking Scottish achievements and revels in taking every opportunity in the House and elsewhere to talk Scotland down?

Mr. Lang: I suspect that my hon. Friend shares my view that the better spokesman for Scotland in that respect is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I wish that Labour would not seek to talk Scotland down because that damages Scotland's economic prospects. Why do the Opposition not recognise that Scotland's share of UK manufactured exports is now at an all-time high and 24 per cent. per head higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom, and that Scottish exports are growing in all sectors of the economy? There is a great deal of good news in Scotland and it would help Scottish interests if Opposition Members would draw attention to it from time to time.

Mr. Eric Clarke: Did the Secretary of State write to or advise the Prime Minister on the statistics contained in the Prime Minister's speech, as the picture that he painted was not one of the Scotland that I know?

Mr. Lang: I am not accountable for the hon. Gentleman's ignorance. I draw his attention to the fact that unemployment in Scotland, although still too high, is now lower than unemployment in England, Wales or Northern Ireland—for the first time in more than 70 years. Unemployment has fallen in five of the past six months and is 11,500 lower than it was a decade ago. In the last decade, 162,000 new jobs have been created in Scotland.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State accept that he has nothing to boast about when he says that unemployment in Scotland is lower, as it is still approaching 250,000 and only marginally less bad? As for young people out of work and those out of work for six months or more, will the Secretary of State comment on the reports from the unemployment unit showing the poor performance of people in statutory training schemes in Scottish local enterprise company areas? When he talks to the chairman of Scottish Enterprise, will he suggest that one of the criteria for training performance might be the ability to place people in jobs after training rather than simply obtaining paper qualifications?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman talks about those who have been unemployed for six months or more. He will know that two thirds of those who lose their jobs are back in employment after six months and off the unemployment register. In regard to the relative performance of enterprise companies, the hon. Gentleman will know better than most that there are bound to be differences in costs and results, depending on geography, demography, the nature of training courses and the level of qualifications being sought. Scotland has a good record on many of those aspects.

Dr. Reid: Does the Secretary of State recall how he and his colleagues cheered when it was announced that the Germans had taken over the Rover group? Did they cheer last night when it was announced that French firm Valourec had taken over the last remaining steel plant in my constituency? Does he not feel some slight shame that in the 14 years during which he and his Government have presided over the Scottish economy the once thriving and vast steel industry has been reduced to absolutely zero in Motherwell, North? There is no British-owned steel industry in my constituency. Does he feel no shame? Could he at least give the work force some guarantee that their employment will be secure and that the North sea will continue to be provided with steel tubes made in Britain by a British firm, or will he cop out on that as well?

Mr. Lang: If there is a case for shame, it is among the Opposition. The steel industry has suffered in recent years because it was starved of new investment when it was nationalised, when the commanding heights of the Scottish economy were taken over and control moved south to London. The lack of investment in nationalised steel companies led to their uncompetitiveness and demise. If the takeover by a French company leads to new investment, that is more likely than nationalisation would ever have been to secure jobs for the future.

Mr. George Robertson: Will the Secretary of State admit that the 250,000 unemployed Scots, who were joined last Thursday by another 14,000, must have been absolutely gobsmacked if they were listening to the Prime Minister's speech on Friday when he said:

> "Employment prospects are vastly better than they were 15 years ago"?

Being intelligent people, would they not find the Prime Minister's use of figures both self-serving and slippery when he claimed there were 160,000 more jobs in Scotland than there were 10 years ago? They will be wise enough to realise that the Government came to power 15 years ago, not 10 years ago, and that far from creating 160,000 jobs in those 15 years, the Government have destroyed 12,000 jobs all over Scotland. How can Ministers have the cheek to add statistical fraud to the human and economic misery that they have caused in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman may not like the statistics, but they happen to be correct. The civilian work force in Scotland has increased over the past 10 years by 162,000—that is more than 16,000 jobs a year on average, 1,300 a month or almost 350 a week. Let me cite some locations where new jobs have been created as a result of announcements in the past four months. They include Cumbernauld, Glasgow, Coatbridge, Bathgate, Livingston, Glenrothes, East Kilbride, Larkhall, Dundee, Aberdeen, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Hamilton, Cumnock, Port Glasgow, Kinross, Irvine, Elgin and Bothwell. There are lots of jobs being created in Scotland. It is a pity that the Labour party will not acknowledge that.

Forestry Commission Land

2. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many access agreements have been reached with private purchasers of Forestry Commission land in each of the past five years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): Access agreements are not made between the Forestry Commission and private purchasers.

Mrs. Ewing: Why not?

Sir Hector Monro: They could not be guaranteed in perpetuity.

Mr. Kynoch: Under the current local government structure, regions are obliged to draw up indicative forestry strategies. Will that be a requirement of the new unitary authorities? If so, will there be co-operation and co-ordination between them?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes. I expect close co-operation between the new unitary authorities and the forest authorities and Forest Enterprise—or whatever is in place when the new councils come into being in 1996. Co-operation will be the watchword—particularly in terms of access, which is most important.

Rail and Car Transport

3. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the likely growth in rail and private car transport in the south-east of Scotland over the next 20 years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. Friend and I have regard to a wide range of information when forming transport policy for Scotland. That includes national forecasts for rail and road use produced by British Rail and the Department of Transport. The Scottish Office conducts more detailed studies in connection with individual transport projects.

Mr. Darling: How can the Government justify a second road bridge at Queensferry, which will pour hundreds of thousands of unnecessary cars and lorries into Edinburgh city centre and cause environmental damage, when that will result in tolls increasing to between £3 and £6 per crossing, which is the experience with other private sector controlled bridges? Will the Government agree to a wide-ranging public inquiry so that alternative modes of transport, such as the underused Forth rail bridge, can be examined, or has the Minister been captured by the road builders in the Scottish Office and by construction companies, some of which have made generous donations to the Conservative party?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is assuming that a decision has been made, but it has not. Traffic levels are steadily increasing. The national road traffic forecast shows that over the next 20 years traffic levels will rise 40 to 60 per cent. If we did nothing, we would rightly be blamed. Were the project to proceed, the toll would depend on the outcome of any future competition to design, build, finance and operate any new bridge and roads. It would be subject to close scrutiny, and a maximum level would be set by the Government. Suggestions of a toll of up to £5 are wholly unrealistic and bear no relation to reality.

The hon. Gentleman wrote to me about a planning inquiry, and I am replying today. The normal statutory procedures require rigorous assessment of development proposals and provide for a local public inquiry if necessary. The kind of inquiry for which the hon. Gentleman asks has never been held in Scotland. We believe that the normal statutory processes should proceed.

Mr. Hood: There is great concern in Scotland about coach transport, especially at this time. Today, the funeral of Francis Scorgie took place in the village of Carnwath in my constituency. His family and the whole constituency is mourning the death of that 15-year-old boy, who left his home last Thursday to travel with 34 other school friends on the school bus to Biggar high school. Within minutes, tragically, he received fatal injuries when the bus collided head-on with an articulated lorry. My constituents, the family of that young boy and the people of Scotland are calling for Government action. It is known beyond reasonable doubt that a seat belt would have saved the life of Francis Scorgie and avoided serious injury to the other children. When will the Government act?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's comments in sending deepest sympathy to the family concerned. I agree that the safety of pupils must be a matter of top priority. Their safety is the statutory responsibility of the education authorities concerned. The Department of Transport is undertaking a review of the fitting of seat belts in all buses and coaches, and will report in due course. The Scottish Office is contributing all the evidence that it has from Scotland. We are looking at that matter actively just now, in co-operation with our colleagues at the Department of Transport, which has lead responsibility.

Training

4. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Scottish Enterprise to discuss training.

Mr. Lang: I last discussed training with the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise on 2 November last year.

Mr. Ross: When will we hear from the Secretary of State the distinctive Scottish circumstances that suggest to him that he should opt out of the proposed national development plan launched by the Secretary of State for Employment for 150,000 apprenticeships? Does the Secretary of State think that Scotland is so different that our young people do not deserve apprenticeships, or that our manufacturing base is so strong that we do not need young people in apprentice training—just in case the economy ever picks up?

Mr. Lang: Labour Members are usually busy telling me how different Scotland is and how important it is that it should have its own arrangements. I am keeping closely in touch with the development of the apprenticeship scheme at the Department of Employment for use south of the border. One of the reasons why we are not automatically and immediately linking ourselves with it is that we are already achieving 30 per cent. Scottish vocational qualification level 3, which is the target that has been set for the apprenticeship scheme. We are already ahead of what they are aiming at south of the border in that regard. Nevertheless, we will learn from the scheme as it is developed in the south. If it has application in Scotland, I am sure that it will be applied there.

Mr. Gallie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, given the comments that he has made on the gaining of qualification under the training schemes, the new skill seekers scheme that is on offer presents a great opportunity for Scottish youth and allows youths to choose the training of their need with the employer of their choice? That will benefit them greatly in future years.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will welcome the fact that youth training credits should be applicable throughout Scotland by 1996.

Mr. Beggs: When the Secretary of State last met Scottish Enterprise, did he discuss its successful initiative into Vietnam, which identified a number of viable hydro-electric projects which would have provided training and employment in Scotland and in my constituency? Will he discuss with the Overseas Development Administration and his colleague in that Department why there has been no response and why there is ongoing delay, and when the funding will be provided to make those projects become viable?

Mr. Lang: That was not on the agenda for our discussion when we met in November. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will in due course hear the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Galloway: Will the Secretary of State ask the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise, Mr. Crawford Beveridge, what he was doing last weekend at a Conservative party fund-raising dinner at an hotel in my constituency—the Focus on Scotland dinner which Sir Michael Hirst, the chairman of the Conservative party, tells Malcolm Rifkind is immensely important and raises around 30 per cent. of its income? Why were a whole host of heads and high officials of Government quangos there, including a reported sighting of Mr. Lawrence Peterken, the expensively transferred health official about whom the House has heard much in recent months? Is it healthy for individuals who owe their livelihoods to Government patronage to be seated around tables raising funds at an immensely important Conservative party fund-raising dinner?

Mr. Lang: There were almost 900 guests at that dinner. A further 200 would have liked to come but were unable to get seats. That is a reflection of the strength of support for the Government among the business community in Scotland. If Mr. Crawford Beveridge was brought as a guest of one of those business men, that is entirely a matter for him. So far as I am concerned, he and any other guests brought to that dinner were equally welcome. I only wish that some Opposition Members had been invited by businesses in their community. They might have learnt quite a lot.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Secretary of State tell the House when he expects to meet Professor Donald Mackay to discuss the skills crisis in Scotland, because, despite the ludicrous answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), 83 per cent. of trainees on employment training in Scotland leave without a qualification and 76 per cent. of young Scots after being on youth training leave without a qualification? Surely the Secretary of State will not continue to be complacent about the future of so many young Scots. Scottish Enterprise is letting him down. He is involved in a widespread sell-out of the Scottish unemployed. It is a national scandal and he should make a statement about it today.

Mr. Lang: Again, the Opposition are trying to talk Scotland down by presenting selective statistics and facts. The hon. Gentleman might have chosen to draw attention to the success of adult training—a scheme that is no more expensive in Scotland than in England and has produced a higher success rate in Scotland. He might also have pointed out that 30 per cent. achieve Scottish vocational qualification level 3 and above—much higher levels than are achieved in England—and that 80 per cent. aim for level 2. He might have mentioned that more youth and adult trainees than ever before are gaining recognised qualifications and that a larger proportion of adult trainees go into jobs, further education or further training.

The fact is that the quality of training in Scotland is improving considerably.

Local Government Finance

5. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to visit the north-east of Scotland to discuss local government spending.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend plans to visit the north-east of Scotland again before long. Local government spending will probably be among the matters discussed.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister recognise that when his right hon. Friend visits Aberdeen he will meet citizens who are full of anger, outrage and downright disgust at the £287,000 early retirement package given to the disgraced chief executive who, although guilty of dishonesty and deception, faced no disciplinary proceedings from the council? What can be done to ensure that the affair is investigated fully and independently, and that those citizens secure the result that they want—no more wasting of public money by councillors who have failed in their public duty?

Mr. Stewart: A reading of the press will probably lead to the conclusion that the hon. Gentleman's remarks reflect widespread public opinion. I must tell him, however, that the district council is an independent corporate body. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Scottish Office have no powers to intervene in such decisions. The council must, of course, be accountable to taxpayers, official bodies and the law.

Mr. John Marshall: As a former member of Aberdeen town council, may I support the plea of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) against Aberdeen district council's complete misuse of public funds? I am sure that it would not have happened when I was a member of the council, or when the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was a member.

Mr. Stewart: The consensus seems to be that Aberdeen's affairs were in better hands when my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) were on the council.

I believe that hon. Members on both sides of the House have reflected the widespread public anger that is felt, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can act only within statutes passed by the House. The council is an independent statutory body.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister agree that we should send our good wishes to Tom Paine, the leader of the council—who had a stroke two days ago—and wish him a speedy return to full health?

Does the Minister also agree that hindsight is a marvellous aid to decision making—the only trouble being that it is not available when it is needed? Will he at least make one point clear—which I wish to do, although I personally do not agree with the final decision? Will he make it clear that that decision was made in good faith, not because of any lack of accountability or responsibility, and that public funds were not misused in the way that both the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) have disgracefully sought to imply?

Mr. Stewart: I think that the whole House will want to send best wishes to Councillor Paine for a speedy recovery.

The decision was, of course, made by the council. I merely expressed agreement with hon. Members' view that widespread public concern has been felt.

Local Government Reorganisation

6. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he employed in determining the size of the proposed new local authorities.

Mr. Stewart: The Government took into account a wide range of factors in determining the boundaries for the new councils. Those were set out in detail in the consultation paper "Shaping the New Councils".

Mr. Chisholm: Does the Minister realise that no one in Scotland wants local government reorganisation—apart from some Tories in the gerrymandered areas—and that it will become even more unpopular once people realise the costs and the effect on services? Will he now confirm that as the proposed number of new authorities increases, the already substantial costs will also increase? How can the several small authorities that he has proposed possibly deliver the range of services that is necessary? Is not it true that he does not care, so long as he can create a few flagship Tory authorities to spearhead his real agenda, which is the handing over of service delivery to private contractors?

Mr. Stewart: I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that every political party in Scotland at one time or another has been committed to a unitary system of local government, for good and understandable reasons. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to congratulate the Government on the changes that we announced in relation to Lothian, after listening to all-party public opinion. I have received congratulatory letters from West Lothian and from Midlothian, areas near the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

As for the size of authorities, if it is the hon. Gentleman's view that small authorities cannot deliver services, it is astonishing that two out of only three votes on detailed boundaries that the Opposition forced in Committee were to make fairly small authorities smaller.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister give us a categorical assurance that, in places where the proposed new local government boundaries cut across school catchment areas, parents and local education authorities will not have to bear the burden of extra transport or any other costs if parents choose to send their children to schools on the other side of a boundary? If the Minister cannot give us such an assurance, will he do the decent thing and withdraw the Bill, which is one of the most blatant pieces of political gerrymandering in the history of Scottish local government?

Mr. Stewart: I have offered to meet the hon. Member and his parliamentary colleagues in Central region to consider the options that would best serve the interests of his constituents, but obviously he does not want to take up that offer on behalf of his constituents.

As for the school question, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for education and housing has given assurances to the Committee and will table an amendment on those matters.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Front-Bench Members divided the Standing Committee only three times when we were discussing boundaries in Scotland and that once we got down to the detailed scrutiny of the boundaries they could not sustain or justify the gerrymandering charge that they have unfairly bandied about during the past six months? Much of what the hon. Members for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) say on television bears little resemblance to reality.

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Opposition Front-Bench Members endeavoured to stifle debate on boundaries. The number of recommendations that were made by Labour-led district councils in Scotland was extremely interesting—

Madam Speaker: Order. It was remiss of me not to stop the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson). We have procedures here whereby we do not refer to what is taking place in Committee. That Committee work stands on its own until it is reported to the House. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman who is now at the Dispatch Box can compose a proper answer without referring to the Committee.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's developing policy will continue to reflect the need for a sensible unitary system of local government in Scotland and we shall continue to take into account the sensible proposals that we are receiving from many local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. George Robertson: The House will understand why the Minister with responsibility for local government was put up to answer local government questions rather than the Secretary of State, who wants to stay well away from this gerrymandering subject. However, this is the Minister who has started to admit that the creation of the new additional authorities will increase costs and eliminate any savings from this unwanted, unnecessary and completely gerrymandering council carve-up. Will he now tell the whole truth about what it will cost the people of Scotland? This ideological fiasco, whose credibility is declining with every day that it is discussed, will mean yet another financial imposition on Scottish household bills. On top of the £10 a week that the people of Scotland will have to pay for economic incompetence and broken promises on taxation, they will have to pay a heavy gerrymandering surtax for the butchery of local government for which they never asked and which they certainly do not want.

Mr. Stewart: That is either the 25th or the 26th time that I have heard the hon. Gentleman pronounce such nonsense. The costs and savings have been clearly identified. If he does not believe me, I urge him to read the submissions of Labour-led councils up and down the land about the savings and efficiencies that they believe a unitary structure of local government in Scotland will deliver to their voters. Members of Labour's Front Bench are simply not representing Labour district councils in Scotland in these matters.

8. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many additional quangos and joint boards will be created as a result of the proposed reforms of Scottish local government.

Mr. Stewart: The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill proposes the creation of a maximum of seven new non-departmental public bodies, including a staff commission for the transitional period. We expect to establish four new joint boards for police and fire services.

Mrs. Adams: Should not the Minister be hanging his head in shame? Is not it an admission that the Government do not believe in democracy in Scotland that they have to go for appointed boards? Will he at least tell us what the criteria for the appointments will be? Will he agree to set up a register listing all members of quangos, their interests and political affiliations so that the people of Scotland might at least know who these unelected people are who are increasingly running their lives?

Mr. Stewart: The lists of people who are members of non-departmental public bodies are well known, as they are all published. We appreciate the hon. Lady's disappointment at not being selected at the last minute for the Committee considering the Bill, due to the traditional sexism of the Labour Whips Office. I assure her that under this Government the number of non-departmental public bodies in Scotland has not increased but has fallen from 240 to 160.

Mr. Dalyell: If, as the Minister told my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), costs have been carefully identified—I use his own words—he will be able to tell us, will he not, to the nearest £10 million, what is the latest cost estimate from the Scottish Office on local government reform?

Mr. Stewart: Certainly. The hon. Gentleman has tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asking precisely that and it will be answered today.

Mr. McFall: Will the Minister ensure that any future quangos will not follow the lead of Dumbartonshire Enterprise, which, *I have just discovered*, has given a grant of £60,000 to the Helensburgh-based Royal Northern yacht club to stone clean its premises? He will know that it is the headquarters of the exclusive Mudhook yacht club, whose 40 rich and famous members include royalty and even Cabinet Ministers. Is he aware that, in an area of high unemployment, not one job was created as a result of the grant? Does he agree that this or any future quango should not provide substantial grants to organisations to finance projects that offer no economic benefits and which could easily and properly be funded by members of that exclusive rich man's club?

Mr. Stewart: I believe that Dumbartonshire Enterprise spends taxpayers' money cost-effectively. Of course, if the hon. Gentleman wants to talk to someone with great experience of quangos, there is the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who was a member of the Police Advisory Board, of the board of the Scottish Development Agency and of the Scottish tourist board, at a time when his only obvious qualification for those important positions was his membership of the executive of the Scottish Labour party.

Homelessness

9. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources he will make available to ensure that homeless people in Scotland are able to receive the full range of health care available under the NHS.

Mr. Stewart: Health boards are resourced to purchase health care services for their resident population including those who are homeless.

Mr. Watson: Despite that response, the Minister must be aware that homeless people in Scotland, as in other parts of Britain, face major and often insurmountable obstacles in getting access to the national health service, largely because of the unwillingness of general practitioners, who are the main source of referral for most NHS services, to accept them on to their registers. Does he accept the view of Dr. Harry Burns, the director of public health in Glasgow, who said that providing better health care for homeless people must be a priority for 1994? Statistics for London show that tuberculosis is already beginning to raise its ugly head again among homeless people, including those in hostels. Will he tell us, and homeless people in Scotland, clearly what he is prepared to do to ensure that homeless does not continue to mean healthless?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point. I know Dr. Harry Burns and have the highest regard for him. In May 1992, the Chief Medical Officer asked health boards to carry out a health care needs assessment of their homeless and residential population. Last October, the CMO asked health boards to develop their services for the homeless and boards have already been instructed to undertake a whole range of specific actions to help in that area.

Mr. Bill Walker: While my hon. Friend and his colleagues are discussing resources and health care facilities, do they bear carefully in mind the necessity, when a cottage hospital such as Meigle has been resourced from its birth with an adequate endowment that would keep it going for ever, of taking that fact carefully into account when considering the information presented before such a hospital is closed?

Mr. Stewart: The whole House will know of my hon. Friend's campaign on Meigle hospital. As always, he has been a most meticulous and determined constituency Member of Parliament. As the House also knows, the Secretary of State himself replied to the Adjournment debate that my hon. Friend initiated on Meigle hospital and I know that my right hon. Friend, as he said at the time, listened most carefully to what my hon. Friend said.

Mrs. Fyfe: First, may I put on record the Labour party's continuing support for cottage hospitals?

On the original question, the Minister must know that bad housing creates bad health and the health of those who do not even have a roof over their heads is even more at risk. Does he agree that it is a scandal that in 1992-93 more than 45,000 households—almost 1,000 every week—applied to local authorities as homeless and that many of the people concerned will not be registered with a doctor? Will the Minister therefore reject for Scotland the proposal from the Department of the Environment to tell local authorities that they need not house those in the greatest need—the people who are literally on the streets—but may provide short-term accommodation only? Will he promise today that the impact on the health of the homeless will lead him and the health and housing Ministers in the Scottish Office to reject out of hand any proposals to weaken homelessness legislation?

Mr. Stewart: As the hon. Lady will know, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for housing has allocated an extra £27 million for programmes specifically designed to deal with the problem of homelessness. With regard to the hon. Lady's general point about legislation, I can say that we envisage a consultation paper on possible reforms of homelessness provision, including legislation. That paper will be issued in the spring.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive

10. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future funding of Strathclyde passenger transport executive, in the context of Scottish local government reorganisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under our proposals for local government reform, the Strathclyde passenger transport executive will be funded by grants made by the Strathclyde passenger transport authority.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister understand—I doubt it—that the Strathclyde passenger transport executive, which is a highly successful operation, is now threatened by the twin nonsenses of rail privatisation and local government reorganisation? Does he realise that these destabilise investment and threaten vastly increased fares? Does he recognise that a leasing deal for rolling stock ordered by Strathclyde PTE has been thrown into limbo by the fact that nobody who will be involved in financing the deal knows where, in a few years'time, Strathclyde PTE will get the money to pay for the rolling stock? Does he recognise also that the access charges announced last week by Railtrack have been passed on, in huge measure, to Strathclyde PTE? Ministers have guaranteed that Strathclyde PTE's additional charges will be covered for one year. Can the Minister confirm that the guarantee is for one year only? What will happen after that? If the money to meet these charges does not come from the Government, will it come from the local government taxpayer or from the passenger?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the costs concerned will be taken fully into account. I also confirm that, together with Councillor Malcolm Waugh and the Minister for Public Transport, I shall have a meeting on Monday with Lombard, to which the hon. Member has referred. Leasing and funding are matters for Strathclyde regional council, but I make it clear that the Scottish Office strongly supports Strathclyde's efforts to conclude a rolling stock leasing deal. Obviously I shall take a very close interest in all aspects of the negotiations. Indeed, I have already attended one meeting with the Minister. I shall let the hon. Gentleman know the outcome.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I support the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunningham, North (Mr. Wilson). The Strathclyde passenger transport executive—in particular, Councillor Malcolm Waugh—has done an excellent job building up both rail and road transportation for the public, especially those who cannot afford cars. I should like to put on the record the fact that Strathclyde PTE opened two small railway stations in my constituency—at Cowlairs and High Possil Park—and that it would be a great shame if either of those was endangered as a result of our losing out on the passenger transport service.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I confirm that the local government reform proposals should present no impediment whatever to the satisfactory conclusion of these matters. I shall look in particular into the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. With regard to boundaries, the remit and responsibilities of Strathclyde PTE will not change as a result of local government restructuring. The new Strathclyde PTA will, of course, replace Strathclyde regional council as the passenger transport authority.

Mr. David Marshall: What changes will have to be made to the travel concession scheme in Strathclyde as a result of reorganisation?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I confirm that there is no reason why local government reorganisation should adversely affect the availability of travel concessions. The hon. Gentleman's theme is incorrect.

Funding (Highland Region)

11. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the allocation of funds for Highland region.

Mr. Lang: Subject to the House approving the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994, Highland regional council will receive aggregate external finance totalling just under £212 million next year.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Secretary of State will have heard his colleague—the grey-haired and worried Minister beside him—refer to the fact that there will be a great increase in the volume of road traffic. What, then, is the logic of cutting by £5.7 million Highland's grant aid for road maintenance? At a time when the Highland region has been defined by the European Community as a deprived area worthy of regional structural funds, what is the sense in cutting grants generally?

Mr. Lang: In other circumstances, I might have described the hon. Gentleman's question as hair-raising.

The allocation of resources for roads is, of course, a matter for the regional council. The capping principles that I have enunciated for next year will enable it, like most other regional councils, to increase spending by up to 1.75 per cent. The hon. Gentleman should not forget the substantial resources amounting to £240 million over a period of time which will be available to the highlands and islands under objective 1. Some of that could be used for roads.

Mr. Macdonald: Does the Secretary of State accept that the structural and economic disadvantages of the west highlands and the outer islands are among the most deep-seated and intractable in the whole United Kingdom and that that played a large part in the award of objective 1 funding for the highlands and islands? Does he agree that that is a powerful argument for siting the committee to administer the funds in the west highlands rather than the east highlands, because that is where the problems are greatest? Will he make a decision soon about the location of that committee?

Mr. Lang: Those are not entirely matters for me, but the hon. Gentleman's case will have been noted.

Tourist Boards

12. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce his conclusions on the review of the area tourist boards in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish tourist board has submitted a recommendation on a new area tourist board structure to my right hon. Friend. This is being considered carefully and an announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister confirm that the seven or eight-board structure that has officially been recommended by the Scottish tourist board to the Minister represents fewer than half the number of area boards recommended in the Scottish tourist board's detailed staff consultation with the industry? Does he agree that it is necessary for boards such as the borders and the islands tourist boards to retain a geographical distinctiveness so that they can market tourism effectively? What assurances can he give the House that that local identity will not be sacrificed in the review and amalgamation of tourist boards that he is currently considering?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am currently considering the representations of the hon. Gentleman, who came to see me with a deputation on the subject. I can tell him that one of the clearest messages that emerged from the tourism review was that there should be a more co-ordinated framework of area tourist boards for the whole of Scotland and that, at 31, there were far too many. Although the Scottish tourist board has encouraged voluntary amalgamations, that approach simply has not worked. We shall consider the hon. Gentleman's point with the utmost care before conclusions are reached, undoubtedly within a few weeks.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Minister aware of the important part that the Greater Glasgow tourist board has played in the past few years in selling events such as the garden festival, Glasgow City of Culture and the international jazz festival? Is he aware that if the proposals of the Scottish tourist board were put into force, the expertise in selling local amenities, attractions and services, which is an essential part of the area tourist board, would be lost?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said. We regard the review as a matter of supreme importance because tourism is now the largest employer in Scotland. It is not the largest employer south of the border, but it is in Scotland. We are absolutely determined to get the review right. We are considering the matter deliberately thoroughly, but it will take a little time to come to informed decisions.

Mr. Bill Walker: While my hon. Friend is considering this difficult and complex matter, will he bear it in mind that Perthshire tourist board—which, by any standards, is one of the more successful, if not the most successful, board in Scotland—is deeply worried that it could be merged with areas that have not been so successful and would be much more difficult to market?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest and of the points that have been made in his constituency, but I repeat to the House that the pressure for change has come from the tourism industry itself through its responses to the tourism review, and it is the tourist trade and the area tourist boards which have said that there are at present far too many area tourist boards. That is why some action must be taken.

Training Companies

13. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make public the funding paid to training companies for each training place that they provide.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for the delivery of training in Scotland is a matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their networks of local enterprise companies. The negotiation and agreement of funding paid to training companies is a contractual matter between the local enterprise companies and the training provider.

Mr. Worthington: Is not it shocking that we cannot know the price that is paid for the training of our young people and of the unemployed? Has the Secretary of State seen the evidence being given by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in which it contrasts the fact that local authorities are told to do everything in public with the fact that local enterprise companies are told to everything in private? Is not it disgraceful that we should be unable to protect our young people by having information about what is paid to private companies to train them or to exploit them?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that the resources going into training are substantially greater than under the last Labour Government. As regards the publication of the specific details paid under contracts to individual training providers, that is a matter for the local enterprise company. They are not prevented from publishing the details, but it is a commercial matter. Local enterprise companies are private sector companies and each is accountable to Scottish Enterprise for the fulfilment of its obligations and delivery of training. So there is proper accountability and efficient, commercial use of resources.

Mr. McKelvey: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating Highlands and Islands Enterprise on its announcement that its books and the books of its LECs will be open to the public?

Mr. Lang: Yes, and I would welcome it from others.

Local Government Accountability

14. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to strengthen the accountability of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The proposals contained in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to establish a single-tier structure of local authorities will significantly strengthen the accountability of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Kynoch: My hon. Friend will already have heard this afternoon of the deep unrest in the north-east over the so-called early retirement of the chief executive of Aberdeen city council. May I add the deep concern of my constituents about the situation? In the light of that, and of the allegations about Monklands district council and other Labour-controlled councils, will my hon. Friend give some reassurance to my constituents that, in the transfer to unitary authorities, staffing matters will be dealt with in a proper and professional manner?

Mr. Stewart: Yes. My hon. Friend raises an important point in relation to council tax payers, the public interest and the interests of employees themselves. The transitional arrangements for staff have been discussed. We are setting up a staff advisory committee and, when the Bill receives Royal Assent, a staff commission. I am glad to have the agreement of a number of Opposition Members that my right hon. Friend's announcement of the chairman of that commission, Mr. Robert Peggie, is widely and warmly welcomed.

Mr. McAllion: I can follow how the quangos created by local government reform will be accountable to the Secretary of State for Scotland. What I cannot understand is how the Secretary of State for Scotland is accountable to the Scottish people, particularly since three out of four of them at the last election voted to remove him from the office that he now holds. Does the Minister agree that, as long as the Secretary of State for Scotland holds his high office in defiance of the democratically expressed wishes of the Scottish people, no aspect of government in Scotland is truly accountable, there is no Scottish democracy and, in every sense of the word, Scottish people are already living in an unelected state?

Mr. Stewart: That probably confirms that it is only a matter of time before the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) joins the Scottish National party, where I am sure he will be warmly welcomed. Ours is a United Kingdom Parliament and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is fully accountable to the House, as is every other Minister in the United Kingdom Parliament.

Homelessness

15. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to end the duty of Scottish local authorities to provide permanent housing to all homeless people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office will circulate a consultation paper in the spring on the possible reform of homelessness policy. The paper will raise issues similar to those addressed in the consultation paper for England which was distributed on 20 January. The consultation in Scotland will also take account of the findings of recent research into the 1991 code of guidance on homelessness.

Sir David Steel: The consultation paper issued by the Department in England proposes to repeal a section of the law that places on local authorities a duty to provide permanent homes for homeless people. May we have an assurance that no such proposal will appear in the Scottish consultation paper?

Lord Douglas-Hamilton: What I can tell the right hon. Gentleman is that the contents of the consultation paper have not yet been finalised; they will take into account the results of the research. We expect the paper to ask questions about all the main issues of the current homelessness legislation—I refer to questions, not proposals, as it will be a genuine consultation exercise. The present duty applies only to those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek advice in relation to the way in which Scottish Question Time was conducted this afternoon. At the beginning, the Secretary of State announced that he was to link Questions 1 and 7. I had been notified that that was his intention and phoned his private office before lunch to say that the Opposition would find that objectionable.

Question 1 asks when the Secretary of State

"last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise".

Question 7 asks when the Secretary of State

"next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress".

Both questions relate to discussions on the Scottish economy, but involve two radically different organisations that are likely, despite their common concern about the way the Government run the Scottish economy, to have two different views on the remedy.

The Secretary of State answered only three questions out of the 15 reached in today's Question Time. If he then chooses to link two of the substantial questions, he reduces even further our opportunities to cross-examine him. Surely there should be some safeguard for the House against a Cabinet Minister unilaterally choosing to link questions because there may be an apparent connection between them. If that policy were taken to its logical conclusion, all the questions could be linked because they related to Scotland.

Madam Speaker: I have done a little calculation myself, and the House may be interested to know that I called seven supplementary questions in connection with the two linked questions to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not criticising my conduct. The decision whether or not to link questions is entirely at the discretion of the relevant Minister.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): on a point of order, Madam Speaker. in reply to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), the Under-Secretary said that the consultation document would involve genuine consultation. Can the House have guidelines on which consultation exercises will be genuine and which will not?

Madam Speaker: That was a very good move on the part of the hon. Gentleman, but it was certainly not a point of order for me.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): It is more a matter of guidance than a point of order that I wish to raise. It relates to an organisation that you chair, Madam Speaker, so I thought that it should be brought to your attention.

In a foreign legislature yesterday, and earlier in the Anglo-Irish conference, decisions taken by the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Boundary Commission were called into question. It was alleged that the decisions taken by that organisation were discriminatory.

That raises a matter of constitutional importance of interest not only to the House but to the whole country. A foreign Government are now trying to overturn decisions made by a commission of which you, Madam Speaker, are the chairperson. I should be grateful if you would tell the House what steps the House and Her Majesty's Government may take to refute that interference by Dublin, which goes beyond all reasonable bounds.

Madam Speaker: I shall look at the matter to which the hon. Gentleman refers, which is currently unknown to me. I shall make urgent inquiries about it and come back to him.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): on a point of order, Madam Speaker. Why, during the past four Scottish questions, have I failed to catch your eye? My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) says that it has something to do with my tie. Will you advise me whether that is the case?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I promise that I am not cringing, but I have no complaints to make.

Madam Speaker: The latter point of order is most welcome. I recognise that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) has stood up on practically every question. It is not possible for me to call all Scottish Members during question time—

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): All the Conservatives get called.

Madam Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has a criticism to make, he should stand up so that we can have a proper exchange about it. I am replying to a point of order, and do not expect seated interventions when I am on my feet.

As I was saying, the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South has stood up on every question. I regret that I have been unable to call him. I look on that Back Bench because it contains many handsome Members. Without any commitment, the hon. Gentleman can be sure that I shall look his way in future.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am in a little difficulty, because the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) made an interesting contribution to the debate on the intelligence services, in column 205 of yesterday's *Official Report*. The only problem is that the speech is attributed to me. Although I agree with much that he said, the record should be corrected.

Madam Speaker: Absolutely, and I am sure that the Editor of the *Official Report* will have heard what the hon. Gentleman had said.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): The point of order that I wish to raise with you, Madam Speaker, is on the transferring of questions. I wish to establish where responsibility lies and what powers the Chair has to protect the interests of hon. Members.

My specific example is that I tabled an oral question for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the subject of the fish farming industry. Unilaterally, the Ministry has transferred the question to the Scottish Office. If I wanted to ask the Scottish Office, I would ask the Scottish Office. on such a matter, there are shades of opinion and different roles. The crucial point is that the lead Ministry in dealings with Europe is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): There are salmon farms in England as well.

Mr. Wilson: As the hon. Member says, salmon farms exist in England, too.

Mr. William Ross: And in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Wilson: And in Northern Ireland. Clearly, the question has been transferred to avoid political difficulty. That is not a good enough reason.

Madam Speaker: The Minister himself determines where his responsibilities lie and whether he is responsible for the question. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that a question has been transferred unjustly and unnecessarily, he should raise the matter with the Minister.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for a member of the Opposition Front Bench to visit the Press Gallery? I spent some 19 years up there and have never known that to happen before.

Madam Speaker: I should have thought that a Member elected to this House had access to all parts of it. I have never been in the Press Gallery, but I understand that all the press can see of me are my buckled shoes.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to a previous point of order, Madam Speaker, on Members' rights regarding the linking of questions. It is a more general point than the one raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). When questions are linked, it is for the convenience not of Members but of the Executive.

The House does not exist for the convenience of Ministers, but for the convenience of hon. Members. There have been many occasions when the linking of questions has not been notified in time to hon. Members whose questions have been linked. When questions are linked, even if that is admissible, it is a matter of interest not only to the Ministers and hon. Members whose questions are linked, but to any hon. Member who might wish to participate in Question Time and who might come in for Question 8, but find that it has already been dealt with after being linked with Question 1.

Is it beyond the wit of the organisation of the House for notification of which questions are being linked to be available in the morning to all hon. Members?

Madam Speaker: If hon. Members are seeking to change our procedures on the matter, it may be something that the Procedure Committee could usefully consider. The hon. Gentleman advanced two interesting points. He was right to say that sometimes hon. Members are not notified. That has happened when I have been in the Chair. When it occurs, of course I allow the hon. Member concerned to ask his question separately and I have done so recently.

When questions are linked, I understand the extent of interest, and I tend to allow more supplementary questions and I call hon. Members who are interested in the issue. The first point may be a matter that the Procedure Committee will wish to consider.

Mr. John Home Robertson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to apologise if I irritated you earlier. I assure you that I was not complaining, but simply observing that Scottish Conservative Members can always be called at Scottish questions. That is clearly a problem of Scottish political arithmetic. It has nothing to do with you, Madam Speaker, and I assure you that I was not complaining.

The substantive point of order that I want to raise concerns another matter. There has been another instance of a very important announcement, which should have been made through an oral statement by a Minister in the House, appearing as a planted question on the Order Paper.

I am referring to Question 180, which deals with further redundancies in the Army. That is a serious matter, which affects many people in the armed forces, including some personnel on active service in Bosnia. I appeal to you, Madam Speaker, to put it to Ministers that, where possible, statements of that nature should be made as oral statements in the House, and should not be sneaked in via planted written questions.

Madam Speaker: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for the preamble to his point of order. He knows that it is entirely up to the Minister whether he makes a statement at the Dispatch Box or in answer to a written question. I understand that the answer to today's question is the third such announcement under the Government's "Options for Change" policy—there has been no change of policy. It is not for me to make the Government's case; I am simply trying to explain to the hon. Gentleman that a written answer is not unusual in these circumstances.

BILL PRESENTED

HARE COURSING

Mr. Colin Pickthall, supported by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Mike Hall, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Elliott Morley, Mr. Edward O'Hara and Mr. Roger Stott, presented a Bill to make hare coursing illegal; to prohibit the use of any place for or in connection with hare coursing; to provide for the confiscation of any animal or equipment used or to be used for or in connection with hare coursing; and for connected purposes: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 March, and to be printed. [Bill 57.]

Pensions Reform

3.42pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for employers' and employees' pension contributions to be paid into personally owned funds registered for the purpose of future pension payment.

A lot of attention in the House and elsewhere has rightly been paid to the problems that are caused when pension funds are embezzled and illegal action takes place.

I pay tribute to the work being done by the Select Committee on Social Security, which is trying to bring a public focus to bear on the issues that are raised. There has also been a lot of focus on the mismanagement of pension funds. Out of respect to my right hon. Friend the Member Selby (Mr. Alison), who I see present, I shall not say too much about the Church Commissioners.

What has not received enough attention is the perfectly legal disadvantage suffered by many pensioners as a result of their decision to move jobs for one reason for another, or because they have been made redundant.

The problem of early leavers is particularly acute, and that is what I want to address by means of the Bill. As a society, we increasingly expect mobility. The age when my grandfather left school at 14 and worked for the same employer for the whole of his working life has long since passed. Most contemporary workers would expect to work for more than one company and perhaps in more than one industry in the course of their working lives. If the provisions of private pensions disadvantage those people in moving from job to job or from industry to industry, the matter needs to be addressed and set right.

Hon. Members have said many times that civil servants should be able to move backwards and forwards from the civil service to industry, local government and academia, and even to consultancies. Everybody would benefit from that, but the constant block is the consequence for pensions, and only secondment is possible. People are unwilling to move from job to job because of the loss of pension entitlement that would result.

The matter concerns many hon. Members and also worries many people who come to my surgery, especially during a time of recession, when people may be made redundant and have to change careers. I expect that almost every hon. Member has had such experiences in his surgery.

The present pensions system seems to be entirely based on those who always work for the same company, those who are fortunate enough to work in an industry that has a common pensions system so that when they change companies they are not disadvantaged, or those who are powerful enough to negotiate, as part of their package for changing jobs, an enhancement of pension rights so that they do not suffer.

Those who are particularly disadvantaged are people whose occupations have high job mobility and for which there is no common scheme. The disadvantaged also include women who may stop working to have a family or because they wish to have experience in other professions, whether related to their own or in an entirely different field, or perhaps in voluntary work. Others return to part-time work in later life. As a result of redundancy, especially in later years, many people are forced to draw an early pension and do not receive the benefit they might otherwise expect.

Present pension fund arrangements mean that people can draw the pension when they reach pension age, and perhaps their wives and husbands can draw it when the person dies, but there are restrictive rules about accumulated pension rights being passed to families or charities or to any other beneficiary that the pension holder had in mind.

The Bill sets out to ensure that employers' contributions, like those of employees, are set aside and accumulated with profits, so that if someone wishes to change his job, he can simply take them to the next job. The effect is cumulative, in that the employers' and employees' contributions and profits are added throughout the career of the worker. The Bill also provides an opportunity for additional contributions, which will result in more benefits later in life.

The issue will come to the House again and again because, as society changes, more and more people will undoubtedly find themselves caught out by the present arrangements. I have no hesitation in commending the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. David Amess, Mr. David Lidington, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. Jacques Arnold and Mr. John Marshall.

PENSIONS REFORM

Mr. Robert B. Jones accordingly presented a Bill to make provision for employers' and employees' pension contributions to be paid into personally owned funds registered for the purpose of future pension payment: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 March, and to be printed. [Bill 58.]

Orders of the Day

Sunday Trading Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

3.50 pm

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I cannot understand why my amendment to delete Wales from the provisions of the Bill was not selected. No other amendments are anything like that amendment, and there is no opportunity for me or my colleagues to raise the issue, because, once again, the amendment has not been selected.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman complains about the non-selection of his amendment. The selection of amendments is the responsibility of the Speaker. I have looked at them carefully to make my selection for today's debate.

Mr. Jones *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I have told the hon. Gentleman as gently as I can that the selection of amendments is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

New Clause 1

LOADING AND UNLOADING AT LARGE SHOPS ON SUNDAY MORNING

'(1) A local authority may resolve that Schedule [*Loading and unloading at large shops on Sunday morning*] to this Act is to apply to their area.

(2) If a local authority do so resolve, Schedule [*Loading and unloading at large shops on Sunday morning*] shall come into force in their area on such date as may be specified for that purpose in the resolution, being a date at least one month after the date on which the resolution is passed.'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: new clause 3—*Meaning of "local authority"*—and Government amendments Nos. 50, 49 and 52 to 55.

Mr. Lloyd: I gave a commitment in Standing Committee to consider the concerns raised by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), among others, about deliveries to large shops in residential areas on Sunday mornings. The worry was that, if shops opened at 10 am, local people could be disturbed by deliveries arriving early in the morning.

We have discussed the matter with local authority organisations and retailers, and I am extremely grateful to them, particularly the local authority organisations, for their prompt advice.

As I said in Committee, there are already a range of powers to deal with noise nuisance, and most stores want to be regarded as good neighbours, especially by potential customers living nearby. However, the local authorities were clear that they would like a specific power between exhortation and general statutory powers. The new clause and schedule bridge that gap.

The new clause permits a local authority to take the powers in the schedule which will enable it to prohibit deliveries before 9 am—late enough to preserve the quiet of an early Sunday morning. If the local authority proceeds in that way, a shop may still apply for consent for deliveries to take place before 9 am. Consent must be granted after consultation with local residents, unless the local authority believes that the deliveries will cause undue disturbance to those living nearby.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): in the discussions with local authorities and local authority associations, was any comment made about the fact that local authorities are so strapped for resources that it would be extremely difficult for them to police such activities on Sunday mornings? If not, will the Minister seek their views on policing them?

Mr. Lloyd: That point was not put to me. Local authorities are glad to have a more simple power, so that they may use fewer resources than if they were to use the wider statutory powers they already have. Although I understand that all local authorities would like more resources, it will not use up more resources but will enable them to carry out their task more speedily and efficiently in the interests of local residents.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that local residents would also be efficient policemen of that power? If they were disturbed by lorries before 9 o'clock where that permission had been refused, I guarantee that they would be willing to be witnesses and to complain to the authority the next morning, if not that day.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that my hon. Friend is quite right. All I would add to what I have just said is that there are a number of other amendments in the group. They are all technical, defining "local authority" for this purpose and the purposes of the Bill in general.

I am quite sure that everyone, whether they are in favour of or opposed to Sunday opening, will welcome the extra powers that local authorities will now have to deal with the noise nuisance that opening may cause.

Ms Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Minister's speeches are always very brief. I shall take a little more time, because I believe that this is an extremely important issue.

As the Minister acknowledged, Labour raised in Committee a number of amendments designed to explore the environmental impact of Sunday trading.

The Minister referred in Committee, as he did today, to the measures already available to local authorities under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and Environmental Protection Act 1990. We acknowledge their importance and the existing provisions of planning law, but maintain that additional powers should be granted to local authorities, to recognise the consequences of much-increased Sunday trading.

In pursuing that matter, we reflect the concerns of our constituents and their local authority representatives. I am glad that the Minister accepts the importance of the issue and, through these amendments, has allowed us to address it. Both the hon. Gentleman and I have maintained close contact with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and other organisations, which in turn consulted their members.

[Ms Joan Ruddock]

The response of the director of health and community services for Gateshead metropolitan borough council is typical. That authority confirms that it has had to deal with disturbance to residents caused by deliveries to supermarkets. Gateshead's director of health and community services wrote:

> "Disturbance can be widespread and at locations remote from the supermarket due to the movement of large articulated delivery lorries passing through residential areas.
>
> Noise at or near the supermarket is caused by the manoeuvring of large delivery vehicles; lorry reverse warning signals; the idling of lorry engines which is required to power ancillary equipment such as lifts; the movement of large metal containers over hard surfaces, and the shouting of delivery/supermarket personnel.
>
> It is the experience of this Authority that people living near or on the route to a supermarket will tolerate a certain degree of disamenity from the above-mentioned sources, but only during less noise-sensitive times of the day eg Monday to Saturday, 8 am to 6 pm."

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I have sympathy with some of the hon. Lady's points, but does she not concede that vigorous application of highways Acts would discourage and make illegal deliveries before 9 am, if that caused a nuisance?

Ms Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman may have shared my experience and that of other hon. Members. When constituents bring noise problems to one's attention and one requests the local authority to address them through the legislation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, the process is cumbersome and lengthy. The nuisance must be caused before action can be taken, whereas the merit of the Minister's proposals is that it would be possible to try to prevent the nuisance arising in the first place.

The letter from Gateshead's director of health and community services continues:

> "Planning legislation and planning conditions are a useful means of avoiding disturbance from deliveries and have been used effectively by this Authority. However planning conditions will only apply to new development and cannot be applied retrospectively.
>
> Early morning or late night deliveries can cause acute noise problems and complainants demand a speedy remedy.
>
> The Noise Abatement Zone provisions and procedures of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which are lengthy are therefore not the answer.
>
> Not every superstore is in a location where there is a potential for disturbance, however many are, and so each case must be judged on its merits. I would support a procedure which would require each superstore to notify a local authority of its intentions so that the effects on local residents can be assessed. The procedure should promote discussion between Local Authorities and superstores so that sensible agreement can be reached."

That "sensible agreement" would, we hope, follow notification of Sunday opening by large stores to their local authorities under the registration scheme that is central to the Bill. However, experience tells us that, often, much damage is done and offence caused before remedies are provided under existing environmental protection law.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Will the hon. Lady confirm that these problems arise mostly from what she is describing as superstores? Whichever way we look at it, there will be some activity, whether it is noise, or those people who are having to work to prevent noise and police the whole thing. Does she accept that those problems could not arise were those large stores simply not allowed to open on a Sunday?

Ms Ruddock: There is an undeniable logic in that point, but, as the hon. Member will recall—as I recall today and recalled during much of the proceedings in Committee—the House in its wisdom decided that the larger stores, the superstores, should be allowed to trade on Sunday for a limited period of six hours.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Lack of wisdom.

Ms Ruddock: If they are to trade, I consider it my duty and that of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to endeavour in every way possible to try to ameliorate the problems that could be so caused.

4 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I agree with her that a lack of wisdom was shown. Does that mean that she will now support the amendments to be called later today to limit the size of shops that can open?

Ms Ruddock: I fear that the hon. Gentleman misheard. It was a woman's voice—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Mine.

Ms Ruddock: — saying that there was a lack of wisdom, but I did not say that; he is mistaken. He knows from our discussions and deliberations in Committee that, on that matter, I shall probably be on the other side, although there have been matters on which we have agreed. I know that the hon. Gentleman very much wanted to see some amelioration of environmental impacts should they occur after the Bill be passed.

I believe that protection is required, particularly in relation to older premises, many of which are situated in residential neighbourhoods. As I said in Committee, I believe that many stores would not need to have any deliveries on a Sunday; many do not have perishable goods and there is no reason why deliveries should be made.

However, where they are taking place—I believe that there would be fewer than on other days of the week—there is a need to try to see that the least possible disturbance is caused. The modest provisions of the new clauses and amendments should be eminently workable, and are patently in the interests of those who live adjacent to such stores and who have every right to expect some protection from increasing commercialisation.

Finally, much could be done in addition to early morning restriction of deliveries. A number of changes have already been entered into by some companies in consultation with local authorities and have led to a considerable reduction in noise nuisance during existing weekday deliveries: the re-routing of delivery vehicles, a common request with which we would expect all firms to comply where it is possible; development of acoustic loading bays; use of wooden pallets; and secondary double glazing of residents' homes. Those are all proven examples of positive local action to ameliorate the environmental impact of large-scale deliveries.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): The hon. Lady mentioned doubling glazing of residents' homes. Obviously that is a benefit. Does she agree, however, that that is the benefit of last resort, that limiting the emanation of noise is the key factor, and that, when one has to double-glaze, it is an admission that one has failed in the first place?

Ms Ruddock: I accept that. The force of the new clauses and amendments is that there should be prevention rather than cure. Of course those measures are measures of last resort, but it is important that we note that such things have been done, that there are examples, that companies have been obliged to take such measures to protect local neighbourhoods. Those measures are important. The burden of my case is that we should expect all possible measures to be put in place if the Bill becomes law.

Many local authorities have been conscious that prevention is better than cure, and have therefore built into their planning consents restrictions on Sunday activities, such as the time when deliveries may be made or, in some cases, that no deliveries are allowed. These constraints tend to apply only to the most recent supermarket and other large store developments.

Furthermore, I believe that, if the Bill becomes law, companies will seek the lifting of the existing restrictions.We are pleased to have on the record the Minister's assurances, given in Committee, that a new Sunday trading law could in no way provide automatic relief from those restrictions; none the less, we feel that these new measures are necessary.

I believe that hon. Members will welcome the protection from the curse of noise nuisance that the new clause and amendments would give their constituents. Large companies must consider themselves under a public duty to reduce noise wherever possible; while we must expect them to make much of that effort voluntarily and willingly, the prohibition of early morning loading and unloading would give more force to what I am sure all hon. Members want—the protection of the local environments of our constituents.

Mr. Alton: The new clause and amendments are worthy of our support, because they constitute an attempt to improve the Bill; I am tempted, however, to see them as yet another example of closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. How much easier it would have been had the House decided at a much earlier stage to limit Sunday opening to small shops.

I was extremely disappointed to hear from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) that, although no changes had been made to provide proper employee protection and no guarantees had been given on such issues as premium payments and double-time working, she was prepared to budge at all in the votes that will take place later. Those votes will give the House a chance to think again, and to try to undo some of the damage done by earlier votes.

Mr. Fabricant: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that, whether he agrees or disagrees, the House decided on 6 December that shops should be allowed to open on Sundays? There was no three-line Whip—at least on either Labour or the Conservative party—and, given that the House made the decision, it is arrogant in the extreme to argue in Committee and on Report that it should be deferred.

Mr. Alton : The hon. Gentleman should realise that, until the Bill receives Royal Assent, it remains a Bill, and we in the House of Commons—and, indeed, the other place—have the right to reform it at any stage. When hon. Members voted at an earlier stage, they did so with a false prospectus before them: they were told that employment protection would be provided, but it was never set out in the Bill. Nor were they told that the House would be presented with another Bill—the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—which would allow shops to open from Monday to Saturday, 24 hours a day. If they had been told that, I do not believe that they would have voted as they did.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Some hon. Members—including me—voted on the options before us after saying, in points of order, that the way in which we were being asked to vote was wrong, and that employment protection should have been debated first. We voted conditionally, on the basis of what that employee protection—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The debate is about loading and unloading, but we are moving very wide of that subject.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) makes a fair point, however. I shall return to the new clause immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is fair to point out that votes were conditional. That is my response to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant).

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: We repeatedly warned that that would be the result, and that shopworkers would be affected. Now Opposition Members are ruing their actions.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Lady reinforces my point: hon. Members voted without the necessary information before them and with no knowledge of the other agenda with which they would be presented.

Now there are attempts, such as those in the amendment, to tidy up the Bill, to give it a more attractive face, but those are superficial amendments and the House should not be conned into believing otherwise. The amendments before us are, as the hon. Member for Deptford said, modest. That is a charitable use of the word. They are minor amendments, which will simply tidy things up.

If we think about the real environmental pressures that are linked in the amendment to the trading and the opening of shops on Sundays, we can obtain some idea of what will happen when Sunday becomes yet another Saturday. There will be increased energy consumption, greater air pollution and greater noise.

I draw the attention of the House to a report that appeared in *The Independent* on 6 December 1993:

> "A shift to widespread Sunday trading could result in an extra one million tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted when the Government wants to cut ten million tonnes per annum from Britain's present emissions in 2000, to comply with the Rio climate protection treaty."

In other words, however much good the amendments do in trying to reduce the environmental impact on a Sunday, widespread Sunday opening will have a catastrophic effect on the environment because of the extra noise, the extra air pollution, the extra wear and tear on road surfaces, and the traffic that will be generated as a result of all that extra trading.

There is clear evidence of lower levels of nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide in London on Sundays at present, which makes life easier for asthmatics. How much worse it will be for them—and for

[Mr. Alton]

anyone else who cares about their children, in the light of reports that we have seen in the newspapers recently about the high concentration of air pollution at the level of prams and cots, as people take their children on walks through high streets. They will not even be able to do that on a Sunday in the future without coming into contact with that air pollution.

In addition, the cross-party Association of District Councils warned of the dangers from Sunday trading in increasing traffic congestion, which would force them to levy the increased costs of traffic wardens on the motorist through car park charges. That report appeared in the *Financial Times* on 10 December 1993.

I believe that those reasons show why we are wrong, as a House of Commons, to give widespread powers to shops to open as and when they wish on a Sunday, and indeed every other day of the week, but, if they are going to do so, new clauses such as this at least try to limit that. For those reasons, I would give what the hon. Lady called "a modest amendment" my support.

Mr. Lord *rose—*

Mr. Alton: Before concluding, I will give way to the hon. Member.

Mr. Lord: Are not all the things that we foresaw starting to happen? We are discussing noise in the vicinity of supermarkets, but we have to think of policemen, of traffic wardens, of refuse collection and of those people in local authorities whose job it is to regulate shops and their activities. It is the thin end of the wedge. It is all coming about as those of us who did not want Sunday trading prophesied. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is not too late for those people who think that they were misled earlier in the debate to change their minds today and ensure that we keep our Sundays.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman is right. All those things were laid before the House, but some people felt that the arguments about employee protection would be met later; that they were conditional—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing employment protection: we are discussing loading and unloading. The hon. Gentleman must get back to the new clause.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will try not to be led astray again.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the hon. Gentleman express a view on the subject of arrogance in dealing with relevant issues now? Surely it is the job of the House, and the business of elected representatives, to make the necessary changes—if changes are to be made—now, before the Bill becomes law. Is it not arrogant to suggest otherwise?

Mr. Alton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is why, I not only think that we should support the amendment now, modest though it is, but hope that the hon. Gentleman will put his argument forcefully to the House in later debates.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): New Clause 1 on unloading and unloading demonstrates well the dangers and difficulties that arise with Sunday trading. The Government are supposed to be taking regulations off people's backs, but here are more regulations. As the schedule relates to unloading before 9 am, lorries will arrive before 9 am, disturbing other people en route. Local authorities will have to apply for powers to deal with that problem, but I already have a problem in my constituency.

Lorries make deliveries to a 24-hour operation called Allied Colloids, where there was a major fire about two years ago. There is a group of houses near the factory to which lorries make deliveries at all hours, although Allied Colloids has asked them not to do so. At 6 am or 7 am, people have to ask the lorry drivers to switch off their engines or move away. Some drivers are helpful and co-operative, while others tell them to get lost.

4.15 pm

Lives are being permanently disrupted because of gross pollution. Hon. Members are in a difficult position. The new clause is designed to remedy such pollution and the intrusion into people's lives. By and large, they will agree to the clause because they believe that it might help people who will be oppressed by this wretched legislation.

However, those are only peripheral matters. The very existence of the new clause is a recognition of the fact that lives will be intruded on by deliveries and unloading. Pollution and noise will be created first, and only after they have occurred will people, as a reaction, have to try to stop them. The fact that the new clause is necessary is a measure of the deterioration that will occur on Sundays.

The new clause is a sop to get the legislation passed. The sop will no doubt be accepted by the House, but there is an alternative. If hon. Members are seriously concerned about providing decent quiet lives for people—and, incidentally, about providing protection for people who work on Sundays—they must vote against the Bill on Third Reading.

Mr. Wolfson: I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) because some of his constituents are clearly in exactly the same position as some of mine. My constituents have two problems.

The first involves an organisation called the West Kent Cold Store in Sevenoaks from which lorries move at all times. There are some limitations on their movements, but it is a continual battle to get them to conform. My experience is that, by and large, the traffic commissioners tend to give increased leeway to such companies when they apply for a more liberal regime which means that the residents lose out time and again.

The problem will, of course, get worse when there is an increased demand for activity on Sundays. Sundays will be busier and there will be more traffic and more lorries waiting outside people's homes with their engines running to keep the refrigeration going, whether or not it is allowed. As the hon. Member for Bradford, South said, when residents remonstrate with a driver they get a mouthful. That will be no more pleasant on a Sunday than on any other day of the week.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Although the Bill does not apply specifically to Northern Ireland, I understand the arguments being presented. This week, we have been told that we should not pass legislation that will be difficult to police. Some of us have had experience of trying to get the law on quietness enforced six days a week but what will it be like trying to get this law enforced on the seventh day? Will it not be impossible to enforce properly?

Mr. Wolfson: It will certainly be very difficult to enforce, which brings me to my second point.

Under the new law the local authority will be given increased powers. Will the Minister clarify for me whether there will still be the opportunity for companies to appeal against its decisions, so that they can be overridden? When Sainsbury's opened a superstore in Sevenoaks, which we were happy to have, no sooner was the ink dry on the consent to build, the building ready and the store about to open, than the company appealed against the original restrictions set on traffic movement. I want to know whether that difficulty will be adequately dealt with, because in my experience superstores tend to get what they want, even if it takes a long time for them to get it.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The council's decision will be made through its power to pass a resolution to take advantage of the new schedule introduced by the new clause. If a store does not like a local authority's decision—for instance, if it has applied to the local authority to deliver before 9 o'clock and been refused—as things stand it may go for judicial review if it can argue before a judge that the decision was unreasonable. That is the only route available, but it is the usual route with administrative decisions of that nature.

Mr. Wolfson: I thank my hon. Friend for clarifying the position.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): Although the hon. Gentleman is thanking the Minister for clarifying the position, does he agree that he has clarified it into such a mess that it can hardly be untangled? Will we not have to untangle what the Minister said about the process and the judicial review that he suggested would have to take place?

Mr. Wolfson: If the hon. Gentleman will give me a moment to develop my argument I shall come to that.

Certainly my hon. Friend has clarified the position, but my experience of the way in which the superstores look to their own opportunities at the expense of local residents does not make me feel optimistic about how the provision will work. Superstores have the resources, the opportunity and often the desire to go to judicial review, so that may well happen.

I support the new clause and the amendments because they help to deal with a problem that the House has created by agreeing to a relative free-for-all on Sunday trading, but I firmly hold to the view that I greatly regret our having taken that decision. Having seen some recent Sundays in London, I know that the city is already becoming a great deal busier than before the decision was taken. As other hon. Members have said, we are already seeing many of the problems that were aired on Second Reading coming to light. The amendments are designed to deal with them, but they will not deal with them satisfactorily.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): In general terms, the amendments should be welcomed. If they are carried, as I suspect they will be, they will represent a modest improvement to the Bill. But, following what the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) said, I must tell the House that I have some specific concerns about the collection of amendments, especially No. 49.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the position on appeals against local authorities' decisions, and the Minister said that any company that had received an unwelcome decision from a local authority could exercise its right to go for judicial review.

The group of amendments and the other issues that we shall deal with today concern matters that are in the main related to planning. It is normal and customary for there to be an appeal to a planning inspector in respect of planning applications, so it is rather bizarre for the Minister to tell the House that the best solution for a dissatisfied company is to exercise its right to go the High Court and seek judicial review. That is an immensely expensive option. I wonder whether underlying the Minister's response to the hon. Gentleman's question is something of a lack of preparedness on the part of his Department with regard to the issues raised by these amendments.

I should like now to say something about my second concern with regard to the amendments. They lay down a detailed procedure relating to local authority decisions on any restrictions that are to be imposed on the delivery of goods at a superstore on a Sunday. I welcome this move, but it seems that the amendments contain nothing concerning a procedure for revoking a council's original decision. We know what will happen when a council wants to exercise its powers under these provisions, but what procedure will it have to follow if it wants to revoke its original decision?

As the amendments are constructed, it is reasonably clear that a council will be able to exercise its powers only if a written application is received from a company that wants to open a large shop on a Sunday. What will happen if, for example, as a result of complaints from residents, a council wants to tighten restrictions that it has imposed —perhaps to lessen noise or inconvenience? What revocation procedure does the Minister have in mind? It seems to me that the amendments contain nothing to address that issue. The Minister may well say that a council wanting to revoke a decision will simply have to pass a new resolution. It seems to me that the amendments contain no such provision.

Mr. Lord: The hon. Gentleman is talking about judicial reviews and a whole variety of processes. Is not the history of this problem one of people hiding behind long, drawn-out legal processes, whether in this country or in Europe? Those of us whose constituencies have noise problems can envisage the judicial process grinding along for months, if not years, while the lorries continue to run and the noise and all the other problems remain.

Mr. Hutton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point about delays in the legal system, though it may well be outside the scope of the amendments. One of the problems about judicial review is that delay is built into the system. I am not here to argue the case for the supermarkets and the big superstores—they have their own lawyers—but it seems logical that these amendments should incorporate an appeals procedure. This is quite clearly an omission, which I hope the Government will take into account in another place.

The crucial point is that the amendments contain nothing by way of power to revoke a local authority's

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original decision. As I have said, it is hardly good enough, by way of response, to say that a local authority can pass another resolution amending its original decision. Such a procedure does not appear to be envisaged in the amendments.

Anyone looking at amendment No. 49 will see that a local authority must carry a resolution within 21 days of submission of the written application to the local authority. In the nature of planning applications—and it is right that these amendments should be considered as an aspect of planning procedure—21 days is a remarkably short period. I wonder whether it will be sufficient to enable the consultation with residents that the amendments envisage. I have in mind in particular a number of superstore developments right in the centre of my constituency that continue to cause immense disturbance to residents. I do not believe that the period of 21 days is sufficient for consultation that most council taxpayers would think acceptable.

With these quite substantial reservations about their accuracy and comprehensiveness, I express my general support for the amendments, as they represent an improvement in the Bill. My point to the Minister is simply that there are three gaps or holes in the new clauses and amendments on which I urge him to respond and reconsider and, if necessary, in another place ask his right hon. Friends to table further amendments.

Mr. Lord: Throughout the debate, some of us have argued that if Sunday is totally deregulated it will become just another day of the week—just another working day. We all know that from Monday to Friday or perhaps Monday to Saturday, 9 am is the time at which we all start work—perhaps not in the House but in schools and most offices, it is the beginning of the working day. Thankfully, until now 9 o'clock on Sunday has not meant a great deal to anyone. The time at which we go to church or go about our Sunday activities is not scheduled like the rest of the week.

On the specific point dealt with in the new clause, by talking about "9 o'clock", "before 9 o'clock" and "after 9 o'clock", we are admitting that we are bringing Sunday into the working week and no longer is it a special day.

4.30 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The point that I should like the Minister to clarify for me in the light of the amendments is whether any assistance will be given to local authorities in funding the additional costs that will inevitably occur. In my constituency, the two supermarkets that come to mind are older and literally cheek by jowl with residential areas. It will not be sufficient for the local authority simply to write yea or nay on the application by the owners of those supermarkets to trade on a Sunday. The local authority will physically have to change parking arrangements that already exist and, indeed, are posited for my constituents.

To make such changes is no small thing. Will the local authority be assisted with changing notices, repainting lines and redefining bays? If one of the superstores wishes to open on a Sunday, residents of the street will have no right whatever to park in the spaces because it will be physically impossible for a lorry to draw up to the delivery bay. That is where my constituents, and their families who may be visiting, park their cars on Sundays when parking restrictions in delivery bays are lifted.

On the face of it, the procedures proposed in the new clauses and amendments seem simple for the local authority to undertake. They are simply the granting or denying of permission for lorries to deliver at 9 o'clock on a Sunday morning. However, for my constituents in two particular areas, if such permission is given, it will not only be vastly deleterious to their Sundays by virtue of the noise that they will have to endure, the fumes that they will have to breathe and all the points that hon. Members on both sides of the House have already made, but it will involve costs for their local authority. I believe that those costs will be sizeable.

One of the earlier points was about the cost of policing this particular arrangement. The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said that the best policemen would be the residents. He said that they could alert their local authority on the day if noise was worrying them. But that presumably would mean that the local authority had to set up on that Sunday, either at the town hall or in some office so designated, employees to take phone calls, log complaints and forward complaints to the necessary committee.

There will be a great deal of hidden expense for local authorities in the new clauses and amendments, if the House sees fit to pass them. I should be grateful if the Minister could give some idea of whether central Government will assist local authorities, if the Bill is passed. If not, will the Government enter into negotiations with the owners of superstores to help relieve local authorities of an undoubted financial burden?

Rev. William McCrea: I shall not detain the House long in speaking to these new clauses and amendments. I want to point out two things. First, while the amendments are an improvement on what we had before, they are an acknowledgement that the legislation on Sunday trading is flawed. If the Bill goes through and becomes law, it will cause serious problems and anxieties to local communities. The amendments themselves are an acknowledgment of problems that were dismissed with a wave of the hand in the original debate and were regarded as foolish, not only by the Government Front Bench but by the Opposition Front Bench—something which genuinely surprised me because there are a lot of other rights that I thought they would have been concerned about.

Ms Ruddock: If I have understood him correctly, the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Opposition Front Bench has not been concerned about these issues or has not expressed such concerns. I can assure him that if he reads the proceedings of the Committee on the Bill, he will see the extent to which we were concerned, as shown by the number of amendments that we raised. If he had listened to my opening remarks today, he would know full well that I dealt in detail with our concern about the environmental impact of Sunday trading. I relate our responsibility, as I said earlier, to the fact that the House made a decision. The decision having been made, our task has been to try to ameliorate some of the effects which we agree would be adverse.

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention, but it was the Front Bench of the Labour party who, with other hon. Members, helped the Bill through, so they cannot now say that they have a particular concern. We should not be discussing the legislation today had they joined many other hon. Members in taking a particular stand on Sunday trading, so they cannot piously wipe their hands now.

Coming back to the issue—I could easily be led off the track by the hon. Lady on this particular issue, and one would not desire to do that—of lorries and deliveries after 9 o'clock, mention was made of the large stores having adequate legal advice of their own on this. They also have adequate resources of their own.

The people who concern me are those in the community who have few resources or none at all with which to defend their rights. They are being cast aside. Ordinary members of the community will be unable to afford to establish even the rights that this Bill would give them.

That is why I believe that the legislation is flawed and why I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will think again, if they are really concerned about the Bill's environmental and other effects on the community.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): There is one question, in particular, that I should like the Minister to answer. He refers, in new clause 1 and amendment No. 49, to local authorities having the right to agree to applications for loading and unloading to take place at big stores before 9 o'clock in the morning. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) made an important point when she referred to the expense incurred by local authorities in introducing this provision. The Shops Act 1950 puts a responsibility on local authorities which over the past 10 years they have failed to meet, yet the Government have taken no action whatever to ensure compliance with the law on Sunday trading. Can the Minister tell the House what action he will take if this new provision becomes part of the law and the local authority does not implement it, either because it is not prepared to meet the expense involved or for any other reason? It is possible that large companies such as Tesco, B and Q and a number of others will put a lot of pressure on local authorities to allow them to be serviced by this agreement.

We know the problems that are encountered when large shops are serviced by large vans, as happens on weekdays and, illegally, on Sundays when such shops are open. I do not want to encourage the two branches of Tesco—one each end of my town of Bridgend—to be serviced in that way. I do not want my authority to grant those stores licences allowing big vans to load and unload before 9 am on Sunday. Bridgend is a market town of some 25,000 to 35,000 people, and the district has always enjoyed the tranquillity of Sundays. But the position is getting worse by the week, with more shops and large stores opening. If the licence is granted, it will cause great concern and difficulty.

Listening to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), I was alarmed at what I thought I heard. My hearing is not all that good and I do not know whether I caught what she said correctly. I am of the firm belief that the Bill must contain employment protection for people who deliver goods to the stores and are expected to work on Sunday.

In the last debate on the Floor of the House on the subject of transport workers, I read out a letter from start to finish. I shall not read it out again today as it can be seen in the *Official Report*. The letter dealt with the protests of workers who will have to drive their lorries early in the morning to deliver and take away goods from big stores. Those people do not want to work on Sundays. Most of them—long-distance lorry drivers—say that they have never worked on Sundays, but will be expected to do so in the future.

Employment protection is highly relevant to the group of new clauses and amendments. I was surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Deptford said that she thought that we had won some employment protection measures from the Government through minor amendments. I am not satisfied that the Government have made any amendments involving employment protection that would allow the Opposition Front Bench team to support the Government. We should not support the Government unless they give us more guarantees on employment protection before the end of the debates. Those guarantees should be stated clearly and precisely by the Minister so that we know the exact position.

Ms Ruddock: I shall help by hon. Friend and the House, without passing comment on my hon. Friend's hearing. I have not mentioned employment protection at any time during my contributions. The most important vote will be on Third Reading, and we have made it clear that that is to be a free vote.

Mr. Powell: I thank my hon. Friend, and I am sorry if I presupposed her remarks, but I have probably saved myself a later intervention as she has been warned of my intentions.

Before we vote on this group, particularly amendment No. 49, I should like an assurance from the Minister that local authorities will implement the legislation and that the Government will not show the indifference that they have shown to the Shops Act 1950.

4.45 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I thought that this would be a short debate and did not even propose to reply to it. I shall not respond to most of the issues raised because many of the contributions rehearsed general attitudes to the Bill. They did not engage in debate on the principles or practicalities of the new clause.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend spoke of matters that we have rehearsed, but the Opposition were under a misapprehension. They thought that they had won certain conditions which we warned them that they would not be granted—the ball game has changed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My hon. Friend seems to be saying that the ball game is just the same.

I shall reply to three questions posed on new clause 1. The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) animadverted that the new clause was prepared quickly. He was right—I made an undertaking in Committee and wanted to produce the new clause on Report. The hon. Gentleman is right that there is no appeal process. I am aware of that and I will certainly reflect on the hon. Gentleman's words to see whether it might be sensible, in another place, to introduce an appeal process. I am not convinced that it would be for two reasons. First, it would lead to some extra expense for local authorities—that in itself is not decisive. Secondly, it would encourage some companies to appeal rather than simply obey the local authority's determination. The possibility of a judicial review remains, but I would not encourage people to take

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that option—although it is widely used—unless they felt that the procedures and the reasons used by the local authority were unreasonable. The judicial review remains a possibility for anyone who seeks to use it in relation to an administrative decision.

The hon. Gentleman has made a good point, on which I shall reflect. Usually, it is the Opposition who call on the Government to find ways of setting aside decisions. I am willing to be convinced, but I am not yet convinced. I shall consider the matter and there will be an opportunity to adopt the proposal in another place should it seem sensible to do so.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether it would be possible for a local authority to revoke permission once given. Yes, it would be possible to revoke permission or to provide additional conditions. A local authority could do that and, no doubt, there will be occasions when it will want to do so.

Mr. Hutton: The Minister says that the local authorities have the power to revoke an earlier decision. What procedures will they have to follow if they want to do that? The new group of amendments and new clauses contains no information about the procedures that a council will have to follow if it wants to revoke its original decision.

Mr. Lloyd: A local authority would have to use a fair and equitable procedure. It would doubtless do so on the basis of complaints received from local residents or knowledge that noise and disturbance were being caused. The local authority would have to talk to the store and its suppliers to see whether the problem could be remedied and to draw the store's attention to its displeasure. That would be done when consultation had taken place, but failed to resolve the problem. If the local authority did not do that, it would lay itself open to a judicial review because it would be proceeding unfairly and unreasonably.

Mr. Hutton: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way again—he is being very indulgent.

If it is appropriate for the amendment to specify a procedure giving the authority the power to grant exemption from the 9 o'clock rule, why is it not appropriate for the Government to introduce in the House a procedure for allowing the local authority to revoke such permission? The Minister has rightly described a number of administrative and procedural methods that a council can use. But, in the context of such an important issue, if it is right to specify how the permission should be granted, should not it also be right to introduce a procedure for the withdrawal of that consent?

Mr. Lloyd: It would certainly not be wrong. As I said, I am perfectly prepared to look at the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. I do not want to make the procedure too complicated. I want to retain the benefit that the provision grants to local authorities—it gives them extra muscle. It does not give them powers that they could never acquire under other legislation, but it allows them to gain powers more speedily and accurately so that they can deal with the problems that arise, even now, early on Sunday mornings.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) seemed confused when he said that my response to one of my hon. Friends had confused him further. He was definitely confused. Were a council to impose a ban that was then challenged at judicial review, the ban would remain in place until the court set it aside. So the hon. Gentleman's worry about the matter going on for several years should be entertained no longer.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister answered an earlier point about a council's ability to revoke a decision and the fact that nothing on that matter is included in the Bill. He will be sensitive to the problem that councillors have been surcharged. If they revoke a decision, they can be surcharged by a district auditor. If there must be clear rules within which councils can operate, in circumstances where two factions are arguing, such as residents and a large store, would it help if the Government made it clear that a local authority that decides for or against will not be subject to local authority surcharge?

Mr. Lloyd: This is not a matter of surcharge. The hon. Gentleman is muddling it up with a different worry. I agreed with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness that the new clause was brought in rapidly to take account of a real worry expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. In the light of this debate and, particularly, anything that local authorities may wish to tell us—we have already conversed with them—I shall look at the matter again. We want the new clause to be effective and clear. I hope that that also satisfies the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) asked a number of questions, including whether we would give financial assistance to local authorities. I responded to that point on an intervention by another hon. Member earlier and said that those were not the sort of circumstances in which we would consider doing so. Rather than giving new powers and responsibilities to a local authority, the Bill enables them more speedily and effectively to discharge the responsibilities that it already has.

The hon. Lady's second point was about parking in some of the streets in her constituency. That is a problem for the store concerned and those delivering to it. If, early in the morning, cars are parked in such a way as those delivering to the store cannot make an early-morning delivery, that is a problem not for the local authority but for the store and those who deliver to it. They need to find an acceptable way to make that delivery, perhaps adapting the size of the delivery vehicle. The point is not directly germane to the powers of the local authority.

Ms Glenda Jackson: The point that I was trying to make was that those matters all affect my constituents. If the local authority assented to such a request, it would mean, in the street that I have in mind, the local authority having to introduce earlier than it intended a residents parking scheme to facilitate the entry of lorries to stores. That will have a knock-on effect on the lives of my constituents and also involve the local authority in additional costs.

Mr. Lloyd: As matters stand, deliveries may be made very early in the morning. The new clause will give local authorities the power to say that deliveries may not be made before 9 am. I do not believe that the new clause worsens the position of local residents or creates an additional problem for the council. Rather, it gives local authorities a new weapon with which to deal with such a problem. The local authority associations say that they are already engaged in consultation with local residents and retailers throughout the country about perfectly lawful Sunday deliveries for perfectly lawful Sunday opening. But they do not have specific powers to deal with them early on a Sunday morning, which is what we are providing.

The hon. Lady and several other hon. Members mentioned extra costs imposed by traffic regulation. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy thought that, on balance, there would be no extra cost because local authorities would gain back any extra costs from parking charges and other such imposts. On policing, the Association of Chief Police Officers said that, if Sunday trading produced any extra work at all, it would be minimal and manageable. So the problem is one of enforcement rather than cost.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) asked whether the Government would make local authorities use that new power and I replied that, obviously, we would not. We are giving the new authorities a power that they want, but it will be up to the local authority when to use it. If they do not use it when they should, that is matter between them and angry local residents and voters, not a matter for the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN LEASES AND AGREEMENTS

'(1) Where any lease or agreement (however worded) entered into before the commencement of this section has the effect of requiring the occupier of a shop to keep the shop open for the serving of retail customers—

(a) during normal business hours, or

(b) during hours to be determined otherwise than by or with the consent of the occupier,

that lease or agreement shall not be regarded as requiring, or as enabling any person to require, the occupier to open the shop on Sunday for the serving of retail customers.

(2) Subsection (1) above shall not affect any lease or agreement—

(a) to the extent that it relates specifically to Sunday and would (apart from this section) have the effect of requiring Sunday trading of a kind which before the commencement of this section would have been lawful by virtue of any provision of Part IV of the Shops Act 1950, or

(b) to the extent that it is varied by agreement after the commencement of this section.

(3) In this section "retail customer" and "shop" have the same meaning as in Schedule 1 to this Act.'—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 51.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) and some other hon. Members expressed the concern in Committee that a small shopkeeper might not wish to open on a Sunday but might be obliged to open by virtue of a general provision in his or her lease requiring him or her to open during normal business hours. I undertook to consider whether it was possible to frame a narrow provision to meet this concern, which is what the new clause does. We have been helped considerably in framing the new clause by information and advice offered by Mr. Silman, a solicitor referred to us by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, the John Lewis Group, the Boots Group and others, and I am grateful for that help.

The new clause provides that, where any term in an existing lease or agreement, however phrased, has the effect of requiring the occupier of a shop to open during normal business hours or to open otherwise without the occupier's consent, such a term cannot oblige an occupier to open on a Sunday. That does not extend to the situation where a leaseholder—perhaps a newsagent—can already engage in lawful Sunday trading under the 1950 Act and has a lease that provides for that. Nor does it extend to leases entered into in the future.

Rather, the new clause deals with the central concern expressed in Committee, particularly by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, that shopkeepers should not be obliged by a general term in a lease to open on a Sunday. When a lease is taken out, there may be no consideration on either side of the possibility that phrases like "general business hours" might include Sunday. It would therefore be unfair if such a provision could in future, because of this legislation, involve a compulsion upon the leaseholder which he or she had not considered or agreed to when signing the lease.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Will the new clause apply to circumstances in which a local authority took a policy decision to open a market hall? Would the protection then apply to the existing leaseholders of the shop units in the market hall where there is no current obligation to open on Sunday? Were the local authority to change its policy, could it force unit holders to attend their stalls on a Sunday?

Mr. Lloyd: It would depend on the nature of the previous agreement between the leaseholders—the stall holders—and the council. If the agreement said that they will open on a Sunday and if the council ever decided that Sunday opening would be introduced, the new clause would not protect them. If the agreement did not specify Sundays or said, "normal business hours", it would protect them. It depends on the nature of the agreement.

We are seeking to ensure—I think that we have succeeded in doing so—that, in the case of agreements entered into where there was no expectation of Sunday working and where the prospect was not taken into account in the drafting of the agreement, this change in the law will not oblige a leaseholder to do what he or she does not want to do, had never intended to do and had not reasonably been in a position where he or she might have expected that it could happen.

Mr. Alton: Will not the Minister again admit that the decision to introduce the proposal is a tacit admission that those pressures will be placed on shops? However good the agreements are, shops will face commercial pressure to open because of the profit factor. Shops—particularly if they are up against the wall and face bankruptcy—will have no choice but to open, regardless of how many worthy clauses of this sort are included in the Bill.

5 pm

Mr. Lloyd: The proposal is a sensible change to ensure that such pressures are not put on small leaseholders. Of course, if businesses want to open, they may do so. Some will not want to open for commercial reasons—they may not think that they will do enough trade on Sundays. No

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pressure should be placed on them to do so. The new clause makes a small, useful change that takes care of a problem identified by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate. On that basis, I commend it to the House.

Ms Ruddock: I am again grateful to the Minister for the way in which he has explained the new clause. He mentioned my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate; in Committee, she and other Labour Members envisaged that an existing lease that provided for a general trading agreement could be interpreted to mean that small shops in, for example, a shopping centre could be obliged to open when they considered that it was not in their interests to do so.

We are all familiar with the concept of the shopping centre that contains a large store, which will perhaps exercise its right to open for the limited period provided for in the Bill. As a consequence, the freeholder might attempt to ensure that the maximum amount of trade occurs and might ask all leaseholders to comply with the new Sunday opening arrangements. That would be grossly unfair and we are pleased that the Minister has found a way to give force to our argument.

We are aware that it was exceedingly difficult to do so. We are particularly pleased that Mr. Silman, the constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate, has assisted the Government. I sent the new clause to Mr. Silman and he responded immediately, so I shall tax the Minister a little further. Mr. Silman has told me that the reference to the occupier in the second and penultimate lines of new clause 2(1) may present a problem. I am aware that throughout the Bill "occupier" is the relevant term, but Mr. Silman, who I presume is an expert on commercial leases, suggested that a contract could be with a tenant, but the covenant could be with the original tenant and could still make that person liable, although he or she is not now the occupier. Will the Minister respond to that small point?

In the main, we very much support the new clause. It appears to achieve our aim of ensuring that small shops or leaseholders do not have to open if they do not wish to do so. They may believe, for example, that it would not be economic to open. Small shops in shopping centres may employ only a few workers who might not want to work and employers may accept that working on a Sunday should be voluntary. For all those reasons, the new clause is very satisfactory.

Ms Glenda Jackson: I thank the Minister for his kind words, but credit should first go to Mr. Silman, who brought the loophole to my attention. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) for facilitating my approach to the Minister.

I thank the Minister for giving his time and attention to Mr. Silman. I hope that he will pay due heed to the point that he has raised via my hon. Friend and will change the wording of the Bill because that matter greatly concerns many shopkeepers, especially those in small shopping centres. Many are single-man businesses and I know that they, Mr. Silman and I are most grateful to the Minister.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful for the remarks that have been made and I hope that the House will support the new clause. I should be most interested to receive Mr. Silman's letter, to which the hon. Member for Deptford referred, so that I may consider the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

MEANING OF "LOCAL AUTHORITY"

'.—(1) In this Act "local authority" means any unitary authority or any district council so far as they are not a unitary authority.

(2) In subsection (1) above "unitary authority" means

(a) the council of any county so far as they are the council for an area for which there are no district councils,

(b) the council of any district comprised in an area for which there is no county council,

(c) a London borough council,

(d) the Common Council of the City of London, or

(e) the Council of the Isles of Scilly.'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

NON-ABATEMENT OF STATUTORY PROVISIONS

'(1) Any provision in an agreement between a shop worker and his employer (whether a contract of employment or not) shall be unenforceable to the extent that it purports—

(a) to exclude or limit the operation of any provision of this Act, and

(b) to preclude any person from presenting a complaint to or from bringing any proceedings before an industrial tribunal under any provision of this Act.

(2) For the purposes of this section "shop worker" has the same meaning as in Schedule 4 below.'.—*[Mr. Purchase.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Purchase: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I agreed to withdraw a similar new clause in Committee so that the Minister could explain why he thought it was unnecessary. He suggested that employment protection issues had already been properly and fully covered in the Bill—I think he said that there were "no loopholes". I am not sure that that is relevant to my new clause, which aims to pick up on the International Labour Organisation's views about non-abatement and minimum rates of pay under the British wages councils.

I have tabled the new clause because the Bill has few enough provisions on worker protection and it will require a great deal of effort if a worker wants to enforce any of them. The new clause would at least help workers in the difficult task of trying to prove their case against an employer.

The Minister confidently suggested that there were no loopholes, but I refer him to a national newspaper article that appeared on 21 February 1994, with the headline "Gap in code on Sunday working". It dealt with an industrial dispute at a Tesco distribution complex at Crick, near Northampton. People involved in the dispute believe that a loophole in the Sunday Trading Bill

> "will leave tens of thousands of workers without protection".

The article continues:

> "Tesco management is demanding that nightshift workers at the warehouse. . . put in at least three in seven Sundays from April in response to extra weekend demand at Tesco stores."

Although the Bill is not yet law, we are already starting to see how it is structuring employer-employee relationships. The employee is an exceedingly vulnerable position in relation to Sunday trading. There is a massive reserve army of people waiting to walk into jobs at any rate of pay and under any conditions or terms that are offered. That is happening in advance of the Bill becoming an Act and we shall see what transpires when we vote later.

Mr. Ray Powell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for referring to the article in *The Guardian* on 21 February. He missed out the last paragraph of the article, which referred to a person who would not be able to go out with his family and young children, go fishing or enjoy the the pleasures of Sunday because of the present circumstances and pressure from Tesco, which has disrupted his family life.

Mr. Purchase: I did not overlook the final paragraph and I shall come to it in due course. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important in the context of what is happening while the Bill is still being processed.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends had listened to our warnings we would not now be in this position.

Mr. Purchase: Many a true word is spoken in jest. I welcome the hon. Lady's support, but she must be jesting because I did my best to warn many people about the Bill's inherent dangers. I coerced many of my hon. Friends who have great knowledge and experience in these matters to vote against Sunday opening. I am glad that the hon. Lady was with us on that occasion.

The heart of the matter is that many of my hon. Friends have been misled, not least by having sprung upon them the new Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. As I have said before, with the advent of deregulation, people's shopping wants should be fully met by the shops that will remain open until perhaps midnight. People who have said that because of their hours of work they cannot do their big shopping until Sunday morning, will be able to choose to do their shopping over a longer period. That will impose enormous strains on workers.

The Government's concessions on the Bill are completely inadequate and will not provide even slight worker protection. That is important because my hon. Friends did not know that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill was on the way. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) said that she believed that, in good faith, the Government would include worker protection in the Bill to enable her to support the six-hour option. As my hon. Friend has said, she is disillusioned and will certainly not vote for the Government's proposals.

I should like to refer to a paper prepared by the Small Business Research Centre at the department of applied economics at Cambridge university. It states:

> "In the absence of controls on trading hours, employment protection legislation is unlikely to provide effective guarantees for the rights of retail workers not to work on Sunday and to receive a wage premium for... working."

The article to which I referred earlier mentions a new twist, the issue of shift working at the Tesco distribution complex at Crick near Northampton. It tells us that in advance of the Bill slightly different patterns of trade are emerging that necessitate deliveries and night shift working at the warehouse. People will be required to work four Sundays in seven. What new twist will there be in 12 months or in two years? How will trade change after deregulation? None of us can be sure about that, but we know that all the shops involved will be competing for the same amount of trade over a greater number of hours. The Small Business Research Centre paper states that we can expect increased Sunday trading to push up costs. The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will push them up further.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend quoted from a report which says that people will be required to work four Sundays in seven. Town centre car parking on Sunday is currently free because the parks are little used. Does my hon. Friend agree that if the Bill becomes law the attendants at those car parks will be required to work on Sunday, thereby being forced to change their working pattern?

5.15 pm

Mr. Purchase: My hon. Friend makes an eminently sensible point. What he predicts is bound to happen. The shift pattern at Tesco in Crick is part of a new annualised system of hours of work. Some hon. Members may not have heard of this new phenomenon. It simply means that instead of working a weekly or daily number of hours people will agree, under their new contracts, to work an annual number of hours. They may be called on to work them at any time and in any sequence whether or not that suits their social or family arrangements. That change was implemented in industry some time ago and has created difficulties and now it is to extend to the retail trade. That system of annualised hours will have to be used to meet the new pattern of trading.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Is not the hon. Gentleman confusing the retail trade with the distribution system? I accept that they are part of the same company in his Tesco example, but does not he agree that distribution work on Sunday has been carried on for many years because of trading on Monday and has nothing to do with trading on Sunday? Tesco already operates this system in four of its eight warehouses and has undertaken not to force the system into operation. It is currently consulting through the normal employer-staff channels at Crick.

Mr. Purchase: I am grateful for that intervention because it leads me nicely to another point about Crick. The article, and I have no reason to disbelieve it, states:

> "Representatives of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers say that workers, who earn £4.23 an hour, were repeatedly assured that Sunday working would not be introduced."

This is a case of the biter bit because unfortunately USDAW has been playing an odd game. It is common knowledge that people behind USDAW have been promising the moon, but I am sure that that will be reversed. The small print of the deal that USDAW thinks that it has reached with the employers includes an employers' clause saying that should trading conditions change, they reserve the right to change the agreement. That agreement is not worth the paper on which it is written.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: USDAW's specific instruction had three points—

> "Total deregulation... No; Keep Sunday Special... No; 6 Hour Option... YES."—[*Official Report*, 8 December,1993; Vol. 234, c. 368.]

That is why we have reached our present position.

Mr. Purchase: I am sorry to say that USDAW will not emerge from this episode with an enhanced reputation.

[Mr. Purchase]

However, what it does should not impinge on the judgment of the House about the welfare of people who work on Sunday.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Does my hon. Friend accept that if any reputations are being damaged, it was not the annual conference of USDAW, but the executive who took that decision in isolation and in opposition to the conference?

Mr. Purchase: I am not a member of that union, but I have read the same document as my hon. Friend. I understand that the USDAW annual conference voted against what has become the Sunday Trading Bill and that the executive, no doubt after some pressure, changed its mind. Part of that pressure was, to use a phrase that one of my very illustrious Labour colleagues used in the House many years ago, something of an unholy alliance between certain very large retailers and a union obviously wanting to do the best for its members. I understand that, but the massive pressure on workers and their organisations means that USDAW's decision may be understandable.

Part of that pressure has manifested itself in the House. I understand that the alliance among employers to get the Bill through resulted in an average expenditure of £5,000 per hon. Member, in terms of the propaganda that they have sent us.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is healthy if unions and others can change their minds after listening to the arguments and seeing what happens in the House and in Committee? Would it not be equally healthy if hon. Members were prepared to change their minds, even at this stage, before the Bill becomes legislation?

Mr. Purchase: It would be a wonderful world if we were all open to persuasion. I am open to persuasion and if the Minister can satisfy me on many points, I shall reconsider the entire matter. The hon. Gentleman is correct. I have already referred to the fact that at least two critical changes have taken place since the initial vote in the House and I shall enumerate them again. The first was the publication of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and the second was the inability of the Opposition to make the Government put meaningful worker protection into the Bill.

Mr. Ray Powell: My hon. Friend mentioned the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, part of which refers to the extension of licences for shops to open perhaps 24 hours a day, six days a week providing 144 hours of shopping a week from Monday to Saturday. Therefore, there should now be no need for the Sunday Trading Bill. Perhaps the Minister should consider whether it would be better to abandon the Sunday Trading Bill and rely on total deregulation.

Mr. Purchase: My hon. Friend, with his vast knowledge of the subject, hits the nail on the head. The Bill would be better abandoned; there is no question about that. However, the shopping needs of the entire population could well be met at hours convenient to them. The major shopping that households need to do can surely now be done between Monday and Saturday.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in effect, the pressing need for the large superstore managers is less offering service to their customers by opening on Sunday than increasing their market share? One has already heard stories of such superstores closing on a Monday, for example, or cutting out the two additional hours for late-night shopping on a Thursday because they can increase their market share and their profit by opening on a Sunday. It has nothing to do with facilitating their stores being open to the will of the customer, and everything to do with cashing in on the profit that they can make on that one day of the week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we go too far down that road, hon. Members are straying wide of the debate, which is about enforceable contracts.

Mr. Purchase: I understand what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I intend to speak to new clause 4.

I was trying to set the scene. I shall be brief in finishing that point, so that the Minister may get the flavour of what I am trying to achieve.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): On enforceable contracts, does my hon. Friend agree that there is no need for the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill because people could get their shopping perfectly adequately during the present legal hours, particularly if the supermarkets employed more people to staff their checkouts?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is now getting rather wide.

Mr. Purchase: It is almost irresistible, but I shall resist replying to my hon. Friends who raise valid points.

The Bill offers workers little protection.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend will be aware that the long title of the Bill precludes any amendments covering Scotland. Does he agree that it is absolutely inconceivable for major store chains such as Tesco to adopt different employment practices in England and Wales from those in Scotland? That is why I shall be in the same Lobby as my hon. Friend tonight.

Mr. Purchase: I take my hon. Friend's point which was well made. If, in its final form, the Bill were to include certain amendments, particularly in regard to premium pay, double time and time and a half, the need for my clause would be infinitely greater.

In the current economic circumstances, the protection of those hard-won concessions on premium times, expressed in a later amendment, will need to be underwritten by the strength of the law. Notwithstanding how little protection there is in the Bill, there are so many ways in which employers can bring pressure to bear on their employees, that an additional safeguard such as I am proposing could do no harm at all.

If the Minister is minded to say that the Bill is already well covered by the worker protection measures it contains, such as they are—and I have to keep qualifying them—in terms of closing the loopholes, in the light of our experience with the Tesco distribution centre, as reported in the newspapers, anything could happen as a result of changed working patterns and changes in demand that cannot be anticipated in financial terms. When one prepares a budget, it is foolish not to make a provision for contingencies. When the bank asks what they are, one says, "I don't know. Although I do not know what will happen, I know that something will. That is the way of the world."

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. Friend spoke about the inadequacies of the Bill's protection for workers. Has he considered that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will not only abolish weekday restrictions but enable the Secretary of State to make orders to abolish or amend anything in the Sunday Trading Bill? Is that not the greatest outrage?

Mr. Purchase: My hon. Friend raises a wide and difficult question about the nature of our parliamentary democracy. I speak for many when I say that there is a considerable battle to be waged over that particular insult to the democratic process. My hon. Friend reinforces the need for as much packing, padding and support for workers' rights as we can devise in their favour.

5.30 pm

In present market conditions, demand for labour is much less than its supply. I remind right hon. and hon. Members that wages councils were needed because even in times of relative balance between labour supply and demand, shop workers in particular were exceedingly vulnerable to low pay, poor conditions and little in the way of benefits. Nothing has changed.

It is selfish of people to demand that others work on Sunday just to meet their wants.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is my hon. Friend aware that I am at a loss to understand why some of my hon. Friends—particularly on the Front Bench—and trade union leaders delude themselves that the Government, having abolished wages councils for low-paid workers, will correct any mistakes that they made when preparing the Bill and will include any form of employment protection?

Mr. Purchase: I understand that the precursor to making corrections is an apology—and it is not in the Government's nature to apologise. They never apologise for anything, however much harm is done to people. I suspect that my hon. Friend is right in thinking that no corrections will be made.

How do we make a plea to our trade union colleagues? Most Opposition Members have been trade unionists for many years. In my case, I am proud to say that I have been a union member for 35 years. I have seen many union leaders come and go. There is acute pressure on USDAW officials to—dare I use the term?—cave in to the major stores lobby.

Mr. Lord: Although it may be difficult sometimes to accept this, right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House care deeply about workers, particularly in respect of this issue. As constituency Members of Parliament, we have evidence already of pressure being brought to bear on shop workers over Sunday trading. Sometimes it is anecdotal, and sometimes the people who write to us ask for their identities not to be revealed. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if a employee wants to object to Sunday working, it is difficult to do so without in some way jeopardising his or her employment? We cannot make a fair assessment of the situation, so the only satisfactory solution is for stores to remain shut.

Mr. Purchase: I am conscious of the situation to which the hon. Gentleman refers. A newspaper article published on 15 January reported a spokesman for a Peterborough-based store saying:

> "Mrs. Love was not sacked for refusing to work on a Sunday but because she refused to move to another store under the terms of her contract."

That is just the kind of situation that we must make watertight. An employer might say, "You are perfectly within your rights not to work on Sunday, but we shall want you to move to another store 25 or 30 miles from your home. You must be there half-an-hour earlier."

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is it not significant that such examples of discrimination are coming to light at a time when the stores are clearly on their best behaviour, because they know that they are being watched and scrutinised, and that any examples of discrimination will be publicised? What will happen when, having made a massive investment in Sunday trading, stores are able to do precisely as they want—as the Government imply that they will? What will happen then to the touching faith of USDAW and others, who imagine that a Government who got rid of wages councils will look after workers' interests?

Mr. Purchase: I thank my hon. Friend for his timely intervention.

Although trade unions represent 250,000, 300,000 or 400,000 employees, 1.5 million others look to the House for protection. I give ground to no one in terms of my trade union membership, the union work that I have done and the workers for whom I have been responsible. I have an honourable record, if I say so myself. The House is given the task of being the trade union for the 1.5 million workers who do not have direct protection. We cannot give that job away, and we cannot duck responsibility for looking after those people.

Whatever the Minister says, I do not believe that the Bill will look after those 1.5 million people. The right hon. Gentleman may argue that new clause 4 would not do so, but at least it attempts to set in concrete the punishments that could be imposed by a tribunal.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill would not be before the House in its present form had members of the Government and Opposition Front Benches not joined in trying to thwart the will of the people of this country?

Mr. Purchase: I hear and understand the hon. Gentleman, but no one would expect me to comment.

I ask the House to acknowledge the importance of right hon. and hon. Members acting as the shop stewards of the 1.5 million workers not covered by the deals, which I believe were the result of collusion, entered into by major traders and, foolishly in my estimation, trade unions. I shall not go further, because it would not help the cause one little bit to do so. There has been collusion. Our duty is to ensure that those 1.5 million for whom we must act take control of our conscience so that we vote in favour of worker protection. If we cannot get that protection, which is so vital to their cause, we should vote against the Bill.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) made a powerful case for the new clause. I hope that it will commend itself to everyone

[Mr. Alton]

in the House. It is a belt-and-braces new clause and—no doubt the Minister will say this—reinforces a principle that purportedly is in the Bill anyway.

The truth is, as the hon. Gentleman has told us, that the employment protection provisions in the Bill are limited. As the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) said, there is so much concern among workers in this country about the systematic erosion of their rights that the latest proposed legislation comes as a further blow to them. They are right to be apprehensive and concerned about the erosion of their rights.

The new clause seeks to ensure that nothing that is in the scope of the Bill can be written out of it by an employer forcing a new contract with an employee. The new clause is worth while, because it will add a double safeguard to people working in the big shops.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East cited the infamous Crick case involving Tesco. I want to return to that briefly, because it is important, as the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) intimated earlier, that the House should understand, if that is happening now, how much worse it will be when the Bill has been enacted and the great stores and shops know that their actions cannot then be put under the microscope by the Chamber. Fears that Sunday trading will have a ripple effect will then increase.

Eighty workers staged a lightning 24-hour walkout at Tesco's warehouse at Crick, near Daventry, in protest. They say that it was about new working arrangements and being lied to by the company. In a changeover to a system of working based on annualised hours, workers asked repeatedly whether Sunday work was included. They were told categorically that it was not.

Ten days ago, workers from Crick rang to tell me what had happened to them. I advised them to speak to *The Guardian* and other newspapers, where the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred has subsequently appeared. It is right that the public and the House should know in detail what has already happened as a result of the proposed legislation, and the assumptions that are already being made by major employers.

Shift cycles recently issued to those workers show that they would have to work three Sundays in a new seven-week working cycle. If they want overtime, it could be four Sundays. The annual hours proposal was rejected initially, with only seven of the workers at Crick voting for it and 1,550 against. A Tesco worker subsequently commented:

> "I need family time, and I need the money premium pay brought me when I could work extra hours during the week"—

not on Sundays.

> "When am I going to see my kids? How can I get away on holiday?"

The workers say that they need their premium pay. Their present pay, as we have heard, is about £4.23 per hour. Tesco has also increased the length of shift work in some cases from eight to 10 hours. How, then, can those men and women live a reasonably normal life? It is not fair that low-paid night workers should lose a further measure of their freedom. That is why I remain extremely concerned about the lack of employee protection available for Sunday workers, which, under the Bill, includes only shopworkers, not workers in warehouses, in transport or in distribution.

Let the House recall, as it considers the worth of the new clause, that legal aid is not available for industrial tribunal applications, that the current industrial tribunal system is heavily biased towards the employer, that remedies that are awarded are always totally inadequate, and that applications to industrial tribunals are subject to delay.

The burden of proof of discrimination for refusing to work on Sundays lies with the employee, and it is extremely difficult to satisfy. That is why we need to add as much as we possibly can to the Bill, which takes away so much that workers expect to have as their right—not to have to work on a Sunday. For that reason, I hope that this belt-and-braces new clause, moved so well by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, will be accepted by the House.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I thought that it might help if I intervened at this point, because the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) directed a couple of questions at me.

This is something of a lengthy reprise of what was a short debate in Committee on the same new clause. I promised to consider the issue carefully with expert legal advice. I have done so. I am confident that the hon. Gentleman's general fear, as indicated in the wording of his new clause rather than the animadversions that he made on it, that an employee might be bribed, cozened or persuaded to contract out of his rights under the Bill, particularly under schedule 3, are groundless. The wording of the schedule is proof against that.

5.45 pm

The hon. Gentleman raised a particular case—if I follow him correctly, I think I know the one—about Tesco and transport workers. That is not covered by the Bill and the schedule. We debated that kind of question on the last day of the Committee of the whole House.

When the hon. Gentleman spoke to the new clause before and then withdrew it, I said that I hoped that he would come to see me with any loopholes that he thought might exist and that might have to be closed were those rights to be absolutely assured. He did not come to see me, so I presumed that he did not have any, and that it was only a general worry.

I understand the general worry, but I have now taken legal advice. It does not exist in the form that the hon. Gentleman expects. People cannot give up their rights under the proposed legislation, most particularly under schedule 3, by signing documents that would then enable them to be dismissed, where otherwise they would have been able to opt out of Sunday working.

However, it seems to me that there may be one potential difficulty with the right not to suffer detriment under paragraph 10 of the schedule. It is a complicated point. I have not yet managed to find suitable words and have them drafted. I should like to have done so by this stage.

The hon. Gentleman's new clause does not meet the point. It covers only what is covered already. It misses the bit that I think is exposed. I hope that he will accept that on this issue at least—the inalienability of the rights under schedule 3 and the Bill—we are of like mind. I want to be quite sure that the full rights are there and cannot be lost by any particular agreement.

I can give the hon. Gentleman and the House an assurance that the Government intend to table a suitable amendment in another place to cover the point that I think is exposed, and any other point that he can convince me—or get others to convince me—exists that I have not yet seen and which can be covered in another place.

Mr. Alton: The Minister adverted a moment ago to the omission of transport workers, warehouse workers and others from the employment protection provisions in the Bill. Is it his intention to widen the scope at any stage to include those workers?

Mr. Lloyd: We discussed that. It covers shopworkers—people whose job is in or about a shop. We had a considerable debate on an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on that issue. I remain of the view that it is a broad protection for those who work in or about a shop, but it does not extend to workers beyond that.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The Minister has been generous in saying that he will seek to remove any ambiguity in respect of the ability of an employee to barter away his rights. I press him in respect of the narrow definition of a shopworker. It is clear that a number of people whose livelihood is directly concerned in shop working are likely to have their position adversely affected as a result of the provisions of the Bill.

Will he therefore be prepared to consider, although he said that it has been canvassed to some extent in Committee, giving a somewhat broader definition of "shopworker" to cover those who will certainly be penalised if the Bill goes through?

Mr. Lloyd: I have no plans to do that. The people referred to in the debate are, for instance, delivery drivers, many of whom already deliver on Sunday for Monday's sale.

We discussed the matter at length in Committee; we did not merely touch on it. Such action would not be practicable, even if it were desirable—and I do not think it would be either desirable or right.

Mr. Cryer: What amendment does the Minister intend to table in the other place to deal with the omission that he perceives in the schedule to which he referred? In what way would that amendment differ from, and be superior to, new clause 4? If new clause 4 merely spells out what is implied in other parts of the Bill, why should it not be included? It could improve the Bill, rather than detracting from it.

Mr. Lloyd: I see no point in inserting in a Bill verbiage that gives no extra protection, power or authority; that only confuses the position. In this instance, I said that I thought a loophole existed—a small loophole, which the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East had not had in mind, and which was not covered by his new clause.

I have undertaken to introduce, in another place, amendments or new clauses that fill that loophole and any others that may be identified between then and now. I will not, however, undertake to introduce belts where we already have perfectly adequate braces.

Dr. Wright: Is not the greatest loophole of all the fact that, under the deregulation proposals that the House is now considering, a Minister—having established that the Bill's provisions for worker protection, inadequate though they are, constitute a burden on business—can make an order and sweep away all those provisions? He can sweep away, for instance, the six-hour provisions, by means of the power to make orders that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill provides. If the Minister is prepared to confirm that, will he also assure the House that that order-making power will not be used in relation to this Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: I certainly do not intend any order-making power to be used to diminish the rights that we have carefully and laboriously put into this Bill. The deregulation Bill has begun its passage through the House; I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman, and he cannot tell me, in what shape it will end up and how far its powers will extend. I am certain, however, that if it is to be used to alter other legislation, it will have to go through the processes already outlined in it.

I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how much of this Bill could be changed by the use of processes in the deregulation Bill, because I have not the expertise. I can tell him, however, that we intend the rights that we are including in the Bill to be there—that is why we are including them—and to remain there. I want to ensure that they are completely effective and contain no loopholes.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Perhaps the Minister will explain what he has just said about the failure of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) to recognise the loophole. Are we dealing with the issue that the hon. Gentleman has presented to the House or not? Are we dealing with another issue, which the Minister is convinced is a loophole? We need to know that.

Moreover, if—as the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) suggested—a Minister has the power, by means of an order, to destroy existing provisions almost with the stroke of a pen, what good is that to workers? Are the Government going to bluff them, saying, "You have safeguards," although a Minister need only sign an order for those safeguards to be ended?

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman cares, at his leisure, to read schedule 3(10), he will see the area where I believe a loophole may exist. It may be possible to make arrangements where an individual suffers detriment through deciding that he does not want to work on Sundays. There is no question about the existence of his right to opt in or out, and to avoid dismissal; the issue of detriment, however, is complicated and, for that reason, I have not yet secured wording that I consider deals with it satisfactorily.

I have exposed to the House a problem that may well exist, before examining it closely and producing a solution. I have, however, told the House that, if there is indeed a problem—as I believe there is—I intend to find a solution.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Does the Minister conceive that my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) has raised an extraordinarily important point? If the protections provided by the Government—however inadequate we consider them—can be removed as easily as my hon. Friend suggests, is that not important?

As the Minister is dealing with this point, can he not find out speedily whether, under the current provisions of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, a Minister can remove the protection in this Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: No Minister can simply remove items of earlier legislation in that way; he has no power to do so

[Mr. Lloyd]

freely, on his own. The hon. Gentleman, however, has asked a reasonable question. As I have explained, I am familiar in general terms with the deregulation Bill. In answer to the hon. Gentleman's specific point, I think—with the advice of the Chair particularly in mind—that it may be possible to return to the matter on a later group of amendments, when I may be better informed.

Dr. Wright: I well understand why the Minister should seem surprised and shocked by the suggestion that a Minister, simply by order, could sweep away the Bill's provisions. That, however, is precisely the power being claimed for Ministers in the deregulation Bill.

Mr. Lloyd: That is right—[*Laughter.*]—but the hon. Gentleman said it. The order must come before the House, and the protection must be construed as other than necessary protection. I regard this as necessary protection. The definition of necessary protection makes me a little reluctant to be drawn to the extent that I should like by interventions about another Bill that I do not manage. I am being entirely frank with the House. I can only say that it would be more sensible if I returned to the matter later in the debate.

As for the specific rights that the Bill gives employees, I want them to be completely watertight in the terms of the Bill, so that they cannot be accidentally lost through an agreement unwisely made by an employee, or through some other act on the part of that employee or his employer leading unintentionally to that result—or, indeed, doing so intentionally. The rights, as contained in the Bill, cannot be given away even if it is the intention of both parties at the time to do so.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister give an assurance that only an affirmative resolution will be involved? He has said that Ministers cannot take such action, but we in Northern Ireland have a sad history of what Ministers can do. They can change, change and change. We also know what happens to prayers in the House. I am glad that prayers to the Almighty are more effective than prayers in the House; otherwise, I would be permanently out of business.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot give assurances about the final outcome of a Bill that is only just beginning its passage through the House—a Bill, moreover, that I do not sponsor, and with whose policy my Department does not deal. However, as I have said, I hope to be able to tell the House rather more later this evening.

Mr. Ray Powell: I support new clause 4. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) did not mention industrial tribunals in depth and detail because he had many other matters to mention.

It is necessary to refer to a report on the Sunday Trading Bill by S.F. Deakin, fellow of Peterhouse college and lecturer in law at the university of Cambridge, and K.D. Ewing, professor of public law at King's college, university of London. They say:

> "The sanctions available to employees who are unfairly victimised for refusing Sunday work are inadequate for a number of reasons.
>
> (a) The Bill would replace criminal sanctions (fines against retailers who open in breach of the law) with weaker civil sanctions (damages and re-employment) administered by industrial tribunals.
>
> (b) The onus will be on employees themselves to assert employment protection rights before industrial tribunals; these rights will be very difficult to enforce for the following reasons."

6 pm

In order to put them on the record, I must read out the five different sections. The most important is as follows:

> "(i) Legal aid is not available before industrial tribunals, while legal representation is not, in practice, available to most employees who do not have access to trade union support;
>
> (ii) There are significant delays in the hearing of industrial tribunal cases which will discourage many workers from making claims, and the Bill makes no provision for this point to be met by the availability of interim relief to employees whose rights are infringed;
>
> (iii) The burden of proving that the reason for a dismissal or other detriment is the employee's refusal to do Sunday work will rest throughout on the employee, and will be difficult to overcome."

Mr. Peter Lloyd: That is absolutely and completely wrong. The burden of proof lies on the employer. The Bill refers to the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, which was put on the statute book by a Labour Government, makes it perfectly clear that the employee has to show only that he is dismissed; it is for the employer to show why he was dismissed and to show that that reason was a fair reason for dismissal. The document from which the hon. Gentleman quotes is wrong. I understand that it is his bible in these matters, but it is not accurate.

Mr. Powell: With all due respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take the advice of two professors, and I would accept the professors' advice far more than I would accept advice from the Minister.

Mr. Donald Anderson: I noticed that the Minister did not intervene in respect of the other advice of the learned professors: that, as a result of the ability of the employer —the respondent—to prolong proceedings, which in any event take quite a long time, by adjournment and otherwise, it is likely that, as a result of the disproportion of power between the employee, or former employee, and the employer, the employee will be frightened away long before the end of the process. As the Government well know, the protection that they purport to give is, in practice, nugatory.

Mr. Powell: I accept the advice of my hon. Friend, in his learned capacity, on those issues.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I think that that remark was directed at me. I do not intervene every time that the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) gets something wrong, because I think that other hon. Members should get a word in edgeways sometimes. However, most cases of unfair dismissal and unfair treatment of that type do not reach the tribunal, simply because two thirds of them are settled well beforehand by the employer, who, knowing that he is wrong, would prefer them not to go to the tribunal. It is therefore simply not true that the law is ineffective.

Representation will be similar in such a case to representation in any other case that goes to a tribunal.

Mr. Donald Anderson *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. We cannot very well have intervention on intervention. Mr. Powell.

Mr. Powell: I shall continue, to ensure that the quotation goes on the record, and I will return to the Minister:

> "(iv) On the evidence of current practice, an industrial tribunal is hardly ever likely to order the re-employment of an employee who has been unfairly dismissed;
>
> (v) Where an industrial tribunal orders compensation, current practice indicates that damages will not be set at a level designed to deter employers from taking similar action in the future; damages will most likely be a small fraction of the legal maximum which an industrial tribunal is empowered to award to an unfairly dismissed employee;
>
> (vi) An industrial tribunal will have no power to order the promotion of a worker who has been subjected to a detriment by being denied promotion for refusing Sunday work."

I hope that if the Minister has not listened to what I have said, he will read it and perhaps give an explanation. All Members of the House are fully aware that even if a worker wants to protest and go to an industrial tribunal, the provision gives him or her no chances of emerging financially better off or protected in any way, shape or form.

There is no provision for legal aid. How much legal advice could a shopworker, earning about £2 an hour, afford for an appearance before an industrial tribunal? The chances of affording that and winning the case are remote.

My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) referred to employment protection, which is a very important part of new clause 4. Many promises were made to us in Committee. We are now told that we will not have an answer tonight, but that an answer might be forthcoming when the Bill goes to another place, if it goes to another place. The Minister is pushing it off, but he is not prepared to give a definite answer about how he will protect those workers on a Sunday.

The new clause would do much to assist. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East referred to an article in *The Guardian*. I do not want to repeat what he said, but I think that it is time to consider carefully what is happening. We speak about sleazy deals in Government circles; I do not know whether those sleazy deals are now flowing over into the trade union movement. Some trade union leaders will be as renowned in the 1990s as Jimmy Thomas was for his role in the 1930s.

I know the feelings that Torvill and Dean must experience, having performed with honesty and hard work and finding the contest rigged. The 22 million people who viewed the skating on television this week have reached their verdict of indignation, and that is what will happen tonight. Hon. Members will show their contempt for the sleazy deals of those people who enjoy champagne and caviare breakfasts and lunches or Savoy dinners.

We could give details of what has happened during the past couple of months. If that is what trade union leaders believe to be the answer, after 15 years of Thatcherism, I have no wish to identify myself with their contemptuous, phoney deals.

I say that because the role of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers has been mentioned in great depth and detail. USDAW has been committed to the Keep Sunday Special campaign since 1985, and it was committed to the campaign in the 1986 Shops Bill debate.

I have been a member of USDAW since I was a shopworker at the age of 16. I have always respected the union and worked for it. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, I have always been committed to the trade union movement. I have been sponsored by USDAW for the past 15 years, and am now a senior member of it.

However, the union's executive council recently took a decision that was not the decision of its 300,000 members —who, in May last year, decided unanimously to support the Keep Sunday Special campaign and my Bill. It was referred to as the Powell Bill, but it was sponsored and supported by Keep Sunday Special and, indeed, by USDAW. Without consulting the hon. Members who are sponsored by USDAW, the annual delegates' meeting or anyone else, the executive council took a decision. Therefore, Conservative Members were correct to attach the defeat of the Keep Sunday Special proposals to USDAW, because USDAW had a responsibility for that defeat.

We have to wonder what is happening when we see the sleazy deals that were done only last week between trade union leaders and Tesco workers. I also wonder whether a Bailey bridge was erected over the rift between the usual channels in respect of the Sunday Trading Bill. What happened has been passing strange, to say the least. I spent 10 years in the Whips office and this is the first time to my knowledge that there is to be a three-line Whip on Report but a free vote on Third Reading. It does not make sense, and I am sure—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he should relate his remarks to new clause 4, which deals with agreements between shopworkers and employers.

Mr. Powell: With all due respect, I was just coming back to that aspect of the new clause.

Members of all parties will appreciate that the support that we are receiving from this side of the House for certain issues is a farce, and perhaps a rigged farce. I shall conclude my remarks, and I know that you will be relieved to hear that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In *The Guardian* on 7 December 1993, Hugo Young referred to "Sunday Trading Bill Tests." He wrote:

> "How many Labour MPs have had their brains so addled by years of defeat that they will surrender to one of the least convincing promises ever made by Capital to Labour?"

I am sure that that applies to some of our trade union leaders, too.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The new clause has opened up the heart of the debate. The Minister's speech and the way in which he dealt with interventions from members of all parties made it clear that he has not done his homework. He could not deal satisfactorily with any of the points made by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) who moved the new clause.

Hon. Members know that the matters of the greatest concern are the rights and protection of workers. We know from day-to-day contact with our constituents that the people who work in the retail trade are invariably the most vulnerable. I listened with interest to the contribution of the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) who touched on an important matter. If I understood him correctly, he was saying that if a worker was not happy with his terms and conditions of employment, and if the employer believed that the worker was going to become a little

[Mr. Tom Cox]

difficult, it would not be long before the employer would be advising the worker what he should do because he—the employer—did not intend to change the working patterns.

Comments have been made about the abolition of the wages councils. I shall not deal with that issue in detail, but there are already reports about the effect of that abolition, which took place only a few months ago. We know what is happening, but Ministers are making no attempt to reconsider. They are not saying that they were perhaps too hasty and did not consider the issue in the necessary depth or that they should seek to reintroduce protection for workers. It is to the credit of many Conservative Members that they are as worried as Labour Members about the lack of protection for working people.

6.15 pm

I shall cite an example to highlight the problem and perhaps the Minister will respond to it. A lady constituent came to see me. She has worked full time for a firm for seven years and is quite happy to continue working for that firm. As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) said, the big companies are behaving themselves at the moment because they do not want any more adverse publicity than is already surfacing. The woman to whom I referred assumed that the company was also happy for her to continue in its employ, but she was called into the manager's office one day and told that the working patterns were being changed. She was offered part-time employment or redundancy, neither of which she wanted. Where is her protection as a worker? She is being forced to work part time or leave the firm altogether. That is but one example of the type of cases that are worrying many hon. Members.

The Minister did not respond in any way to many of the issues that were raised. My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) referred to industrial tribunals. There are any amount of tribunals, but, even if people receive legal aid, they are rarely satisfied with the outcome. Those of us who represent constituencies in the big cities know that people who believe that they are being forced to pay extortionate rent increases by rent assessment officers rarely win the cases that they take to the tribunal, even though they have a legal framework in which to present them. The Minister has not dealt satisfactorily with the issues raised by hon. Members, irrespective of party.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have debated tribunals at least twice during our consideration of the Bill. Tribunals can be most effective when employees make use of them and, clearly, Labour Members believe that when it suits their purpose. The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), who described tribunals as wholly useless, has tabled a later amendment on premium pay, which relies on industrial tribunals to reinforce it.

Does the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) think that his hon. Friend is being absurd, ridiculous and stupid in trying to have his amendment made effective by that route or does it suit Opposition Members to condemn tribunals when they do not like the rule and to applaud them when they do?

Mr. Cox: That is an interesting point and my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore will be able to deal with it himself when he speaks to his amendment. It is regrettable that the Minister should seek to introduce a party slant because, as he knows, while we have been debating the new clause, hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the lack of protection for working people.

Of course there should be tribunals and of course the people who go to them sometimes win, but in the vast majority of cases the person loses, because the odds are stacked against him or her. Whether such people get legal aid is obviously important, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore said, that will not apply in the cases that we are discussing.

We are entitled to expect from the Minister, not at some distant future date or in the other place but tonight, before Third Reading, a suitable and acceptable reply to what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East said about new clause 4.

Ms Glenda Jackson: I shall speak briefly to the new clause because it appears in my name as well as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). It has become clear from the debate that hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the lack of worker protection on the face of the Bill. That is the central issue.

Major changes are being imposed on the lives of millions of working people in this country because of Sunday trading. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East tellingly pointed out, most people who work in shops are represented in any possible dispute with their employers by no one other than Members of Parliament. It is our responsibility to speak for those who are not in a position tc speak for themselves as a uniform or united group. It is our responsibility—indeed, our duty—to strengthen with the will of the House people in such confrontations, who are inevitably weak because they are individuals.

I sincerely hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will find it in their hearts to support new clause 4.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Like the leadership of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, I believe in the essential goodness of human nature. Like them, I believe that the vast expenditure by the stores on cars and on lunches at the Dorchester was all incurred in the public interest, and because the stores have the interests of the workers at heart. Scarcely a moment of the day passes without the senior management of Tesco and Sainsbury saying to themselves, "What can we do now for our workers, poor chaps?"

If, perchance, my faith in human nature is not borne out in practice, I shall be reminded of the poor Scottish pastor in a story that our good friends from Northern Ireland probably know already. After his death, rather to his surprise, the pastor found himself not in heaven but in hell, with the flames licking round him. He looked up to the good Lord and said "O Lord, I didnae ken, I didnae ken." and the good Lord, in his infinite wisdom and mercy said, "Ye ken the noo." I expect that a little while after the shops have been given the powers granted in the Bill, our good friends in USDAW will make their plea to the House, saying, "We did not know, we did not know; our confidence was misplaced."

Initially, the Government did not wish to introduce any measure of employee protection—that was their main agenda—but, as a result of the concern expressed, they introduced what they claimed was some protection for workers. However, anyone who practises in industrial tribunals, as I have done on both sides, knows that the protection afforded is small indeed. Many shop workers will not be protected by their trade unions in any event, and they will be somewhat intimidated by the procedures, which can be spun out over a long period by wealthy employers who are usually legally represented and who know all the rules.

The poor litigant in person will lose heart as he sees the time slipping away, even if that person has sufficient commitment and is sufficiently gifted to take and continue his case—or, as is more likely, her case. As we are speaking of shop workers it is more likely to be a woman who goes to the tribunal, and she is more likely to be overawed and intimidated——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That is a sexist remark.

Mr. Anderson: It is more likely to be a woman because more woman are employed in shops.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That is not what the hon. Gentleman said. He said that a woman was more likely to be intimidated.

Mr. Anderson: I am sorry. If I unintentionally made a remark that proved offensive to the hon. Lady, I unreservedly withdraw it.

We know that the amount of compensation likely to be awarded by industrial tribunals is relatively small, and only in the rarest of cases will a tribunal reinstate a worker in the job from which he or she was dismissed. Therefore, there will be an enormous temptation for major stores, for whom the compensation likely to be awarded is small change, to get rid of any worker they think is being difficult and to go for an easygoing and complacement work force. I therefore reject as wholly inadequate the gift that the Government offer. As we say in some parts of Swansea, "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes."

Furthermore, we should consider not only the Government's relatively last-minute insertion of the so-called employee protection provisions, but their attitude in other areas. I am thinking not of the wages councils, which some of my hon. Friends have already mentioned, but of the spirit and practice of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which is making a bonfire of controls. It would surely be consistent with the spirit of that Bill to remove the unfair burden that weighs upon employers.

With all due respect to the Minister, I should have thought that he would know what the Government seek to do in the deregulation Bill, and would realise the direct potential relevance of that Bill to what the Government seek to give in the Bill before us. Clearly if he were doing his job properly he would have been briefed about the potential relevance of the other Bill, so that he could tell us whether even the minor protection that the Government purport to give here is likely to be wholly illusory in practice, because what they give in this Bill they can easily take away tomorrow by using one of the orders under the deregulation Bill.

The Minister was wrong not to come here adequately briefed, but I hope that by the end of the debate he will be able to tell us clearly not only about the Government's current intention—that will probably disappear in smoke as soon as the Bill is passed—but that in no way can orders under the deregulation Bill be applied to the Bill before us in such a way as to allow the Government to take away later what they are offering now.

Rev. William McCrea: Many hon Members on both sides of the House have expressed genuine and deep concern about the protection of workers. It cannot be said that one side is more concerned than the other. I listened carefully to the Minister's remarks. He asked us to reject new clause 4, saying that in another place the Government may introduce a provision to close a loophole in paragraph 10 of schedule 3. However, he gave us no indication of the substance of such an amendment. He is therefore asking us to throw aside the substance of new clause 4 for something about which we do not have a clue. The Minister said that it was not desirable, at the stroke of a pen, to cast existing provisions aside. I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's good faith, but, as he knows, his promise will not bind his successors. We should not be carried away by such a promise.

6.30 pm

I should like to refer to a matter that puzzles me. The Minister probably approaches this problem with a perspective and a philosophy different from those of other hon. Members, including Opposition Members. On the question of the protection of workers, I should like someone to explain what happens to an Opposition Member when he or she moves from the Back Benches to the Front Bench. The attitude of such people seems to change. They become willing to give Ministers the nod and to accept undesirable legislation. It seems that something dramatic happens: there is a road to Damascus conversion. The people of the United Kingdom deserve to be told why Opposition Front-Bench Members nod when a Minister gives them an assurance. If they were still on the Back Benches they would raise many of the matters that still trouble ordinary people.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman should be careful what he says. Many Opposition Front-Bench Members have consistently voted against this legislation and in favour of worker protection. My colleagues and I have done so and will continue to do so on Third Reading.

Rev. William McCrea: The nub of the matter is that we should not be confronted with this problem if the Opposition Front Bench had taken a stand against Sunday trading.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): What about your own lot?

Rev. William McCrea: As I said earlier, I do not understand the apparent unanimity between the two Front Benches.

Ms Ruddock: It should not be necessary to remind the hon. Gentleman that the decision was taken by the whole House, with extraordinary attendance, on a free vote. This was not a Labour Front-Bench decision, and I deeply resent the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there has been collusion between Labour Front-Bench Members and the Government. I responded positively to the Minister's new clauses 1 and 2 because they were introduced as a result of points that we raised in Committee. It was most appropriate that I should acknowledge the Minister's positive response.

Rev. William McCrea: I remember the incident very well. To the best of my knowledge, *Hansard* will show that on that occasion the hon. Lady voted with the Government.

Ms Ruddock: On a free vote.

Rev. William McCrea: Yes, on a free vote. But this matter goes to the very heart of the industrial life of the community and of workers' rights. It is not good enough for us to tell the people that we are really concerned about workers' rights, but, at the same time, to support legislation that will remove many of those rights. The pious pleading from the Opposition Front Bench cannot be accepted.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. If the hon. Gentleman does not give way, other hon. Members will have to resume their seats.

Rev. William McCrea: I must make it abundantly clear that the charge of collusion has been made by many hon. Members, and not just from this side of the House.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The hon. Gentleman's uncalled-for charge will be refuted from the Opposition Front Bench, with very good reason. There is no reason for such an allegation, from whatever part of the House. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how often in the past 10 years he has gone through the Lobbies to keep that lot afloat?

Rev. William McCrea: I can assure the House that I shall use every opportunity for a free vote in the best interests of the people who sent me here. That is very different from the attitude of Opposition Members. The Bill strikes at the very heart of workers' rights. A basic right stems from the fact that the Lord's day is a special day. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) should be defending people's rights.

Ms Glenda Jackson: Every amendment put forward in Committee for the purpose of protecting workers' rights and wages came from the Opposition, and when our proposals were voted on Members on the Government side voted categorically, totally and in unison against them.

Rev. William McCrea: As I was not a member of the Standing Committee, I shall accept what the hon. Lady says. However, Sunday trading is the basic problem, and these other matters are peripheral. Many hon. Members from all parts of the House have stood side by side in support of Sunday trading. Some of them ought to know better.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we are dealing specifically with new clause 4. It seems to me that the debate is becoming very wide indeed. Hon. Members are doing re-runs on who voted and why. Let us return to the new clause.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has made an absurd allegation about how Ulster Democratic Unionist party Members vote. The hon. Gentleman would do well to consult *Hansard* to discover how we voted on questions concerning the miners and on matters of confidence——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is doing precisely what I said should not be done.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Rev. William McCrea: I do not propose to go down that road, but the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) should examine the voting record of my hon. Friends and me. It is one of which we are rightly proud. Others will have to answer for their decisions. I shall certainly speak for myself and answer to my constituents for my votes on this legislation.

Mr. Alton: I support the hon. Gentleman's case. In the Standing Committee I represented the minority parties. After consultation with the other minority parties, I tabled amendments on employment protection. Those parties have overwhelmingly supported the new clause now before the House. I hope that all their hon. Members will go through the Lobby in support of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase).

Rev. William McCrea: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful intervention.

In conclusion, new clause 4 is important and it is worthy of our consideration. I do not believe that we should withdraw it on the promise that something may be done in another place. The House should support it tonight.

Mr. Purchase: In the light of events, I am not satisfied with the assurances given by the Minister. I apologise to him for not attending the meeting that he kindly offered. I assure him that that was entirely due to a misunderstanding between me and the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. However, I do not think that if I had gone to see him I would have been reassured on the substantive points that he wished me to bring to him. Just a few days ago, you assured me that there were no loopholes. Today, a few days later, you come and say that there may be one. I feel that belt and braces——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has forgotten that he is addressing me and not the Minister.

Mr. Purchase: I apologise for not using the correct terminology, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will finish the point and then conclude.

I apologise to the Minister for not attending the meeting, but it would not have been possible for me to be reassured on any of the substantive points that he asked me to bring to him. I am not a lawyer, but instinctively, intuitively and from my industrial experience I know that all employers find ways of minimising costs in the face of any law that this Government or any Government introduce. I therefore intend to press the new clause to a Division.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of course I accept the hon. Gentleman's apology. I should have liked to talk matters over with him. It would have been useful to go through several of the matters that he raised which troubled him. I did not promise him last time that there was no loophole. I said that I saw no loophole, but that I was taking legal advice. We have found a loophole in paragraph 10 of schedule 3. The hon. Gentleman's new clause does not cover it. That is why I offered to bring back suitable wordings in another place. I still intend to do that. Meanwhile, I hope that the House will reject the hon. Gentleman's new clause because it does not do what needs to be done.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 276, Noes 312.

Division No. 140] **[6.41 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Purchase and
Ms Glenda Jackson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim

Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 6

SHORT TITLE, REPEALS, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 50 in page 2, line 25, at end insert

'section [Loading and unloading at large shops on Sunday morning]'.

No. 51, in page 2, line 25, at end insert

'section [Construction of certain leases and agreements]'.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

New Schedule

Amendment made: No. 49, a new schedule,

LOADING AND UNLOADING AT LARGE SHOPS

ON SUNDAY MORNING

Meaning of "large shop"

1. In this Schedule "large shop" has the same meaning as in Schedule 1 to this Act.

Consent required for early Sunday loading and unloading

2. The occupier of a large shop in respect of which a notice under paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to this Act has effect shall not load or unload, or permit any other person to load or unload, goods from a vehicle at the shop before 9 a.m. on Sunday in connection with the trade or business carried on in the shop, unless the loading or unloading is carried on—

(a) with the consent of the local authority for the area in which the shop is situated granted under this Schedule, and

(b) in accordance with any conditions subject to which that consent is granted.

3. A consent under this Schedule may be granted subject to such conditions as the local authority considers appropriate.

Application for consent

4. An application for a consent under this Schedule shall be made in writing and shall contain such information as the local authority may reasonably require.

5. An applicant for a consent under this Schedule shall pay such reasonable fee in respect of his application as the local authority may determine.

6. —(1) Where an application is duly made to the local authority for a consent under this Schedule, the authority shall grant the consent unless they are satisfied that the loading or unloading of goods from vehicles before 9 a.m. on Sunday at the shop to which the application relates, in connection with the trade or business carried on at the shop, has caused, or would be likely to cause, undue annoyance to local residents.

(2) Before granting a consent under this Schedule, the local authority shall consult such persons residing in the vicinity of the shop to which the application relates as appear to them to be likely to be affected by any loading or unloading at the shop.

(3) The authority shall determine the application and notify the applicant in writing of their decision within the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the application is received by the authority.

(4) In a case where a consent is granted, the notification under sub-paragraph (3) above shall specify the conditions, if any, subject to which the consent is granted.

Publication of consent

7. Where a local authority grants a consent under this Schedule, the authority may cause a notice giving details of that consent to be published in a local newspaper circulating in its area.

Offence

8. A person who contravenes paragraph 3 above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

Schedule 1

RESTRICTIONS ON SUNDAY OPENING OF LARGE SHOPS

Amendment made: No. 52, in page 3, leave out lines 10 and 11.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 3, line 18, leave out 'retail'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it may be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 25 to 34.

Mr. Lloyd: After another debate in Committee, and consequent on an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), I undertook to consider whether it was possible to ensure that outlets that combined retail and wholesale trade, such as Costco, could be restricted in respect of trading on Sunday to the same extent as outlets that engage entirely in retail sales. That is the purpose of the group of amendments.

In the Shops Act 1950 "shop" is so defined as to catch any premises where any retail trade or business is carried on. It catches wholesalers who also engage in retail trade. But the definition stretches widely. It catches certain outlets that provide services or hire out goods. It catches premises where any retail trade is carried out, however minimal and whatever the premises' main purpose.

The Shopping Hours Reform Council adopted a different approach in developing the model that the House selected and defined "shop" as any premises where there is carried on a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the retail sale of goods. That has advantages as it excludes hire purchase and service shops as well as buildings such as churches, where the odd postcard might be sold. It also excludes outlets where the predominant trade is wholesale, even where significant retailing takes place. The amendments seek to remedy that defect while preserving the benefits of the definition as a whole.

Amendment No. 27 amends the definition of "shop" so that it becomes premises where there is carried on a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the sale of goods. No distinction is drawn between wholesale and retail for that purpose. However, if we left matters there, the Bill would inadvertently bring into the net all wholesalers and suppliers irrespective of whether or not they engaged in retail trade.

Amendment No. 28, which amends paragraph 2(1) of the schedule, would prohibit large shops opening on a Sunday to serve retail customers instead of just customers. As I forewarned members of the Committee, guaranteeing that the schedule applies to mixed wholesalers and retailers, without causing further mischief to the schedule, is a complicated business. That is shown by the fact that it took no less than 11 amendments to achieve. However, in substance, all that the amendments achieve is that any large outlet engaged wholly or mainly in the sale of goods is restricted to six hours retail trade on a Sunday and has to apply to the local authority for listing so to do.

Amendment agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before we move on to the formal amendments, I must say that I do not take kindly to the host of private conversations taking place. If hon. Members wish to engage in them, they should do so outside the Chamber.

Amendments made: No. 25, in page 3, line 18, at end insert—

'"retail customer" means a person who purchases goods retail;

"retail sale" means any sale other than a sale for use or resale in the course of a trade or business, and references to retail purchase shall be construed accordingly'.

No. 26, in line 19, leave out 'retail'.

No. 53, in page 3, line 23, at end insert 'and'.

No. 27, in line 25, leave out 'retail'.

No. 54, in line 25, leave out from 'goods' to end of line 33.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 3, line 36, leave out 'sub-paragraphs (2) and (3)' and insert 'sub-paragraph (2)'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it may be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 2, leave out lines 44 to 46.

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

No. 38, in line 45, leave out from 'shop' to end of line 46 and insert—

(a)in respect of any Sunday other than a Sunday specified in sub-paragraph (b) below, before 1 pm, and

(b) in respect of any Sunday falling within the period in any year commencing with 27th November and ending with 24th December, before 4 pm.'.

No. 14, in line 46, at end insert

'but this sub-paragraph has effect subject to sub-paragraph (4) below.

(4) The exemption conferred by sub-paragraph (3) above does not apply where the Sunday is Easter Day or Christmas Day'.

No. 3, in page 4, leave out from beginning of line 36 to end of line 2 on page 5.

No. 39, in line 38, leave out from 'Sunday' to end of line 41.

No. 40, in line 43, leave out from 'notice' to 'cancel' in line 47.

No. 41, in page 5, line 1, leave out

'superseded by a subsequent notice or'.

No. 4, leave out lines 4 to 21.

No. 42, in line 7, leave out from 'shop' to end of line.

No. 43, leave out lines 15 to 21.

No. 5, leave out lines 26 to 28.

No. 6, leave out lines 29 to 35.

No. 45, in line 32, leave out

'specified in a notice under paragraph 4 above'.

Mr. Alison: The effect of amendments Nos. 1 to 6 is that the broad structure of the option that the House chose last December is left in place. There is no reversion to the "type of shop" approach that the House rejected on 8 December. The amendments retain the provision that all small shops, under 3,000 sq ft or 280 sq m, should be allowed to open. They also provide for a short list of exempt shops of any size at any time on a Sunday. Importantly, they delete the provision allowing large shops to open for six hours on a Sunday—the aching tooth that I seek to extract from the gum of the Bill. That extraction greatly shortens and simplifies the Bill. We no longer need a notification scheme or rules governing precisely how and where large shops can open. The list of offences is reduced. Most of the amendments tabled in my name shorten the Bill because the provisions are no longer necessary.

The main reason for once again asking which shops should be allowed to open on Sundays is the publication and subsequent Second Reading of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. That allows shops to open from Monday to Saturday for 24 hours a day if they wish to do so. Although some reference was made to the possible introduction of the provision in the Government's White Paper on the deregulation Bill which was published last October, there was no confirmation that the provision would be included before the debate on the Sunday trading options on 8 December. It is striking that, in all that long debate on 8 December, no mention was made of the possibility of full deregulation from Monday to Saturday.

Clearly, the deregulation of shop opening hours during the working week has a major impact on the main arguments used against Sunday trading. I shall list a few of the implications for full weekday deregulation on the connected issue of Sunday trading, the first of which relates to consumer convenience. Many of those who argued in favour of Sunday trading at the end of last year did so on the ground that consumers needed the extra hours to shop on Sunday owing to the pressures of their weekday commitments. It was argued that many people could not get to the shops easily between Monday and Saturday and needed them to open on Sunday. It was alleged that it was extremely inconvenient for such people that shops did not open on Sunday. If shops can open from Monday to Saturday up to 10 pm or 11 pm, instead of closing at 8 pm —or 9 pm one night a week—as under the present law, weekday deregulation will add at least an extra 11 hours on to the 67-hour shopping week of Monday to Saturday. That is a 15 per cent. increase in shopping hours and represents a much longer additional period than is offered on Sunday under the Shopping Hours Reform Council proposals. If shops open until 11 rather than 12 o'clock, it will add a further six hours and represent an increase of 20 per cent.

Mr. Fabricant: My right hon. Friend has been my sparring partner on this issue for several months. Although I take his point about the deregulation Bill and the extra hours that will be available on weekdays, when it comes to acquiring fresh food, plants and so on does not he accept that supermarkets still need to be open on Sundays? The extra hours on weekdays will not satisfy housewives' needs for shopping on Sunday mornings and afternoons.

Mr. Alison: The next paragraph in my speech will address precisely the point about supermarkets' hours of opening.

Mr. Barron: If the right hon. Gentleman has such misgivings about the deregulation Bill, why did he vote for it on Second Reading?

Mr. Alison: I am very happy with the deregulation Bill and am not criticising it. The hon. Gentleman misunderstands me. I am merely showing that the deregulation Bill's provisions were so sweeping and beneficial that there are good grounds for the House to decide that the need for the extensive opening of large shops on Sundays has been evacuated and eviscerated. Three cheers for the deregulation Bill, precisely as a result of that provision.

Mr. Barron: The right hon. Gentleman makes great play of the effects of Sunday trading, especially the issue of employees. Does he think that shop employees should work until 11 or 12 at night?

Mr. Alison: It is not for me but for the shops to determine the hours that they may open during the week. The hon. Gentleman has probably received, as I have, a letter from Sainsbury. He may treat it with a grain of doubt, but it says that it does not propose to open any extra hours during weekdays. That remains to be seen, but it is not for me to decide.

In the light of the deregulation Bill, it must be decided whether large shops still need to open on Sundays. We can expect major supermarket chains, such as Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda and Gateway, to open frequently in the evenings until 10 o'clock if there is public demand, which is the key point. They have expressed a great willingness to try to meet the convenience of consumers, often claiming that they earn little additional profit in doing so. If large numbers of employed women find it difficult to shop during existing opening hours, we can expect supermarket chains—this is the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) —to open late in the evening to accommodate that wish.

I ask hon. Members to bear the following point closely in mind when envisaging what will happen on Sundays. I am reliably informed that, in the United States, 34 per cent. of supermarket chains open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Over there, it is difficult to find a large supermarket that is not open until 10 or 11 pm every day of the week. If all those extra hours are available on weekdays, the argument that we need Sunday trading for the convenience of consumers, including those who use supermarkets or fresh food stores—we shall also keep smaller shops open on Sundays—loses much of its impelling logic.

7.15 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): It is mostly women who go shopping and, as my right hon. Friend will be aware, these days most of them go to work. Will he take it from me that, if a woman has been at work all day, shopping late in the evening, particularly getting home in the dark in the winter, is extremely unattractive? Does my right hon. Friend agree that shopping in daylight hours on Sundays and being able to take one's children and, if one is lucky, one's husband to carry home the shopping, is a much more attractive arrangement for women who work?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will agree that even better things can be done with one's family on a Sunday than haunting the halls of supermarkets if it is possible to get one's shopping done during the week, even in the dark. I am sure that a few fluorescent lights will be brought to bear on the supermarket environment. Better pursuits, such as my hon. Friend would want to engage in with family and friends, can then be indulged in on a Sunday.

Mr. John Marshall: My right hon. Friend seems to be producing a shopping pattern for insomniacs rather than average families. Does he accept that most people would like to shop at midday rather than midnight and that, although America has many supermarkets open on Sundays, Sunday shopping there is accompanied by much greater church attendance than in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend's reference to church attendance is superfluous and irrelevant because people who want to go to church on Sundays will do so and will find a chance to shop at other times. He makes too big an issue of the unsurpassed, ecstatic joy of being able to shop at midday, as if shopping in daylight were a sure sign of all the possible enticements, inducements, benefits and joys that could accrue to a human being. I remind him that shopping in daylight at 12 o'clock on a particular day of the week is not what everybody lives for. People want to engage in a vast number of other activities. On Sundays, they can find plenty of things to do other than shopping if the shopping chore can be dealt with during the most convenient hours, by day or night, from Monday to Saturday. My hon. Friend's point is, therefore, not compelling.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My right hon. Friend is making an interesting case. I agree that shopping, at any time, is a chore and that shopping on Sundays is not the height of family values. Will he deal with the point relating to the freedom to shop during the week? If his argument is consistent—he says that it is up to shops to decide how long to open—surely the same applies to Sundays. If people decide voluntarily to shop in the evening when that becomes possible in the light of the deregulation legislation, the demand for Sunday shopping will no longer exist and shops will therefore decide not to open. The Bill does not oblige shops, whatever their size, to open, but gives them the possibility to open if the demand from the public is persistent.

Mr. Alison: Sainsbury may have written to my hon. Friend, as it has written to me, saying that following deregulation it does not propose to increase its current weekday opening hours. But it may discover that Tesco, Asda, Waitrose, or Budgen intend to stay open until 10 or 11 or 12 o'clock on weekdays. In that case, I draw an analogy with people watching a spectacle. At first they are all seated, but one stands up to get a better view and slowly everybody else stands up to get a better view. In the end, they all stand up and no one gets a better view.

The application of that little analogy is that, one after another, shops will all be forced to open on weekdays until a much later hour. One will find that if one large shop is permitted to open on Sunday, the same phenomenon that I described for weekdays will occur. One after another, shops will, of necessity and due to commercial pressures, have to open on Sunday. No one will be better off and everyone will find that Sunday has become just another day. I have attempted to give a rational response to my hon. Friend's intervention.

Mr. Pike: When Sainsbury started to open on Sundays, it said that it had entered the Sunday market only because its competitors had done so and it felt that it had to follow suit. Does not that underline the argument advanced by the right hon. Gentleman? His predictions of what will happen with late weekday opening will prove correct, despite what Sainsbury says in the letter to which he referred.

Mr. Alison: I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of, and support for, my analysis. I am sure that he is right and that we have correctly diagnosed the pattern that will evolve.

I do not want to delay the House too long, so I shall move on to my second argument in favour of restricting the opening of large shops on Sundays. One of the major concerns expressed about allowing Sunday trading concerned its impact on small shops. If large shops open on Sundays, most small shops will have to open to compete. The owner of a small shop cannot afford to keep his shop shut when his competitors' shops are open. Even the loss of a few percentage points in market share could lead to small shops having to close. We have seen the widespread closure of small shops in the past decade. Many run close to the margins of profitability.

Opening small shops on Sundays, however, adds greatly to the stress of family life. It means that there is no longer even one day when shopkeepers can rest quietly with their families. If, under deregulation, they face competition every evening of the week, potentially until 10 or 11 pm at night, what will be left of their family lives? Many small shops will need to stay open much later in the evening to compete with larger shops.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): My right hon. Friend said that small shops will be forced to open on Sundays and that family life will be damaged. Perhaps he does not fully appreciate that small shops need to open on Sundays and provide a good service because supermarkets are closed. It is the economics of being able to open on

[Sir David Mitchell]

Sundays that enables small shops to stay in business. My concern and, I hope, that of my right hon. Friend is that many villages will be deprived of their small shops if their trade is swamped by the supermarkets on Sundays.

Mr. Alison: The purpose of my amendment is to leave in place the proposal to allow the unrestricted opening of small shops of under 3,000 sq ft. My hon. Friend's argument is well taken. Those shops will have at least one day when the competitive pressures are such as to enable them to determine for themselves where their real interest lies.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) keeps returning to his bone of contention about the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. If he thinks that that Bill will be responsible for some of the pressures on small shops during the week, he should at least endorse the principle that keeping big shops shut on Sundays makes the best of what is, in his view, a bad world.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Alison: Before I give way to the hon. Gentleman, I remind him that I supported the Tobacco Advertising Bill, which he introduced.

Mr. Barron: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that support. He was advancing the argument that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will impose stress because shops will be able to open 24 hours a day.

Mr. Alison: If the hon. Gentleman has diagnosed stress, let him accept the remedy, prescription, pill or drug—whatever he wants to call it—that I have prescribed to reduce it. That remedy involves shutting the big shops on Sundays and giving the smaller shops a chance to catch up some of the ground. The logic of his objection to the extra stress is for him to support the proposition that big shops should not be allowed to open on Sundays.

Everyone knows that there is no potential for increased turnover from opening on Sundays. Everyone agrees that extra money will not be spent if shops open for longer hours—the butter is simply spread more thinly over the bread. The argument in favour of protecting small shops from the pressure of competition from large shops on Sundays and the pressure imposed on their family lives by having to work all hours of the day and night is doubly strengthened by the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and its impact on Sunday-to-Saturday trade. More than ever, those who run small shops need one day when they are free from competitive pressures and when they can have a day of rest and quiet with their families.

Similar arguments apply to the 1 million or so shopworkers who will feel additional pressure to work on a Sunday. Longer weekday working hours will mean more irregular hours away from the home and family and will make it more difficult for shopworkers to spend time with their children when they are out of school, and with the spouse or partner when he or she is home from work. If we want to protect the home lives of our citizens and encourage families to stay together, we must pay attention to the impact of longer weekday hours on shopworkers. Longer weekday hours mean that it is even more vital to protect Sundays, when they can be at home with their families.

Urban residents will also suffer from longer weekday hours. Noise, bustle and general disturbance, including parking problems, will afflict them into the evening if shops can open until 10 or 11 o'clock, or even later.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. Friend said that he has received the same letter as I received from directors of Sainsbury, which said that there will not be a significant lengthening of the hours that it will open during the week. That seems likely to be the same for all the major stores. Who wants to shop between 8 pm and 11 pm or even midnight? He cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that they are not going to open, but that they will have longer hours for deliveries. He is arguing against his own case.

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend has not followed the line of my argument, which was that Sainsbury has written to me, as it has written to him, to say that it is not proposing to extend its existing hours of opening. That should be taken with a pinch of salt because it is not the wishes of the customers that will determine Sainsbury's opening hours, although I am not implying that it is an anti-social outfit. What will determine its weekday opening hours will be what Tesco, Asda, Gateway and other such shops do. It only needs one of those to extend its opening hours for all the others to extend theirs. So I am being consistent in saying that deregulation will lead to a widespread extension of opening hours for all the big shops.

I repeat my figures about supermarket chains in the United States—34 per cent. are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days in the year. That is likely to begin to apply here under deregulation and it is all the more reason for having a precinct of sanctity, quiet and peace on Sundays, with big shops closed.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend agree that although Sainsbury says that it will not open in the evening, it is assuming that it will be open on Sundays? Is it not more likely to open in the evenings if it cannot open on Sundays?

Mr. Alison: I cannot be dogmatic about how it will behave in the evenings. I am simply saying that, in essence, my amendment is a limited fail-safe provision that, after deregulation, big shops should not open on Sundays because they are likely to be opening much more extensively on weekdays. That fail-safe provision will at least regulate and contain the impact of big shops in so far as they affect the one day that has traditionally been a precinct day for family life, relative peace and quiet, absence of bustle, confusion, noise and the necessity to deploy all the extra services.

7.30 pm

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): There have been a number of critical interventions during my right hon. Friend's speech. In a constituency such as mine, with 170 villages and about six market towns, it will be the death knell of the small shopkeeper if the amendment is not carried.

Mr. Alison: I am grateful for the unquestionably weighty support of my hon. Friend, whose intellectual scope and power is widely recognised in the House. My hon. Friend's intervention is such an enormous advantage to the deployment of my argument that I can almost sit down.

Mr. Donald Anderson: If we interpret the Sainsbury letter at its face value, do we not see that it is not Sainsbury's intention to extend its current opening? Sainsbury has altered its position on Sunday trading because of actual and anticipated competition. In the same way, its current intention, however honest, is likely to move with the movement of trade.

Mr. Alison: That is inescapable and it is why we need a statutory safe haven, a ring-fenced day in the week when small shops can open if they wish but larger shops are barred from opening by the will of the House.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The right hon. Gentleman said that in America some shops are open for 24 hours. I recently watched some programmes on Sky television and I noticed that shopworkers in America had to ride shotgun because of the lateness of their hours in 24-hour opening shops. I worked for Rolls-Royce on the night shift and nothing was more dismal and soul destroying than to be forced to do a night shift turn and have to spend it away from the family. At least Rolls-Royce paid us a premium wage for Sundays. The right hon. Gentleman may not be aware that we were not forced to work on Sundays in Rolls-Royce, but were expected to do so if the company was under pressure. But we got at least double pay. Britain's shopworkers seem to be treated as second-class citizens who can get their Sundays only if they can bargain and put in a good bid. I hope to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his speech now. That was a very long intervention.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has made a valid point and I seek to recruit his support for my amendment by saying that the aspersions that he cast on big employers such as Rolls-Royce, which he would no doubt like to direct at large shopkeepers, retail stores and big multiples, are best avoided by preventing them from opening on Sundays. By that means the difficulties of double pay are entirely avoided.

I apologise to the House for taking so long, but I thought that it was right to give way to some interventions. It is reasonable to assume that when hon. Members decided to support the Shopping Hours Reform Council option on 8 December, they had weighed the arguments and had considered the desire of some employees to work on Sundays, although I think that the number of such employees is quite small. They also considered the convenience of customers in having access to shops on Sundays and that applied especially to married women in employment, although in a recent poll well under 10 per cent. of such women wanted Sunday shopping. They will also have considered the needs of small shops to have one day without competition from larger shops, the need for shopworkers to have a day with their families and partners, and the need for urban residents for a day of peace and quiet.

Deregulation of weekday hours tilts the balance of the argument much more in the direction of keeping Sunday special. That is what makes me believe that there is an urgent need to reconsider our earlier decision to allow all shops to open for six hours every Sunday. That is why I urge all hon. Members to support amendments Nos. 1 to 6.

Mr. Donald Anderson: I was delighted to add my name to the amendments moved by the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). I almost called him my right hon. Friend, because he certainly is on this issue. I congratulate him on the way in which he spoke to his amendment. Like me, the right hon. Gentleman believes in "back to basics," which we construe as applying to a Government who are honest about their intentions and who seek, as far as they are able by legislation, to encourage family values and do not put up obstacles to the proper functioning of the family.

It is certain that one of the effects of the Bill would be to add to pressures on the family, which the right hon. Gentleman and I—and, I am confident, a substantial number of hon. Members in all parts of the House—believe to be the cornerstone of our society.

I have two reasons for supporting the amendment. First, unlike the six-hour option, the amendment represents a true and fair compromise between the interests of consumers and retailers and their staff. Secondly, I support it because of the many absurdities that are likely to be generated by the six-hour option. Those two points are closely linked. It is precisely because the six-hour option would be so difficult and expensive for local authorities to enforce and to police that it would speedily degenerate into a total deregulation.

I have argued, and shall not repeat, that in no wise is the six-hour option a compromise: it is what those who want total deregulation feel they can get at this time. There is no logical stopping point, because people will say, "If six hours, why not seven or eight?" As some hon. Members have forcefully said, even the six-hour option would need to have hours on either side for deliveries and so on. In effect, it would take up the whole of Sunday. The Shopping Hours Reform Council option was designed to be, and is, a Trojan horse designed to smuggle total deregulation into our society.

Mr. Pike: In recognition of the stores that support the Shopping Hours Reform Council and the six-hour option, and the way in which they have been prepared to break the law for a number of years, surely one can have no confidence that, if the Bill is carried in its present form, they will not try to break the law to move to eight or 10 hours, as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Anderson: I should have thought that it was also "back to basics" not to encourage law breakers, as the Government are seeking to do in the Bill, and to protect those such as Marks and Spencer who, against their financial interests, seek to obey the law.

People in Britain do not want total deregulation and it was overwhelmingly rejected by the House on 8 December. If one were to believe the bona fide credentials of those behind the Shopping Hours Reform Council, one would also assume that they want overall liberalisation. As one can see from their unsuccessful attempts to prevent American warehouse chains entering the country, however, it is not liberalisation that they want; it is market share and their own narrow trade gain and, alas, various sections of the House appear to have fallen for that.

As a result of the SHRC option, every local authority will be forced to spend resources drawing up a detailed register of the names, addresses and opening and closing times of every large store in the area and of every large shop wishing to trade on Sundays. That in itself is a major requirement to impose on hard-pressed local authorities

[Mr. Anderson]

which, as a result of other pressures, are shedding staff. Assuming that they had done that, local authorities would then have to police the opening and closing times which would have been registered by the stores in question. Because there are no set opening or closing times—the six hours have to be within a band—the local authority would have to ensure, so far as practicable, that the stores adhered to the opening and closing times that they had set out. That is an untidy system and would impose an additional unnecessary and unwelcome burden on our local authorities.

Each local authority will be required to have a large number of inspectors, to be on patrol every Sunday—presumably premium payments will be payable to them—to ensure that the new law, as laid down by the House, is respected and enforced. I fully accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). What confidence can we have, in the light of the law-breaking record of those stores, that they will rigorously adhere to the opening and closing times which they will have registered with the local authority? It may well be that the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has greater faith in those stores.

Mr. Couchman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Can he tell me how many officers the average local district council has had on duty on Sundays seeking to enforce the Shops Act 1950 in the past 40 years? I suggest that most of them have had none.

Mr. Anderson: The reason why there have been none is that those local authorities knew that they did not have the backing of central Government, particularly during the past few years. Therefore, it would have been wasted effort to employ officers who had many other duties to enforce the law when there was a clear signal from the Government—by the Government's inaction—that they were not at all interested in the law being enforced and obeyed. Had there been a clear signal from the Government that in these matters, as in others, they were interested in law and order, local authorities would have responded accordingly and would have had their officers enforcing the law.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that over the past two or three years local authorities, particularly environmental officers who normally would enforce the trading standards laws, have been under-resourced? Does he further agree that many local authorities did not know where the Government stood on the issue? Had they pursued the court cases and had the European Court ruled differently, councillors could have been surcharged for those actions.

7.45 pm

Mr. Anderson: I fully agree with my hon. Friend, save in one respect: local authorities knew only too well where the Government stood. They knew that the Government were not interested in enforcing the law.

As every lawyer knows, although the referral to the European Court of Justice was done by the High Court on the basis that there was at least a minimally arguable case, there was no serious prospect of its being agreed by the European Court of Justice because every country in Europe has its own laws on Sunday trading.

It was a delaying device. The Government prevented local authorities from enforcing the existing law during the time—and it was known that it would be a long time—that procedures would be gone through in the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. It was a deliberate collusion between the Government and the law breakers. The Minister shakes his head. I can tell him that when the matter was referred to the European Court of Justice, it was asserted that it would take more than a year. With another hat on, I do some work in the European Court of Justice and it is well known how slow its procedures are.

Immediately upon that referral to the Court, it was clear that there would be a period of uncertainty. That period of uncertainty was increased by the Government when they refused to assist local authorities who knew that at a time of financial stringency they were risking their own poll tax or council tax payers' money. I understand from one local authority that more than £250,000 would have been at risk had the case been lost. Few local authorities would have been bold enough to risk that sort of money while the Government were doing nothing to enforce the law.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Should it have been right for the Attorney-General to intervene—I do not believe it was, and that was certainly not the opinion of my right hon. and learned Friend—the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that taxpayers' money should have been put at risk in the same way as charge payers' money was. That would not be a good use of the money when the law was obscure, because the High Court had referred the matter to the European Court.

Mr. Anderson: The law was clear in respect of the Shops Act and the existing law, as traditionally interpreted, would have prevailed while the referral to the European Court of Justice was taking place. The Minister makes an absurd point in suggesting that there is some equivalence between a local authority risking the money of its own ratepayers because of a technicality and central Government ensuring that law and order in this case, as in others, was enforced. The Government chose to do nothing.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was saying that the law was in doubt and that that was why the local authorities could not perform their duty or that the law was quite clear. If it was, why did local authorities not pursue their duty and obtain damages at no expense to local ratepayers?

Mr. Anderson: Clearly, the Shops Act had been interpreted in a certain way. As a result of the referral, there was only an arguable case. There cannot have been any serious expectation on the part of those who brought the case in the first place that they would ultimately win in the European Court of Justice. There could have been no such expectation because there is such a range of practices within EC countries. If that lobby had no serious expectation of winning, what was its motive but to buy time?

Mr. John Marshall: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that the High Court sent that case to the European Court of Justice to buy time for retailers—that the judges of this country indulged in a legalistic facade? If so, no one believes him.

Mr. Anderson: The hon. Gentleman makes an absurd point. I said that the motive of those who commenced the proceedings was to buy time. The nature of our laws dictated that the issue be taken to Luxembourg. It was known from past practice that that would take a long time —during which the Government could choose to enforce or not to enforce the law. That lobby knew that the Government were sympathetic, and it was allowed to get away with it.

As the absurdities of the SHRC option are made manifest, local authorities will again be unready to enforce the law. Matters will become more and more chaotic and, as sure as night follows day, we shall slide into total deregulation.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those who supported complete deregulation said that they would vote for the SHRC proposals as the way forward? That supports the hon. Gentleman's argument that, the door having been opened, it will open much wider.

Mr. Anderson: Of course. The Shopping Hours Reform Council knew that its option was riddled with anomalies, would cause chaos and would eventually slide in the direction that the council wanted.

Total deregulation is not wanted here or by the people of Britain, who recognise the strong case for a common day of rest and relaxation each week. They acknowledge that Sunday is the principal day of the week on which time is spent with family and friends. They know that as a result of the Bill—in which the Government are colluding—that invaluable common day off will be permanently obliterated from national life, in the same way as Good Friday. It is a one-way ratchet and there will be no going back. The effect of the SHRC option will be that Sunday will become like any other shopping, working weekday.

Total deregulation is also not wanted by small shop owners—few of whom would survive eight-hour competition from larger stores. I ask the right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to consider village stores, which play a tremendous community role, and the way specialised shops in high streets throughout the country are increasingly closing down. How many family butchers are left in our high streets as a result of competition from supermarkets?

Mrs. Gorman: In my experience, many small shops have gone to the wall because of the heavy rates and, sometimes, high rents that they have to pay—rather than lack of trade.

Mr. Anderson: I concede that rates are a factor. I know that the hon. Lady cares about this issue, and I ask her to consider also the case of markets. There is a market in my city, and I know many of the stallholders personally. The powers given to local authorities in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will create competition that may be too much for them to bear. That process of eliminating small traders such as butchers and bakers through competition from supermarkets will certainly accelerate.

Mr. Graham: We are always being told about the wonderful Scottish experience of Sunday trading, but I assure my hon. Friend that it creates many difficulties. In my area, police have to attend areas that were once quiet on Sunday to deal with traffic congestion. There is also pressure on local government services to ensure that shopping areas are kept clean and tidy. Much cost is associated with Sunday opening. I confess that my wife shops on Sunday, although not every Sunday. My final point——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Enough.

Mr. Anderson: After that little warm-up, I look forward with eager anticipation to my hon. Friend's speech. He spoke of his experience of Sunday trading in Scotland, and I wholly agree that the character of Sunday will be fundamentally altered.

As to the point about rates mentioned by the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), I imagine that they account for a small proportion of the total costs that bear on small businesses.

Deregulation is not wanted by small traders, or by urban residents—whose peace and quiet is likely to be fundamentally changed. Neither is it wanted by the majority of 2·2 million retail workers—contrary to the assertions of those who claim to speak on behalf of those workers.

Total deregulation is not wanted by policemen and traffic wardens. It is not wanted or needed by consumers, whose requirements will be catered for more than adequately by the combination of deregulated mid-week opening hours provided for in clause 17 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill.

When we first discussed the options, there was a case for ensuring greater consumer choice. That was one of the more cogent points made by those who argued against my position, but that contention has been fundamentaly altered by the deregulation Bill. Any consumer will have ample time to shop on weekday evenings; yet the Government are still determined to destroy our traditional British Sunday —which is precious to us and has many positive social effects.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Selby on his amendments, which meet the profound wishes and good sense of the majority of the public, who do not want Sunday to be just like any other day. They fear the commercial pressures to which we yield again and again, and that much that we value in terms of small shops, the peace and quiet of a Sunday and the ability to be with one's family at least one common day a week will be destroyed —and will not be capable of being recreated.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I recall clearly the arguments that we all listened to on 8 December. Many hon. Members in the House this evening will remember that I favoured the total deregulation option. It was not the will of the House that we should have total deregulation, but I do not accept the contention of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) that the Shopping Hours Reform Council proposal is a Trojan horse or, indeed, that it is a short cut to getting total deregulation.

I did not think that that proposal was the right one for the House to adopt and I made that abundantly clear at the time. I believe strongly that we should allow people to make for themselves the choices that they want to make. That was not the choice of the House. Having voted on 8 December for the six-hours option, I determined that I would pursue that course, for some of the reasons that the hon. Gentleman articulated. If we are to have a day that is different, the SHRC option of six hours for the larger stores gives just that difference to the day. For example, the hon.

[Dame Angela Rumbold]

Gentleman argued that small shops would also not suffer if we had the option that my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) has just proposed.

8 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): For the record, will the right hon. Lady define the difference between what is in the Bill and total deregulation? Will she give her definition?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I was just coming to that. The Bill will allow smaller shops the freedom to open at any time that they wish on a Sunday—the protection that so many people wanted to offer to small shops against what they saw as the predatory nature of the larger stores. The larger stores, however—those of more than 3,000 sq ft —will have to choose the six hours in which they wish to open during a Sunday. That is in itself protection for those small shops.

Mr. Donald Anderson: It is very marginal.

Dame Angela Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman might say that, but it is a protection, because it shows that there must be a choice.

Mr. Couchman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the total deregulation option, there would have been no question whatever of the substantial degree of worker protection that has been written into the Bill as it presently stands?

Dame Angela Rumbold: That is one reason why I wanted total deregulation; it seemed to make eminent sense.

The other point that the hon. Member for Swansea, East made was that, under the six-hour option, there will be considerable extra work for the local authorities to police the law, as it will be if that is what the House wishes. I must put it to him that the option that Keep Sunday Special made included an enormous amount of regulation and policing, to such an extent that a majority of local authorities were in agreement that that was the very last thing that they wanted introduced, because it would mean so much extra work and extra costs for them and for the people whom they would have to employ.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Of course I concede that, under the Keep Sunday Special option, there would be burdens on local authorities. I do not resile from that. All that I am saying is that the so-called liberalisation of the SHRC would also entail a substantial burden on local authorities. By so doing and moving inexorably—in my judgment—to total deregulation, we will do away with our traditional Sunday, which most people value.

Dame Angela Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view, as, indeed, I am to mine. I do not believe that the six-hour option will impose on local authorities anything like the burdens that the Keep Sunday Special——

Mr. Lord: Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Dame Angela Rumbold: I shall do so, although I should like to make a little progress.

Mr. Lord: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way because I am one of those who believe that this is simply deregulation by the back door. I accept the points that were made at the time. This was looked at as a compromise, but only because there were three matters before the House and this was the one in the middle. If we had started from scratch, with a clean sheet, and asked whether we wanted shops to open on a Sunday and somebody came forward with a "compromise" that allowed shops to open for six hours in an eight-hour day, that would not have been regarded as sensible. Bearing in mind a bit of opening at the beginning of the day and a bit of opening at the end of the day over the edges, to most normal people it must look like a normal working day.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I am quite surprised at my hon. Friend. I thought that the House specialised in compromise. It was incapable many times of making a clear decision one way or another, which is why I deplore the fact that we were not able to choose the total deregulation option that was before the House at the time.

I want now to come to the point that was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby. He believes that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will enable stores to open for six days a week at any time. Therefore, following his reasoning, that will obviate the need for shops—particularly the larger stores—to open on a Sunday.

I believe that the shopping habits of the great British public are not quite as manic as some hon. Members would like to think. I do not see millions of people rushing to the shops at every minute or hour of the day that they are open. The habits of the shopping public are normally more rational and they are more inclined to go shopping at their convenience than at that of the shops. The shops can do no more than open and offer the opportunity to their customers. It will be entirely up to customers to choose when they go shopping.

I am fairly confident that the vast majority of women who take on the responsibility of doing the weekly shop will find intensely unattractive the opportunity to go shopping at the hours of 9 pm to midnight. I say that because substantial numbers of those women work extremely hard. When they have worked, they normally go home and prepare a meal, and often do chores. The very last thing they will want to do then is get into the car or on their bicycles, or on their feet, and go down to the local supermarket to do a shop.

I must tell hon. Members who are not accustomed to shopping that it is not a leisurely or enjoyable task. It is a task which must be done, but is quite hard work, requires a certain amount of physical capacity and can be very tiring. To assume that this suggestion will be welcomed by people who want to go and do their shopping in a more rational frame of mind seems quite absurd.

Mr. Alton: There are good reasons therefore for sparing people the necessity of going through precisely those exercises on a Sunday as well.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I deeply disagree. I make no bones about this. I do not want to dictate when any shop or retailer should open, but if it is possible for families to go together and do the shopping, it is infinitely better for the person on whom the burden normally falls—that is, the woman—that she should have the opportunity of having her husband, and perhaps her children, accompany her. We are not talking about the weekly shop, although I was quite incensed at some of the ways in which that shop was described. I thought it demonstrated beyond anything that I have ever heard in the House a total ignorance of the burdens that women must carry. It was also suggested that few women—indeed, people—worked on Sunday and did not work on other days.

On the whole, women work extremely hard, whether they work for their living, look after their children or simply stay at home and look after the home. If they also have to take work during the week to supplement and subsidise the family income, for whatever reason, it seems quite outrageous that we should say to them that they can work Monday to Saturday up until midnight but not on a Sunday, and that one can only do that for extra money. Many of those women choose to work on Sunday because that is the day when it is most convenient for them, to ensure that the families stay together, because their partner is then able to undertake caring for their children. Families—the element about which we argue so often in the House—are more likely to stay together in those circumstances than if the woman has to work until midnight, which is a ridiculous idea.

Mr. Alfred Morris: The right hon. Lady has spoken with some feeling about the problems of shoppers. She is a former Minister of State in the Home Office and I recall that she often spoke with feeling in support of what was said by the Police Federation. Now, the federation's general secretary says:

> "To allow Sunday to become a day which requires high levels of manpower and police resources would have a serious effect on shift systems, and there is no doubt that police officers do require Sundays off to spend with family and friends".

How does the right hon. Lady respond to that?

Dame Angela Rumbold: When I was at the Home Office, I had no responsibility for the police, although I had other responsibilities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As I said earlier, the Association of Chief Police Officers has made clear its view that any extra work that would fall to it would be manageable and negligible.

Dame Angela Rumbold: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend.

Let me continue with what I was saying about the importance of understanding precisely what we are being asked to consider. We are being asked to consider an alternative to what we approved in our vote on 8 December—and that alternative is posited on the fact that because larger stores may have an opportunity to open six days a week throughout the night as well as all day, we should feel able to change our minds and deny families and others the chance to shop in such stores on Sundays, even for limited periods.

I believe that it would be best to uphold our vote of 8 December and to allow customers—including families—to make up their own minds about when they wish to shop. I feel extremely confident that many will continue to do what millions do already, irrespective of the notion that everyone wishes to spend Sunday at home—often, dare I say, bored out of their minds.

Many people like to go out as a family on Sundays. They do not necessarily want to do the weekly shop; many wish to visit garden centres, take the children to buy a new pair of shoes, look at furniture or buy materials for home improvement. Who are we to deprive them of that opportunity? Who are we to say that, with total deregulation, they can engage in those activities from Monday to Saturday, between certain hours? In fact, most families do not manage to get together in their homes until between 7 and 8 pm; they will almost certainly be condemned to shop late at night. What rational family will take the children out so late, or expect a woman to go out in the dark at a time when women, and elderly people in particular, are fearful about going out?

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My right hon. Friend makes an eloquent case for deregulation. May I ask who will pay the additional costs involved? Who will pay for the extra policing, the extra parking and traffic control and the extra garbage collection costs, for example? Will it be the shops that benefit from Sunday opening, or the general public—taxpayers, business taxpayers, business rate payers and council tax payers, including those who, for reasons of conscience or otherwise, prefer not to open their shops on Sundays?

Dame Angela Rumbold: Many, of course, will not open their shops on Sundays. Precisely those points, however, have been considered very carefully, both in Committee and just now by my right hon. Friend the Minister, who answered adequately and eloquently on behalf of the Police Federation. He said that ACPO and other federations had said that the extra charges that may or may not accrue—I am not at all convinced that they will—would be negligible in comparison with the importance of giving people the opportunity to behave as they choose on Sundays, rather than as we dictate.

8.15 pm

Let me make the point about safety once more, because I think that it is important. We often assume that, because shops are open late at night in summer, that is a perfectly acceptable time for families to go out. In this country, however, it is usually dark when people go out in the evening, because we cannot grasp the nettle and bring our time arrangements into line with those of our continental counterparts. That, however, is a separate point, on which I shall not elaborate.

I feel that we are in grave danger of assuming that, because a deregulation Bill is before the House, it may somehow enable people to open their shops at different times and thereby attract more customers. For reasons of safety, I do not believe that any elderly people or many women will go out late at night; certainly, no families will allow their children to go out at such times, for good and sensible reasons. Therefore, I believe that very few shops will avail themselves of the opportunity to stay open enormously late: customers simply will not want to visit them.

This evening, hon. Members are trying to put a case based on a false premise—the premise that we know when people are going to go shopping. We do not know that; what we do know is that the experience of the past few years suggests that many people enjoy shopping on Sundays, during the day. Are we to deny those people the opportunity, simply because we think that they might go shopping late at night instead? I do not think that likely, and I urge hon. Members to think very carefully before voting for the amendment. I believe that such a vote would be based on a completely false premise.

Mr. Alton: We are considering three sets of amendments. There are what might be described as the "mornings only" amendments; there is the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and me, which seeks to exempt at least Christmas day, when it falls on a Sunday, and Easter Sunday; and there are the amendments to which the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) spoke so well, which seek to limit the size and scale of shops that may open, excluding the larger shops measuring more than 3,000 sq ft. All are attempts to return us to where we were in December, when the Keep Sunday Special option was narrowly defeated.

As we now know from our debates on the Floor of the House and in Committee, the changes made since then —both in the Bill itself, and following the introduction of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—and the subsequent failure to include worker protection in this Bill make it clear that the votes cast earlier by many right hon. and hon. Members were conditional on future alterations. That is why these amendments are so crucial. I hope that many hon. Members, when they come to vote, will see them as a chance to put the Bill back on the right path.

The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) spoke in the debate on the original Bill presented by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). It seems a long time ago that we first went through the arguments, as a kind of rehearsal for the debate to come.

The right hon. Lady and I have always disagreed on this matter; there is no point in disguising that. I disagree with her for a number of reasons. She has argued for complete deregulation and I respect the way in which she has put her view, but I do not agree with it.

Enough features of our life in this country have been "deregulated". There is a need to protect and safeguard our family life, our community life, church life, town centres and small shops, and to meet the needs of the elderly and the disadvantaged. We have already conceded far too much to materialism and consumerism. There is, therefore, a moral question to be considered about the deeper values of our society. The issue that we are debating goes to the heart of those.

We need time together as families and communities. Nothing can be more important than children and their parents having time with one another, or there being time in which to visit elderly people. If all the pressures are to be placed on us on a Sunday that are placed on us every other day of the week, what chance will we have to fulfil those duties? We speak so much about our rights and our choice, but what about our responsibilities, our duties and our obligations to one another? Sunday gives us the ideal opportunity for a pause in our lives.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman was answering the arguments of the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). Does he accept that, just as she was making assumptions from our point of view to try to refute the arguments of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), the right hon. Lady was making some strange assumptions herself—obviously not fully aware of changing patterns of night life in our cities —when she postulated that no one would want to go shopping at night? In other words, there will be an opportunity for people to shop at night and, to confirm what the hon. Gentleman was saying, we are minimising the proper opportunities for family leisure together on the one day that is available.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that argument so well. What I found strange about the right hon. Lady's case was that she argued an entirely different case on the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and that she and some of her hon. Friends would say that we need to have those opportunities Monday to Saturday to shop 24 hours a day, because people need to have the chance to go out at night and so on. I do not dispute that, but let us consider the present moment.

We seem to have got by perfectly well for most of this century with the shopping arrangements which we have had and, in so doing, we have protected Sunday as a special day. It was the Government's own Auld committee, appointed in 1983, that concluded:

> "the economic effects of deregulation are likely to be small; the social effects may not be."

The social effects may not be. I believe that that is true. The social effects are likely to be considerable.

If I can offer even better advice than that of the Auld committee to the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, it would be the advice that Winston Churchill once gave. He said that we needed Sunday and he described it as

> "the necessary pause in the national life and activity".

He said:

> "it is essentially the day of emancipation from the compulsion and strain of daily work".

He said:

> "it is the birthright of every British subject, a day of personal, social and spiritual opportunity, and, above all, our great heritage, and one it is our responsibility, privilege and duty to hand on, to posterity unsullied by the commercialisation which is making its mark today."

If that was true 40-odd years ago, how much more true is it today, with the pressures of commercialisation and materialism that abound?

I passionately believe, therefore, that we must do more to restrict, rather than to make available, Sunday as yet another day for shopping.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), who speaks for the Labour party on home affairs, is here for this part of the debate, because it reminds me of what he said, quite rightly, in the book "Reclaiming the Ground":

> "There is right and wrong. There is good and bad",

and that we had to understand the difference. In that book, he and other people quoted from R. H. Tawney, when they said that expediency alone should not justify the way in which we vote on issues. I hope that he will be present with us in the Lobby later, to put some real flesh on those remarks, because he has his chance tonight to protect a very important part of our national life.

Other hon. Members will speak about the amendments that deal with "mornings only". The amendments that I want to speak to specifically are those about Christmas and Easter. If we do nothing else today, surely we should exclude from the Bill Christmas day and Easter day. Easter day especially is a day when the pressures will be on for shops to be open. We heard from the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) earlier about Good Friday and the way in which that has already disappeared as a special day. The same is true of Easter day.

I hope that amendment No. 14 will be relatively non-controversial, although I doubt it, somehow. I suspect that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who I know would have been sympathetic if the amendment had merely mentioned Christmas day, will not support it if it includes Easter day. I hope to be proven wrong by him later, and perhaps I have stirred him into making a few remarks about that amendment.

I strongly support the right hon. Member for Selby's amendments, which are supported by Members in all parts of the Chamber. First, I believe that they would be a boost for small business. Small stores have been especially hard hit by the recession and by the sheer corporate muscle of the big superstores. Of course there is room in the marketplace for small food shops and for large supermarkets, but they can co-exist only if small businesses are given a chance to thrive on Sunday trade.

Large stores make only 5 per cent. of their turnover on Sundays, whereas up to 25 per cent. of small shops' trade takes place on Sundays. Under the Shopping Hours Reform Council option, Sunday trading, which is crucial to small shops' survival, could be cut by half. That is one reason why people should support the right hon. Gentleman's amendment.

Secondly, there is the idea of Sunday as a different day. If those amendments are accepted, Sunday will remain different from the other days of the week. Customers who need to shop for essential foods and household goods will be able to do so, yet the free-for-all of deregulation, with the noise and the environmental cost—issues which I mentioned earlier—and the pressures on small shops to open when the employees would prefer to be with their families, will be avoided.

Thirdly, there is the issue of damage to small shops. Small convenience stores have fought hard to remain viable in the face of increasing competition from supermarkets and superstores. Late night and Sunday opening have been essential to their survival.

In the past 20 years, 50 small stores on average have gone out of business every single week. In 1950, there were 650 supermarkets of more than 2,500 sq ft, and 145,000 independent grocers. In 1992, there were 769 superstores of more than 25,000 sq ft and only 35,000 independent local stores, compared with 145,000 in 1950. That situation will be made much worse unless we provide the protection that the right hon. Member for Selby is trying to provide.

All that is borne out by the "Retail Intelligence Report" for 1993, which reported:

> "for major multiples, business that was formerly going to neighbourhood stores is being picked up as additional business."

For small stores, the SHRC option is not a six-hour option but an eight-hour option, as different superstores choose to trade at different times. As we heard from the hon. Member for Swansea, East, not only will workers have to work an hour in advance of opening and an hour at the end of opening, but they will have the travelling time involved, which will require them to work up to nine hours on a Sunday.

Fourthly, there is the issue of job losses. The London Economics survey for 1993 stated that the SHRC option would lead to about 5,000 job losses. They would come mainly from the small shops sector. That is another reason why the amendment should be supported.

Fifthly, I want to tackle the myth of freedom of choice, which the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden advanced. The SHRC and the right hon. Lady seek to justify their deregulatory proposals in the name of freedom of choice. That argument is superficially plausible, but in practice it is bogus.

When small stores close as a result of a superstore trading on Sundays, the freedom of choice of millions of people, including some of the most disadvantaged groups, will be much reduced. The public understand this, even if the SHRC and the right hon. Lady do not. Eighty per cent. of respondents to a National Opinion Polls poll conducted in September 1990 said that they would oppose wider Sunday opening if it would cause smaller shops to close.

There is also the issue of community life. Small shops' decline undermines the social fabric of community life. The Rural Development Commission has emphasised the importance of small shops in rural communities. When they go out of business, it is the elderly, the disabled, women at home with children, and those without transport who suffer. Community shops are highly valued by the public. In September 1992, a *Countryweek* survey asked villages which of their institutions was the most important. The shop came first with 50 per cent., the church second with 40 per cent., the village hall third and the pub fourth.

Deregulation would not, as so many people have argued, lead to increased profits. Even those who advocate deregulation acknowledge that Sunday trading would not increase profits. John Dowd, the managing director of Morrisons, which was reluctantly forced to open on Sundays to maintain market share, said:

> "There is no more trade to be had. There is only one cake; to slice into seven pieces rather than the six does not make the cake bigger".

Even David Quarmby, the managing director of Sainsbury, admitted:

> "It is not particularly commercial. I mean, it is almost profit-neutral for us."

Although there may be a little extra trade for the superstores which currently open under deregulation, the advantage would be wiped out as all the competitors opened on Sunday.

8.30 pm

A study by the Small Business Research Centre in Cambridge found that only 10 per cent. of firms thought that Sunday trading would boost their sales and profitability. Half of firms thought that their profitability would decline.

In summary, the small shops sector has already had a foretaste of the effects of the Shopping Hours Reform Council option, since superstores, started opening on Sundays. It has had a detrimental effect on the turnover of local shops. Superstores do not need such trade—as we heard from Sainsbury, it is profit-neutral—but for small stores and shops, Sunday trade is crucial for survival.

If the SHRC proposal became law, the effect would be felt not immediately but within three to five years, when market share would be concentrated in the hands of superstores, and local shops and high streets could have virtually disappeared.

For those reasons, I hope not only that the House will accept my amendment dealing with Easter and Christmas and the amendments that seek to limit Sunday opening to mornings only, but that the amendment proposed by the right hon. Member for Selby, which deals with the size of shops—the big and the small and the less-than-3,000 sq ft option—will commend itself to every hon. Member, irrespective of party.

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I shall follow on from the points made by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) in his excellent speech. He referred to other amendments in the main group and I speak in support of amendment No. 38 and the consequential amendments which stand in my name and that of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley).

The amendments are straightforward and easily understood. Their purpose is to restrict the opening hours of the larger stores to Sunday mornings with 1 pm as the closing time. If the House were to accept them, we should achieve the best compromise, and we have talked much about compromise in this debate.

The half-day opening of shops has always been a successful method of giving staff a good family break and instead of having a complicated system of registration and notices of the particular six hours during which shops intend to open on Sundays, as will happen under the present six-hour shopping day proposals, no notices are required under our proposals. In addition, registration with local authorities, would not be necessary, although one of our consequential amendments would provide for a local registration system to assist local authorities, but that could easily be dropped by the Government if they felt that it was not necessary.

In the debate on 8 December, much was made of the suggestion that a six-hour option was the "compromise" option, but, in a situation where many hon. Members might not have ideally chosen any of the three options, the six-hour option may have been selected—by a very small majority of 16 on the second vote—as merely the best of what was on offer. If Sunday trading for large shops is to be controlled by the number of hours they are permitted to open, it is legitimate for the House to consider the exact number of hours. I should like to explore first how many hours constitute a real compromise and when they might best be accommodated.

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which has been published since the crucial vote on the Sunday options, will permit shops to open without restriction between Monday and Saturday. The extension of opening hours should influence our thinking on what represents a compromise for Sunday opening. We should also identify the competing interests that have to be reconciled in arriving at the right compromise. In this case, we must consider the interest of consumers and small shops, the environment, employees, families and the general quality of life in the community.

To allow shops to open for a half day, as we used to see mid-week or Saturday afternoons, would provide a total of one-and-a-half days within the two-day weekend. I believe that that is a much better compromise than allowing shops to trade for any six hours within an eight-hour window —that is, in effect, for the larger part of a normal working day. If one adds on the time before opening and the clearing-up time, one arrives at a normal working day. Incidentally, the amendments are in line with the pre-Christmas period of extended opening of up to seven hours on the four Sundays. Of course, under the amendments all small shops would continue to be able to trade without restriction throughout the year.

For the benefit of those who are anxious to avoid a return to the 1950 Sunday shopping law, I stress that the amendment would clear up various anomalies and simplify even more than the six-hour option. The question is how half-day opening would sit with retailers and their customers.

We must remember that retail interests have driven the campaign for Sunday shopping in the name of the Shopping Hours Reform Council and they are dominated by DIY and major food retailers such as Sainsbury's, Tesco, Safeway, Asda, B and Q, Texas and Homebase, all of whom have been willing to flout the existing restrictions and laws. However, we must accept that if Sunday trading is permitted for six hours, the forces of competition will drag other retailers in their slipstream, however reluctant they may be initially to trade.

The major food companies are now big retailers of non-food goods. Sainsbury's alone sells perhaps £2 billion worth of non-food goods a year. Marks and Spencer and the John Lewis Partnership, although they believe that Sunday trading will bring no long-term benefit, have said that they will not be able to stand out indefinitely if the household names are driven by competitive forces to open. Who else will resist? What will happen to the smaller shops?

If the better compromise is half-day opening, when should it occur? As I said, morning opening and afternoon closing have precedents. The early-closing day was of great benefit to many people and is still applied through employment laws in many European countries, in Belgium, Luxembourg and Austria, for example. Some may argue that it is better to open in the afternoon on a Sunday rather than in the morning, but that is not better for the consumer; nor is it better socially.

Consumers requiring DIY items or garden equipment on Sunday would be able to buy them sooner rather than later in the day. Equally, those wanting food would be more likely to shop in the morning before the mid-day meal. The same is true for garden centres. Consumer interest clearly backs the Sunday morning opening rather than afternoon opening.

From a social point of view, limiting opening to mornings only would be far more beneficial.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I came to hear my hon. Friend because he is a neighbour, but I am a little puzzled. Some people will want to shop for food and other household goods on Sunday mornings but it would be more normal to visit a garden centre or a DIY shop, and particularly a garden centre, on Sunday afternoon. What has he to say about that?

Sir John Hannam: I do not understand the logic of my hon. Friend's argument. One would not want to buy plants at 4 pm or 5 pm on a Sunday and have to work all through Sunday night to plant them. I have discovered that many garden centres have shop buildings consisting of less than 3,000 sq ft, so that would allow them to stay open throughout the day. Most garden centres will be able to continue trading throughout the day, anyway.

As I was saying, from the social point of view I believe that Sunday morning opening is more beneficial. In the average active hours of the typical citizen on Sunday, from 8.30 in the morning until 10.30 at night, morning shopping could occupy the first four or four and a half hours of a 14-hour day. In the remaining hours, there would be benefits for all the other interests.

Smaller shops would have a better chance of competing with larger shops, thus preserving a vital service for villages and other local communities. Residents of high streets and areas near shopping centres would have peace and quiet for a decent proportion of the day. Shop workers would be home for Sunday lunch, and would be able to spend the rest of the day with their families. From the environmental point of view, half-day opening would limit the estimated increase of 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year that would result from widespread full Sunday trading.

The most important argument about the proposal is that the retail and, more especially, the consumer interests that have driven the campaign for Sunday opening—DIY interests, the garden centres and the food stores—should be sufficiently served by half-day opening, without dragging along in their slipstream, however unwillingly, the rest of the retail industry. That, in turn, would bring real benefits for retail employees.

Those of us with real doubts about the effectiveness of a statutory right not to work on Sunday would welcome a situation in which there would probably be sufficient genuine volunteers for Sunday work on the scale projected for Sunday morning. There would also be less of a reduction in full-time weekday employment in favour of part-time weekend employment. That reduction is a forecast trend that clearly works against the interests of breadwinners' incomes and it is expected to reduce the overall number of jobs in retailing. We have already seen evidence of it in the increase in the number of part-time workers.

I must take account of the argument that morning opening conflicts with church services. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said earlier, the six-hour option poses the same question. However, I suspect that church leaders would regard the morning-only option as preferable to six-hour opening. Many church-going colleagues have argued that those who wish to attend morning services will continue to do so, and they are right. Services last about an hour, so there will still be plenty of time for both worship and Sunday shopping for those who wish to do both.

A dictionary definition of "compromise" is:

> "finding an intermediate way between the conflicting causes by the modification of each".

If we are to have a compromise on Sunday trading, permitting larger shops to open until 1 pm, and until 4 pm on the four Sundays before Christmas, would provide a fairer balance between retail interests and the interests, indeed the survival, of small shops, the environment, employees, families and the community as a whole.

If the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby is rejected, I hope that the House will look favourably on amendment No. 38, which would achieve all that we need to achieve in clearing up the anomalies of existing shop legislation and allow all shops to open for a decent four and a half hours on Sunday morning, giving us all at least a peaceful half day with our families.

8.45 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): It is a curious irony that while the House of Lords is debating the International Year of the Family, we are debating legislation that, whichever decision we make, will have real implications for the family.

I shall speak in support of amendment No. 38 and the consequential amendments so persuasively advocated by the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). I agree with his arguments and there are one or two other points that I should like to raise, too.

On Second Reading, I supported the case put forward jointly by the Keep Sunday Special campaign and Retailers for Shops Act Reform, for two principal reasons. First, it represented the only option before the House on Second Reading that I believed was genuinely concerned with, and committed to, employee protection.

Several hon. Members have advanced the case that Sunday shopping is necessary because women feel unable to shop, or unsafe shopping, outside their normal working hours during the week. I shall read the House a short extract from a letter that I received from one of my constituents, Miss Phyllis Abba, a lady now retired:

> "I worked at Boots when we had to do most of our shopping during our dinner time and I cut out a tea-break to make it a little longer for this purpose, because when we left at 6 pm, and 1 pm on half-day closing, most of the other shops were closed too. So when people talk of needing Sunday for shopping, in these days of much greater leisure, I am not very impressed."

As someone who worked in the shop trade, she found ways to shop for her needs, despite the fact that, because of her employment, she was at work during precisely the hours when shops were open.

The second reason why I supported the Keep Sunday Special and RSAR compromise on Second Reading was my belief that the key issue is whether we want retailing to go the way of small local businesses or the way of national chains. I saw the argument as one between the town centre and out-of-town shopping, between the high street and the hypermarket. I believed that it was important to protect the interests of smaller businesses, which provide a range and diversity not, by their very nature, offered by a small number of large national stores whose shops sell exactly the same products whether they are in York or in Abingdon.

My heart tells me that I ought to support the zero hours option put forward by Keep Sunday Special—and indeed I shall vote for it. But my head tells me that that proposal may not carry the day. If it is carried, the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Exeter and myself will fall. If and only if Keep Sunday Special is not carried will the House have an opportunity to vote for our proposal.

We propose a genuine compromise which provides a genuine half day to allow people who want or need to shop on Sunday to do so. But it would also allow shop workers and others whom Sunday shopping would require to work on Sunday the opportunity to spend at least some of Sunday—the afternoon and evening—with their families, making it different from the days of the normal working week.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I support the hon. Gentleman's half-day proposals; indeed, I suggested something similar on Second Reading. But will he say what arguments he has considered on the possibility of having half-day closing on Sunday morning and half-day opening on Sunday afternoon?

Mr. Bayley: In Committee, I spoke to and supported a similar proposition, but, on reflection, I have come to the opinion that a morning rather than an afternoon Sunday opening provides a better balance between the social need for time off and the commercial needs of retailers to open shops when people would choose to use them.

I understand the conflict between morning opening and church services, but, as the right hon. Member for Selby

[Mr. Bayley]

and the hon. Member for Exeter have explained, people who want to shop as well as go to church would be able to do so under this compromise proposal which allows four and a half or five hours opening on Sunday morning.

The six-hour option put forward by the Shopping Hours Reform Council differs only by degree from the normal eight-hour shopping day. A half day, by contrast, is a step-change difference.

Mr. Couchman: The hon. Gentleman speaks of a normal eight-hour shopping day. Most of the large stores now open from 8 o'clock in the morning until 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. Thus, a normal shopping day is 11 or 12 hours.

Mr. Bayley: I speak of my constituency. With the exception of Thursday and Friday, the normal hours for almost all shops are 9 am to 5 pm or 5.30 pm. It is a shopping day of about eight hours. If the hon. Member is arguing that the nature of retailing is changing in such a way that more and more shops open 12 hours, he will have to accept that the argument for Sunday opening is weakened and is getting weaker day by day. When that is coupled with the implications of the Government's deregulation legislation, which will enable and encourage shopkeepers to open more hours of the day, the argument that some people cannot shop during the week will become less and less valid.

I should like to say a word or two about employee protection. I welcome the Government's concessions in this regard, but, as we all know, real protection will be impossible to enforce by statute. In the real world of nods and winks, shop workers realise that they will progress only if they conform to the wishes of their employers. When an employer wants seven-day opening, employees will, at the very least, compromise their career prospects, and perhaps even risk their jobs, if they do not go along.

Anyone who wants a future in the retail trade will have to agree to work on Sundays, and most will agree. Work will have to come first, and families second, seven days a week rather than just six. Shop workers know that protection can be obtained only by their going to an industrial tribunal and they realise that such redress is slow, that the penalties are inadequate and that, even if the judgment goes their way, their chances of reinstatement in employment are virtually nil.

Shop workers will have seen the press reports appearing even at a time when one might have thought that the retail companies would be keeping a low profile. I refer to the period of the passage of this legislation. There have been newspaper reports of the firing of shop workers who refused to work on Sundays and of the letter to Sainsbury managers telling them that if they wanted to keep their jobs they would have to go in on Sundays.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: They retracted it.

Mr. Bayley: Of course. They would, wouldn't they?

We all know that anyone who wants a career in a major chain that opens seven days a week will have to be prepared to work on Sunday.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the best form of protection would be the old Puritan idea of double time on Sunday? There is some irony in the compromise that resulted in the proposal of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—I refer to amendment No. 14—with a view to protecting Christmas, which the Puritans were against. The Bill is riding roughshod over all employment traditions and practices in this nation.

Mr. Bayley: I agree that double time would be a very good thing, but—sadly—we know that that will not happen. As such protection is not available, some other protection is needed.

The House has voted for a measure of Sunday trading. This will result in people who are employed in the retail trade having to work on Sunday. The legal protection embodied in the Bill simply will not amount to real protection for most employees. Protection can be provided only by a decision of Parliament that shops are not allowed to open at certain times and that any shopkeeper opening will be breaking the law. This amendment is a compromise. It provides that all shops will be able to open on the first part of Sunday, but that only small shops will be allowed to open for the rest of the day. Under all the proposals, the latter has been agreed to.

I should like, finally, to deal with a couple of technical points. The amendment proposes what was contained in the original Retailers for Shops Act Reform and Keep Sunday Special compromise proposal at the time of the Second Reading. The compromise was that shopping should be allowed throughout the day on the four Sundays before Christmas. That is a realistic and practical proposition, and it is provided for in the compromise that I propose.

At the time of the Second Reading, the SHRC presented an eight-hour opening period as a compromise. As we discovered in Committee, the period of disruption caused by shopping will be not eight hours but, taking into account the shopping-up period, eight and a half hours.

Mr. Fabricant: Six hours.

Mr. Bayley: It is eight and a half hours. Shops will be allowed to open from 10 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock in the evening, and people will be able to continue shopping until 6.30. That was presented as a compromise, but it was never a genuine compromise.

This issue has divided the House deeply for far longer than the period of my membership. If hon. Members want a compromise that will allow a measure of shopping on Sunday for those to whom that is important but also provide a measure of real protection for shop workers and their families, amendment No. 38 is a way forward, and I recommend it to the House.

Mr. John Marshall: Listening to some of the speeches tonight, I sensed that I was listening to individuals who rarely, if ever, go shopping. We have just heard a speech from the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), in which he suggested that his amendment was a compromise and that supermarkets would open at 8.30 in the morning and people would rush out to shop at that time. If he went round supermarkets on Sundays, he would know that relatively few people go in before 11 o'clock in the morning.

Even if amendment No. 38, tabled by the hon. Member for York and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) were accepted, supermarkets would not open before 10 am. So the amendment provides a three-hour option. It does not seem to me that a shopping day of three hours for supermarkets can be described as a compromise.

Let hon. Members who are thinking of voting for amendment No. 38 remember that they would deprive the checkout girls at Tesco of £24 every Sunday. Instead of having a six-hour working Sunday, they would have a three-hour working Sunday. I do not believe that it is up to Members of Parliament to salve their consciences at the expense of checkout girls at Tesco, Sainsbury and Asda. Amendment No. 38 is not a compromise. It is anything but a compromise. It would cut the working day to three hours rather than six or six and a half hours.

Amendment No. 14 has been tabled by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). I believe that he is wrong to say that on Easter Sunday people do not want to go and shop. If people want to buy plants from a garden centre, they will frequently want to do so on Easter Sunday. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) made that point in Committee when we were talking about Easter Sunday. I had to remind the hon. Member for Mossley Hill that Easter day was always a Sunday. He did not seem to know that.

9 pm

Mr. Alton: If the hon. Gentleman will calm down for just a moment, will he be good enough to confirm that he does not believe that there should be any exemption for either Christmas day when it falls on a Sunday or Easter day?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not true. I specifically offered to sign an amendment if he would limit it to Christmas day when it falls on a Sunday. I said to him that it was not right to impose his restrictions on individuals who wanted to go shopping for plants, go to DIY centres or to motor around the country on Easter Sunday. That is why I was willing to agree with him on Christmas day. I acted in the spirit of compromise, but he wanted all or nothing and was not willing to give way.

Mr. Alton: The hon. Gentleman will accept, because of his deep knowledge of the calendar, that Christmas day rarely falls on a Sunday. The festival of Easter begins on the Friday before Easter. Good Friday is a good example. It was once a special day in this country. It no longer is. Will not Easter day and Christmas day go precisely the same way as Good Friday if the hon. Gentleman does not support an amendment such as mine tonight?

Mr. Marshall: There is no reason why. It is a defensive position for spokesmen of the Church to come to the House and say, "Unless you give us the protection of telling people that they cannot shop on Easter day and Christmas day, those days will go the way of Good Friday." It is up to the churches in this country to have a message to give to the people of this country.

I was surprised today to receive a letter from the Bishop of London. I looked for a letter from the Bishop of London before we voted last Monday. Did I get one? No. Have I ever had a letter from him on overseas aid? No. Did I receive a letter from the Bishop of London when the House dealt with the abortion measure introduced by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill? No. The only issue that seems to concern the Bishop of London is Sunday trading.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: The Bill does not apply to Northern Ireland, so I will not give way to Northern Irish Members. If the churches of this country had a message for the people——

Rev. Martin Smyth: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Will you confirm that in discussing any motion before the House we are all equal within the House and that for a Member to refuse to give way to a person who comes from another part of the Kingdom is a shame on British democracy although it may reflect the attitude of the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): All hon. Members are indeed equal, whatever part of the United Kingdom they represent, but when an hon. Member has the Floor it is entirely up to him or her whether to give way.

Rev. William McCrea: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. Will you help me? As I seemingly have no right to intervene, will I have the right to vote at the end of the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not expect me to guide him on that.

Mr. Marshall: What I was really saying was that the Bill affects certain parts of the United Kingdom and not others. Those who heard my speech last time the House discussed the Bill will know that I gave way seven times during my speech. I am happy to give way, but I ought to give priority to those whose constituents will be affected by the Bill rather than to others whose constituents will not.

Mr. Alton *rose*——

Mr. Marshall: To show that I am a man of tolerance, I will give way to the Jack-in-the-box on the Liberal Benches.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but will he correct the record? He complained a few moments ago about the Bishop of London. The Bishop of London was not the Bishop of London when the measure that I promoted was before the House. The then Bishop of London, Graham Leonard, was a considerable supporter of that Bill and spoke in favour of it in the other place.

Mr. Marshall: I did not think that that Bill actually reached the other place, but the then Bishop of London did not see fit to write to the then hon. Member for Hendon, South about it in any event. This is the only piece of legislation coming through the House about which I have ever had a letter from the Bishop of London. It says something about the priorities of the Church that this is the only matter on which it sees fit to write to me. I would prefer it to write to me about overseas aid or some of the other great moral issues facing us.

There are good reasons why supermarkets should be allowed to open on Sunday. First, it is what the customer wants. It is no use the hon. Member for Mossley Hill referring to opinion polls. The fact is that more housewives go shopping on a Sunday than on a Monday, a Tuesday or a Wednesday. When I went round various supermarkets last autumn I asked people why they were shopping on that particular day. They told me that it was because it was convenient. The ladies were able to persuade their husbands to go with them, and some of the husbands may have paid the bill at the end. The children were out with

[Mr. Marshall]

them. On one occasion, I saw a son of about 40 taking his 70-year-old mother shopping. He had shopped for himself on the Saturday and was shopping in a different part of London with his mother on the Sunday. The consumer wants it. The housewife wants it.

Secondly, employees want it. A large number of them work only on a Sunday. They ask us to let them keep their Sunday money because they need it. It is not right for hon. Members to salve their consciences by preventing shopworkers from earning £48.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be most grateful if the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) would sit properly in the Chamber.

Mr. Marshall: The third reason why supermarkets should be allowed to open on Sunday is that they offer——

Mr. Bayley: Before the hon. Member makes his third point, he has said that it is wrong of those such as myself who support the compromise half-day amendment to seek to deprive Sunday shopworkers of part of their earnings. Did he not hear the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) say that the Home Office, on its own research that it commissioned from London Economics, had found that if the Shopping Hours Reform Council's proposal went through it would cut the number of whole-time equivalent retail jobs by some 5,000? So what the hon. Gentleman is arguing for—more opening on Sunday—will redistribute jobs, not create more, and will reduce the number of jobs and therefore the number of opportunities for people who need the money to earn it by working in retailing.

Mr. Marshall: I do not necessarily accept that if shops open for a longer time, one will end up with fewer jobs. It does not seem very logical. As one who was for many years a professional economist, I have always known that economic forecasts were never as precise as the hon. Gentleman seeks to make them. It was always said that if one had five economists in a room one would have five different opinions, unless Lord Keynes was one of them, in which case there would be six. So I do not accept that a particular survey makes that point.

The third reason why I believe that supermarkets should be allowed to open, not for the half-day option, but for somewhat longer than the three hours proposed by the hon. Member for York, is that prices in supermarkets are substantially lower than elsewhere. I have told the House before of a visit that I made to two shops in my constituency. One was 7-Eleven, the sort of shop that the hon. Member for York would keep open all day, and the other was Food Giant, a large supermarket. The basket of goods bought from Food Giant cost £13·74; precisely the same goods from the 7-Eleven store cost £18·35——

Mr. Lord: Which one makes the most profit?

Mr. Marshall: The 7-Eleven store has never been a particularly successful retailer, while Food Giant, which is part of the Gateway chain, has been relatively successful. Neither of the two stores is brilliantly profitable, but Food Giant is slightly more profitable than 7-Eleven. However, I do not think that that is relevant to the issue, which is whether the customer should have the opportunity to do whatever he or she wants to do. The question we should address is whether the pensioners of Hendon should have the chance to buy pints of milk at 25p from Food Giant or at 38p from 7-Eleven. I believe that many customers would prefer to shop at low prices rather than to be cajoled or forced into shops with goods at high prices.

Today, one or two hon. Members have talked about the cost of Sunday opening and have mentioned refuse. Everyone connected with local authorities knows that every retailer has to have a trade refuse agreement with the local authority—that is certainly true of larger retailers. The store will have to pay for any refuse around it to be collected. I know that a certain amount of refuse is created on Sunday, but it is normally created by take-away food restaurants which are not subject to opening restrictions under the Bill. It is perfectly possible for Burger King to open at almost any time on a Sunday, create refuse and not pay for it to be taken away.

Parking is a subject which frequently upsets my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). She should recognise that the one group in society that frequently supply car parking spaces for their customers to use are supermarkets. People visiting supermarkets in my constituency park in the supermarket car park. Difficulties would arise in my constituency if supermarkets were told that they could not open and people had to shop in Golders Green road, where double parking frequently occurs. Parking problems there are a thousand times worse than outside any supermarket.

People have shown that they like Sunday shopping. Individuals like to work on Sunday, and are queuing up to do so. We should listen to the voice of the British people. We have heard the name of Churchill mentioned this evening; I should like to quote the words of Lord Randolph Churchill, who said, "Trust the people". I believe that if we trust the people we shall obtain a perfectly satisfactory compromise.

Mr. Fabricant: I do not intend to reiterate a number of the points that have already been made today and in Committee. The same issues were raised when I had the privilege to serve on the Committee that discussed the private Bill of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), the Shops (Amendment) Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) raised a number of interesting issues. He said that small village shops would suffer if supermarkets were allowed to open on Sundays. In Lichfield, rightly or wrongly, the supermarkets open on Sundays—Tesco and Safeway both do so—and the village shops around Lichfield are thriving. There is a market for the supermarket and there is also a market for the small corner shop—the two are not mutually exclusive.

A number of hon. Members have said that there is no demand for Sunday trading—that is incredible, and I wonder whether they have ever been shopping on a Sunday. When I listen to some hon. Members, I wonder whether they shop at all. They may have husbands, wives or even, heaven forbid, servants who shop for them. As a single man, I have to shop on a Sunday and I can tell the House that the supermarkets are full—that is not only my personal experience; research shows that 25 million people now shop regularly on Sunday. A total of 11 million people shop every Sunday, so to say that there is no demand for shopping on Sundays is ridiculous.

The option to shop only on Sunday mornings is equally ridiculous. For those of us who work hard, which includes all 651 Members of the House, Sunday is the only opportunity for a lie-in. That means getting up, perhaps listening to the omnibus edition of the Archers, gradually getting dressed at 11.15 and strolling to the shops at midday. If shops closed after midday, there would be no opportunity to shop.

Some people in Lichfield would condemn me for listening to the omnibus edition of the Archers and others would say that I should be at the cathedral, which is only 50 yards from where I live. On some Sunday mornings, I do worship at the cathedral. How could I do that if I were expected to shop at the same time on Sunday mornings? It would not be practical.

9.15 pm

Another amendment says that, as a result of deregulation, ladies and gentlemen can shop from 9 o'clock in the evening until midnight on weekdays. That is a fallacy. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) asked, what lady in her right mind living in an inner city would go out at 11 o'clock at night and push her trolley round a shop? How can that be an alternative to shopping on a Sunday?

If the amendment were passed and if Third Reading did not go through, 180,000 people who now work in supermarkets and stores on Sundays would find themselves out of a job. Is that what hon. Members on either side want? For those worried about premium pay, may I simply point out that people who work on Sundays receive on average 1·9 times the pay that they would get on a weekday.

This group of amendments does not make sense and I urge the House to reject them.

Mr. Couchman: I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on the way in which he introduced his amendments. He made an eloquent and elegant opening speech to introduce what are, none the less, wrecking amendments. Both he and the House know that. He said that shutting large shops on Sundays would ease matters for small shops. In saying that, without that pressure, small shops would not have to open on Sundays, he revealed his true position, for he would much prefer it if no shops opened on Sundays.

My right hon. Friend's views would find some sympathy from the group OPEN which has encouraged and exhorted hon. Members, as it did in its letter to me dated 21 February in which it suggested that we should support my right hon. Friend's amendments because they would take the pressure off small shops and allow them to open on Sundays, keeping all large shops shut. It quoted evidence from a London Economics survey, which forecast that if the Bill is enacted, 5,000 jobs will be lost in the small shops sector. If that figure is correct—I do not for a moment believe that it is—it compares with the 180,000 people who now work mostly in the large shops sector, who would lose their jobs if the amendments were passed.

Those who lose their jobs will lose an income that is important to their households and would not qualify for redundancy pay. Many people who work on Sundays are students who value an opportunity to add to their grants or loans.

We have heard a lot about employee rights from opponents of Sunday shopping. I received a letter, dated 16 February, from the deputy general secretary of USDAW, Bill Connor. He states:

> "We welcome the incorporation of an employee rights package into the Sunday Trading Bill, which was agreed on Wednesday, 9th February 1994, ensuring that Sunday working will be on a voluntary basis in the retail sector for existing and future employees. Given the level of turnover and the number of part-time workers in the industry, we particularly welcome the right of access to a tribunal without any qualifying terms."

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The rights of future workers, on which we lost the amendment, are not covered.

Mr. Couchman: I am more inclined to take the word of the deputy general secretary of USDAW. He makes it clear that those rights will exist for present and future employees and that they will have access to a tribunal without any qualifying service or number of hours worked.

Interestingly, Mr. Connor also states:

> "If one looks specifically at premium payments, as an example, it is in the major companies with whom we have agreements that our members receive either double-time payments or some significant premium for working on a Sunday. In the smaller stores premium payments have virtually disappeared".

If the amendments are passed, they would restrict the number of people who work on a Sunday who would receive premium pay.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): We do not have any of those idiotic regulations in Scotland. How is anyone to shop on Monday if someone does not man the heating, lights and transport on Sunday? Is it not all a lot of bogus hypocrisy?

Mr. Couchman: I am interested in that intervention by my hon. and learned Friend. It is not the first intervention from a Scottish Member. I think that it was the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) who, in a long intervention, said that his wife enjoyed shopping on Sundays. How many Scottish Members, particularly those on the Opposition Benches, will feel inclined to deprive English housewives of the right to shop in the shop of their choice on a Sunday while allowing their wives to continue to shop in whatever shop chooses to open in Scotland on Sunday?

In his letter, Mr. Connor also talks of an agreement that he and his union have reached with the major employers who make up the principal supporters of the Shopping Hours Reform Council. That agreement with Sainsbury, Tesco, Kingfisher, Boots, Dixons, Asda, Argyll, and W H Smith includes all sorts of undertakings and in it the employers

> "reaffirm their statement . . . that they will continue to pay current premium rates of pay to Sunday employees . . . that they would only require employees to give one month's notice of their intention to opt out of Sunday work . . . that they would incorporate the right to opt out of Sunday work into employees' terms and conditions of employment . . . that they would endeavour to make the opting-out procedure as simple as possible . . . that where an existing shop worker opts out of Sunday work the employer will use his/her best endeavour to reschedule the employee's lost working hours elsewhere subject to the needs of the business."

Interestingly, the agreement also states that if the

> "standard working week for shop floor employees shall not exceed 39 hours . . . hours worked in excess of this will be paid at currently agreed rates."

Because of that agreement, Mr. Connor exhorts the House to give a speedy passage to the Bill and asks us all to vote for the Third Reading.

That is an interesting letter from an erstwhile opponent of Sunday trading and the change has come about because USDAW has sensibly responded to the needs, desires and

[Mr. Couchman]

wants of its members. Many of them work in large shops which, if the amendment were passed, would be forced to close.

We must lay to rest the question of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. I shall quote in full a paragraph in the letter from Mr. Nigel Matthews, the group secretary of Sainsbury, which I am sure hon. Members have received. It states:

> "I understand that during the debate on the Sunday Trading Bill this Wednesday there may be some who will seek to link the provisions of the Deregulation Bill to Sunday trading. I would like to make Sainsbury's position clear on this issue. While we generally welcome deregulation, we would not expect to make any significant changes in our trading hours. Our trading hours reflect the needs of our customers, and we have no evidence from our current trading patterns that there is a widespread wish for people to shop extended hours on weekdays."

In her excellent speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) advanced the case for rejecting the amendments and said that few housewives will wish to shop between 8 o'clock in the evening and midnight.

Mr. Alton: By saying that he hopes that we will negative the amendments, the hon. Gentleman implies that he opposes them all. Will he confirm that he is in favour of shops opening on Christmas day when it falls on a Sunday and on Easter day, as that is one of the amendments on which we shall vote?

Mr. Couchman: I think that very few shops will open on Christmas day when it falls on a Sunday and that, in general, very few, apart from convenience shops which presently open, will do so on Easter day.

These wrecking amendments of whatever strand should be opposed. I include the intriguing amendment in the names of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) and the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley). That amendment would interest only a limited number of large shops. I suspect that it would suit the John Lewis group, which would wish to open its Waitrose supermarkets but not its major stores. That may be where the idea came from.

I was intrigued that we were offered a mornings-only option this time when on Second Reading my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) offered an afternoon-only option for the opening of large shops.

If these substantial amendments are approved, they will stop many do-it-yourself stores, garden centres and supermarkets opening. That would be a tragedy for do-it-yourself stores and garden centres because it would deprive many people of the opportunity to buy the goods that they want for their leisure time on Sundays.

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): I apologise for not being here for part of the debate. I was here when my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) moved his amendment and I place on record my strongest possible support for it. If by some mischance it should fall, I shall support the mornings-only option. I urge the House to take this opportunity once again to try to maintain, as far as we can in this day and age, the special qualities of our Sunday.

My hon. Friend and good neighbour the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) said that these are wrecking amendments. That is nonsense and fails to understand the nature of the legislative procedures of the House. Some people in the House and outside suggest that when the House has taken one vote its will has been expressed for good and all and thereafter anybody who seeks to change or amend that decision is flouting the will of Parliament. That is nonsense and I hope that every hon. Member understands that.

The will of the House or of Parliament is tested only when legislation has passed through all its stages in both Houses and has been tested in Committee and by the resolve of the House being tested in every possible way. Our measures are law only when they receive Royal Assent. It is quite right and proper that at every stage in this House, including Third Reading, and in another place, hon. Members should seek to change the legislation in any way they can. That is exactly what we are trying to do, and rightly so, and we shall continue to do so.

I place on record again my sadness and disappointment that we did not vote to keep Sunday special. I hope that subsequent events will have persuaded enough hon. Members to take this further opportunity to prevent us from going down that sad road.

9.30 pm

Listening to some of the arguments that we have heard before—it is not right to rehearse them again today—one would feel that we are simply arguing about the checkout in Tesco in 1994. It is much more than that; we are arguing about the nature of the society that we have inherited and what we pass on to future generations. The decision that we make today on the vote and the legislation is about much more than the retail war of the 1980s and 1990s—the DIY war and the superstore war. We are making a decision that will outlast all those factors and will influence our society for 100 years to come.

When we open up Sunday trading without any regulation, although none of us can forecast what will happen tomorrow or the day after, it is a reasonable assumption that in years to come Sunday will be exactly the same as every other day of the week. That is the decision that we are taking and we should not take it lightly or throw away the opportunity to say that we wish to keep Sunday a quieter day and a special day, and to seize every opportunity to do so.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, but I do not follow his assumption that Sunday will become like any other day. That is not the case in Scotland, where Sunday trading is allowed. There are those who say that Scotland is different from England and Wales, but we heard earlier in the debate that there is no restriction on Sunday trading in many states of the United States. In many of the states of New England, where there are small shops, Sunday is still a very different day, although there is derestriction.

Sir Roger Moate: My hon. Friend has made that point on many occasions. It is a matter of judgment. I am talking not about Scotland, but about England and Wales; I am talking not about the United States, but about our society. We are trying to make a judgment about the shape of our society in years to come. I really cannot believe that, given the trend of events, if we open the doors to deregulated shopping, we shall not see the end of Sunday as we know it. Let us make a longer-term judgment for the future.

It is self-evident that if we have total derestriction Sunday will cease to be a special day. Whether it is next year, in 10 years' time or in the lifetime of our children or our children's children, that is the decision we are taking for our society and we should be very careful about what we are doing.

Mr. Alton: I strongly support the point that the hon. Gentleman is making and draw his attention to the evidence that the Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee gave to the Home Secretary, which made it clear that it believes

"that the experiment in Scotland was not a success and was no model to be followed elsewhere."

Sir Roger Moate: The House is now becoming familiar with those arguments.

I wish to make one further point about small shops. The amendment moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) appeals particularly because it allows the opening of small shops and prevents the opening of very large stores, but not necessarily garden centres.

When my hon. Friends—I do not doubt their sincerity —say that they believe in maintaining small shops and defending rural post offices and then argue for total deregulation and for the high streets and the major supermarkets to be open all day Sunday, I begin to doubt their judgment. Frankly, the one major threat to the small shops are the major out-of-town centres and the large supermarkets. If we legislate, as we shall, to allow major stores to open six days a week, 24 hours a day, surely that will provide ample opportunity for shoppers to purchase goods at cheaper prices in supermarkets, if they wish.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does my hon. Friend agree that many small shops are on the brink, and that the Bill could push them beyond the brink?

Sir Roger Moate: My hon. Friend is right. This is a turning point for many small shopkeepers. Unrestricted Sunday opening will deliver a tremendous extra power into the hands of major retailers and large supermarkets. I cannot believe that Parliament wants that to happen. Many small shops, such as rural sub-post offices, will face a further and greater challenge. We should be trying to help those businesses, which have suffered most damage in recent years, yet no one seems anxious to help them—save those who support my right hon. Friend's amendment.

I hope that the House will take this late opportunity, seize the chance to back my right hon. Friend's amendment and send a message to the country that we will protect smaller shops, keep Sunday special and protect full-time jobs the rest of the week—albeit at the loss of some part-time jobs on Sunday.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

9.45 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I missed the vote through no fault of my own. I came over from Millbank as soon as it was called, and arrived in good time; but there was a great logjam, and it was impossible to get through, although I pushed and shoved. May I urge you, Madam Speaker, to call off the Division and call another so that I can exercise my rights? This is very important, because many of my constituents have raised the matter with me and want me to vote on it.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has just pointed out that he arrived on the premises, and in the precinct, in time to vote. The fact that a lot of hon. Members are milling around is not the responsibility of the Chair. Hon. Members know that there are Divisions tonight, and they should know which Lobbies they are going to go into. I have watched the clock very carefully, and I am not prepared to have a recount. I caution hon. Members that Divisions are taking place; they must know which Lobby they are going to enter, and they must be prepared to do so. That is the end of it.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge) *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I arrived on time, and it was impossible to get through the Lobby, although I was here a good two minutes before the doors were locked. My constituents, too, want me to vote consistently, as I have voted before.

Madam Speaker: The system has been functioning in the House for many years. Very seldom do Members of Parliament find it impossible to get into the Division Lobby of their choice, and I am not prepared to accept that as an excuse tonight, simply because Members of Parliament are standing around. Let me repeat that hon. Members know the way in which they will vote on these issues. The Chair has kept the Division Lobbies open for the appropriate time and hon. Members are responsible for themselves.

Mr. Alton *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you ask the Serjeant at Arms to conduct an inquiry into the way in which— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to sit down.

Mr. Alton *(seated and covered):* Once the vote has been concluded, Madam Speaker, will you ask the Serjeant at Arms to give you a report about the scenes outside the Lobby? You were not able to observe those scenes, Madam Speaker, but some of us did, and they were more reminiscent of the Portobello road than of the House of Commons. They clearly prevented some hon. Members from exercising their right to vote. We hope that you will ensure that there is no repetition of those scenes when the next vote is taken, on the exclusion of Christmas day and Easter Sunday from the provisions of the Bill, and on whether people should be able to shop on those days.

Madam Speaker: Of course, if it is necessary. Are there any more points of order?

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman looks far smarter like that, if I may say so.

Mr. Renton *(seated and covered):* With the greatest respect, Madam Speaker, I have voted in the House on many occasions, over quite a few years. When I arrived in the Lobby just outside to vote just now, there was a considerable scrimmage, and it was very hard to get through to the No Lobby. People were explaining which way to go. I must say that I think that the Division should be recalled on account of the amount of pressurising and lobbying that was going on outside. I found it impossible to get through to the No Lobby.

Madam Speaker: I am very surprised indeed to hear that hon. Members did not know which way to vote and were being persuaded. I am waiting for the Tellers to deliver the figures.

Mr. Quentin Davies *(seated and covered):* Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have succeeded in voting this evening, but I was just in the Dining Room when the Division began. There has been a new factor during the past few months. It is perfectly true that, for years and years, Members have managed to get into the Division Lobbies on time. There is a new factor. From 7 Millbank, where I have my office, it takes at least six minutes, even without any——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am well aware of that factor. I have in fact paced it myself.

The House having divided: Ayes 239, Noes 300.

Division No. 141] **[9.36 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob

Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*

Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bill Olner and
Mr. Michael Lord.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*

Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive

Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucl'if)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Denham, John
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John

Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heppell, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald

Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian

Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes :
Mr. John Marshall and
Mr. Michael Fabricant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendments made: No. 28, in page 3, line 37, after 'of' insert 'retail'.

No. 56, in page 3, line 39, leave out from 'below' to end of line 43 and insert

'or

(b) any shop in respect of which a notice under paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 2 to this Act (shops occupied by persons observing the Jewish Sabbath) has effect'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Schedule 1

RESTRICTIONS ON SUNDAY OPENING OF LARGE SHOPS

Amendment proposed, No. 38, in page 3, line 45, leave out from 'shop' to end of line 46 and insert—

'(a) in respect of any Sunday other than a Sunday specified in sub-paragraph (b) below, before 1 pm, and

(b) in respect of any Sunday falling within the period in any year commencing with 27th November and ending with 24th December, before 4 pm.'.—*[Sir John Hannam.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Madam Speaker: Order. I should be glad if the Serjeant would ensure that the Lobby doors are clear so that hon. Members are able to vote. I should like a report as soon as the Division is over.

The House having divided: Ayes 258, Noes 308.

Division No. 142] **[7.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir John Hannam and
Mr. Hugh Bayley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin

Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Marshall, and
Mr. Michael Fabricant.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the Sunday Trading Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 14, in page 3, line 46, at end insert—

"but this sub-paragraph has effect subject to sub-paragraph (4) below.

(4) The exemption conferred by sub-paragraph (3) above does not apply where the Sunday is Easter Day or Christmas Day'.—*[Mr. Alton.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 247.

Division No. 143] **[10.06 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bendall, Vivian
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gryffis, Sir Michael
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Robathan, Andrew
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Ms Liz Lynne and
Mrs. Ray Michie.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bournemouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dowd, Jim
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Fry, Sir Peter
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
O'Hara, Edward
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Marshall and
Mr. Michael Fabricant.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 4, line 7, leave out from 'is' to 'medicinal' in line 8 and insert

'not open for the retail sale of any goods other than'.

No. 30, in page 4, line 14, leave out from 'is' to 'food' and insert

'not open for the retail sale of any goods other than'.

No. 31, in page 4, line 38, after 'Sunday' insert

'for the serving of retail customers'.

No. 32, in page 5, line 16, after 'of' insert 'retail'.

No. 33, in page 5, line 30, at end insert 'retail'.

No. 34, in page 5, line 32, at end insert 'retail'.
—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Schedule 2

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO SCHEDULE 1

Amendments made: No. 55, in page 5, line 40, leave out '"local authority" and "shop" have' and insert '"shop" has'.

No. 57, in page 7, line 16, leave out from beginning to end of line 2 on page 9 and insert—

'9.—(1) A person of the Jewish religion who is the occupier of a large shop may give to the local authority for the area in which the shop is situated a notice signed by him stating—

(a) that he is a person of the Jewish religion, and

(b) that he intends to keep the shop closed for the serving of customers on the Jewish Sabbath.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph, a shop occupied by a partnership or company shall be taken to be occupied by a person of the Jewish religion if, and only if, the majority of the partners or of the directors, as the case may be, are persons of that religion.

(3) A notice under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be accompanied by a certificate signed by an authorised person that the person giving the notice is a person of the Jewish religion.

(4) Where the occupier of the shop is a partnership or company—

(a) any notice under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be given by the majority of the partners or directors and, if not given by all of them, shall specify the names of the other partners or directors, and

(b) a certificate under sub-paragraph (3) above is required in relation to each of the persons by whom such a notice is given.

(5) Every local authority shall keep a register containing particulars of the name (if any) and address of every shop in respect of which a notice under sub-paragraph (1) above has effect.

(6) Any register kept under this paragraph—

(a) shall be open to inspection by members of the public at all reasonable times, and

(b) may be kept by means of a computer.

(7) If there is any change—

(a) in the occupation of a shop in respect of which a notice under sub-paragraph (1) above has effect, or

(b) in any partnership or among the directors of any company by which such a shop is occupied,

the notice shall be taken to be cancelled at the end of the period of 14 days beginning with the day on which the change occurred, unless during that period, or within such further time as may be allowed by the local authority, a fresh notice is given under sub-paragraph (1) above in respect of the shop.

(8) Where a fresh notice is given under sub-paragraph (1) above by reason of a change of the kind mentioned in sub-paragraph (7) above, the local authority may dispense with the certificate required by sub-paragraph (3) above in the case of any person in respect of whom such a certificate has been provided in connection with a former notice in respect of that shop or any other shop in the area of the local authority.

(9) A notice given under sub-paragraph (1) above in respect of any shop shall be cancelled on application in that behalf being made to the local authority by the occupier of the shop.

(10) A person who, in a notice or certificate given for the purposes of this paragraph, makes a statement which is false in a material respect and which he knows to be false or does not believe to be true shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(11) Where a person is convicted of an offence under sub-paragraph (10) above, the local authority may cancel any notice under sub-paragraph (1) above to which the offence relates.

(12) In this paragraph—

"authorised person", in relation to a notice under sub-paragraph (1) above, means—

(a) the Minister of the synagogue of which the person giving the notice is a member,

(b) the secretary of that synagogue, or

(c) any other person nominated for the purposes of this paragraph by the President of the London Committee of Deputies of the British Jews (otherwise known as the Board of Deputies of British Jews),

"large shop" has the same meaning as in Schedule 1 to this Act, and

"secretary of a synagogue" has the same meaning as in Part IV of the Marriage Act 1949.'.

No. 58, in page 9, line 11, leave out from 'concerned' to end of line 33.

No. 59, in page 9, line 37, leave out from second 'be' to 'includes' in line 41 and insert

'a shop in respect of which a notice has been given under sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 9 above by the person who was then registered as the occupier of the shop; and the provisions of that paragraph in relation to the cancellation of such a notice shall have effect accordingly.

(2) In paragraph 9(8) above, the reference to a certificate provided in connection with a former notice'.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

Schedule 3

RIGHTS OF SHOPWORKERS AS RESPECTS SUNDAY TRADING

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move amendment No. 35, in page 12, line 19, after 'Sunday' insert

'(whether or not as a result of previously giving an opting-in notice)'.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following amendments: Government amendment No. 22.

No. 15, in page 13, line 18, leave out from 'means' to end of line 19 and insert—

'for shopworkers working in shops in respect of which a notice under paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 has taken effect and has not ceased to have effect the period of one month beginning with the day on which the opting-out notice concerned was given and for all other shopworkers the period of three months beginning with the day on which the opting-out notice was given'.

No. 18, in line 19, at end insert—

'Limitation on Working Hours on Sunday

6A. No shopworker shall be employed on Sunday for more than eight hours and any provision in any shopworker's contract of employment or in any agreement which requires, or may have the effect of requiring, that worker to be so employed for more than eight hours is unenforceable to the extent that it so requires or may so require.'.

No. 19, in page 14, line 16, at end insert—

'Right to enhanced pay for Sunday work

9A. A shopworker shall be entitled to remuneration from his employer in respect of shop work undertaken on a Sunday at a rate of pay which exceeds that which he earns in the case of shop work undertaken by him for that employer during his normal working hours on a weekday or in the case of a shopworker required to work only on a Sunday, at a rate of pay which exceeds that earned by a shopworker carrying out similar shop work for that employer during his normal working hours on a weekday.'.

No. 61, in line 16, at end insert—

'9A.(1) A shopworker working in a large shop on a Sunday shall be remunerated at twice the hourly rate applicable on a weekday to that job.

(2) A shopworker working in any shop other than a large shop on a Sunday shall be remunerated at one and a half times the hourly rate applicable on a weekday to that job.

(3) A complaint by a shopworker that he has not been remunerated as required by sub-paragraph (1) or (2) above may be presented to an industrial tribunal.

(4) An industrial tribunal shall not entertain a complaint under sub-paragraph (3) above unless it is presented to the tribunal before the end of the period of three months beginning with the date on which there occurred the action complained of, or where that action is part of a series of similar actions, the last of those actions, or within such further period as the tribunal considers reasonable in a case where it is satisfied that it was not reasonably practicable for the complaint to be presented within the period of three months.

(5) Where on a complaint under sub-paragraph (3) above an industrial tribunal finds that the employer has failed to pay a shopworker the whole or part of the amount thereby required to be paid, the tribunal shall order the employer to pay the employee the amount which it finds due to him.

(6) Compensation payable under sub-paragraph (3) above shall not exceed the limit for the time being imposed by section 75 of the 1978 Act.

(7) In this paragraph, "large shop" has the same meaning in relation to a shop in this Schedule as it has in relation to a shop in Schedule 1.'.

Government amendment No. 23, and amendment No. 21, in page 16, line 33, at end insert—

'14A The extent of any failure by an employer to remunerate a shopworker as required under paragraph 9A above shall be regarded as a deduction made by the employer from the wages of that shopworker and the relevant provisions of Part I of the Wages Act 1986 shall accordingly apply in respect of that failure.'.

Mr. Lloyd: The amendment fulfils another commitment that I made in Committee. It makes explicit on the face of the Bill that the right to opt out of Sunday working subject to three months' notice is a continuing one. It removes any room for doubt that workers who opt into Sunday working retain the right to opt out subsequently if they wish to do so. The only limitation to that right will be the requirement to give employers three months' notice. Workers may opt in and out again on future occasions if they are so minded. I hope that the House will support the amendments.

I also undertook to introduce amendments that specify how shopworkers will be informed of their statutory rights under the Bill. Amendments Nos. 22 and 23 do that by requiring employers to provide all new shopworkers and existing shopworkers opting in with a form describing their right to opt out at three months notice and advising them how they can appeal to a tribunal if they are dismissed for doing so or are treated detrimentally for that reason. The employer must provide each worker involved with the explanatory statement within two months. If he or she does not, the period of notice that the employee may give if he or she wishes to opt out drops to one month. I hope that those amendments will meet with the approval of the House.

Earlier in the debate, reference was made to the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill and the power contained in it to repeal protection in a schedule—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Pike *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. A Minister at the Dispatch Box is trying to explain the amendments and the House should come to order.

Mr. Pike: That is exactly my point of order, Madam Speaker. Although the Minister has a loud voice, it is extremely difficult to hear what is being said.

Madam Speaker: Absolutely—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] It is all very well hon. Members saying "Hear, hear"—I wish that they would obey my blandishments.

Mr. Lloyd: I was talking about the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill. I promised the House earlier that I would return to that subject and it is now germane to the amendments under discussion. That Bill has only just begun its progress through the House. Primary power to alter by order primary legislation is available in that Bill only to get rid of burdens on business. It cannot be used to get rid of necessary protections. We have included in schedule 3 provisions to protect shopworkers precisely because we consider such protections to be necessary.

The Government and I do not believe that a future Government or Parliament would take a different view —such an idea is far fetched. It is not possible for one Government or Parliament to speak for future ones. If a future Government or Parliament sought to use the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, once enacted, to dismantle the protections in schedule 3, that could be a matter for the courts. The legitimacy of any order is finally a matter for the courts, not Ministers, to decide. As I am not a court, all that I can tell the House with authority is that the Government regard the protections in schedule 3 as necessary protections which should not be changed by order.

In answer to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), if any order that is introduced under the deregulation Bill is debated, it must be debated in the Chamber under the affirmative procedure. I think that that is an academic point. I commend the amendments to the House.

Ms Ruddock: First, may I respond to the amendments which the Minister moved? As he noted, they respond in part to concerns that we raised in Committee and we are more than willing to support them because they give force to our concerns.

I wish to speak to amendments Nos. 15, 18, 19 and 21. During the last day of our Committee proceedings on the Floor of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) proposed an amendment that sought to reduce the notice period for all shopworkers who opt out of Sunday working from three months to one month. He made the valid point that three months could be too long a period to keep an unhappy worker doing Sunday duties when he or she had chosen to opt out.

In responding, the Minister made much of the fact that, although large stores with significant numbers of employees could be expected to cope with only one month's notice of opting out, small shops, particularly specialist shops, could not. We have taken that point to heart and tabled amendment No. 15 to accommodate it. It seeks to provide that those who work for large shops covered by the Bill's registration provisions should be required to give only one month's notice of opting out and that those who work for small shops and other shops covered by the Bill should give three months' notice, as proposed by the Government.

Since our last debate, farther ammunition to support our cause has been provided by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, which has struck a voluntary agreement with the Argyll group, Asda, Boots, Dixons, Kingfisher, Sainsbury, Tesco and W. H. Smith to the effect that only one month's notice of opting out will be required by those big companies. That agreement significantly undermines the Government's case and removes most of the objections to which the Minister alluded in his previous contributions. I hope that he will now be minded to reconsider and support our new amendment.

At the heart of the debate about Sunday trading has been the acceptance by virtually all hon. Members that Sunday is different from other days of the week. Most hon. Members have expressed some support for trying to preserve something of the special nature of that day. The Government have had to concede the special nature of Sunday by making express provisions in the Bill to limit large shops' trading to six hours and providing for an opting-measure by which employees can refuse to work on Sundays if they object to doing so.

If a significant number of people are to work on Sundays, albeit voluntarily, in the retail trade, it therefore follows that the House should consider their pay and conditions. The six-hour trading period for large shops

[Ms Ruddock]

may have created the impression that shopworkers are likely to be at work for only six hours and that the number of hours that they will work will automatically be limited. As we discovered in Committee, that is not so. Large shops covered by the registration scheme will require their workers to be in post for at least six and a half hours and possibly even more because they must set up the tills, fill the shelves and carry out shutting-up procedures at the end of the six-hour trading period.

While that is the case for large shops, the Bill enables small shops to open for unrestricted hours on Sundays. It therefore follows that workers in small shops may be required to work for an unrestricted number of hours. That is inappropriate and at odds with the special nature of Sundays, so we have tabled an amendment to limit the hours of all shopworkers on Sundays to eight hours.

That cannot be an inconvenience or be against the financial interests of any shops that trade on Sundays. Eight hours is sufficient for any worker and if small shops open for longer hours they must make appropriate arrangements. If working on Sundays is to be voluntary, people cannot be coerced into working for more than eight hours, whether it is in a small or a large shop.

Shopworkers who work on Sundays must be remunerated in a way that takes into account the special nature of Sunday and the fact that workers have given up potential leisure time to be at work.

From our discussions with employers, we have realised that the pool of shopworkers who are willing to work voluntarily on Sundays is drawn from people who find the present premium payments attractive. In Committee, the Government opposed our amendment to provide for double-time payments for Sunday workers—*[Interruption.]* All those Conservative Members who have spoken today in support of the special nature of Sunday, and who are commenting from a sedentary position on what I am saying, should be willing to vote for the amendment, which will provide for enhanced payments for those who work on Sundays.

Mr. Lord: The hon. Lady knows full well that that argument will not wash with those Conservative Members who want to keep Sunday special. The only way adequately to protect the workers whom she wants to protect is to keep shops shut.

Ms Ruddock: I could accept the integrity of the hon. Gentleman's argument if he had proposed that all shops should shut on Sundays and I could have supported that proposal. He and other hon. Members have proposed that some shops should open and others close. The very shops that the hon. Member would allow to open on Sundays are the small shops, which pay the lowest wages of all. His amendment and others tabled today, which propose a distinction between small and large shops, would not protect workers but would lose them their jobs in the large stores—the very stores that pay premium wages.

As I was saying before I was interrupted, by rejecting our amendment proposing double-time payments the Government have failed to understand the link between premium pay and the voluntary principle.

Before I came to this debate, I was lobbied by workers from my local Tesco—other Members may also have been. I asked them why they had come and why they had been working on Sundays. They came to urge me to vote in favour of the Third Reading and they all said that they worked on Sundays for the money [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Conservative Members are agreeing with me, but they should bear in mind the fact that that money is based on a double-time payment on a Sunday. The payment of double-time wages has provided a group of workers who are voluntarily available to work on Sundays.

The payment of premium wages in the larger stores has produced the demand and the basis for enhanced pay for workers in smaller shops. We remain convinced of the justice of making double-time payments to those who work voluntarily on Sundays.

As I said in Committee, double-time payments are a long-established practice, which recognises the contribution of those who work anti-social hours. Despite Government measures, millions of workers who are legally working anti-social hours are receiving double-time payments. They include local authority and hospital workers and, indeed, civil servants.

Notwithstanding our case for double-time payments, we have tabled amendment No. 19 in a spirit of co-operation and in an attempt to meet some of the Minister's earlier criticisms and the reservations of some supporters of the Keep Sunday Special campaign. The amendment calls for enhanced pay for Sunday working, but we would not have been able to table it in the absence of developments outside the House. Those developments are the direct result of our previous debates and the Government's rejection of our earlier amendments.

Two days after the debate on employment protection in a Committee of the whole House, USDAW and the major companies participating in the Shopping Hours Reform Council campaign entered into a voluntary agreement on premium pay. That agreement would not have been reached but for the pressure for double-time payments that was exerted in the House. Before speaking about the agreement, I should like to tell the House about a survey of about 3,000 stores belonging to the SHRC member companies.

Some 51 per cent. of the workers in the survey currently receive double-time pay; 18 per cent. receive on average 1·9 times the basic pay; and 27 per cent. receive rates varying between time and a half and 1·9 per cent. It is thus possible to say that 96 per cent. of those surveyed received between time and a half and 2·3 times basic pay. They all receive additional payments for working on Sundays and there can be little doubt that they are willing to work for that reason.

If the arrangements in the Bill to enable voluntary workers to say no to working on Sunday are to have real force, the employers will have to continue to pay premium wages. That is the way to get people to volunteer to work. We are not fooled by commercial interests: we know full well the motivation of the companies involved. They are interested in their market share and in profit margins. Equally, no one can deny that when enhanced pay is on offer workers are willing and anxious to work on Sundays.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Lady appreciate that when the system, if it is approved by the House, is up and running, many workers will be obliged to take Monday off in lieu of Sunday?

Ms Ruddock: The hon. Lady's point is not pertinent to the case that I am making.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend says that she understands the difficulties faced by workers in well-organised, large capitalist organisations. She spoke about the agreements reached by USDAW and the other unions with the large multiples for Sunday premium payments. Does she agree that those payments depend on trading conditions and that if those conditions worsen the payments will go out of the window?

Ms Ruddock: When I said that I was in no way fooled by the commercial interests and the motivation of companies, I said it advisedly. It is quite clear from all my contacts with companies and those who work voluntarily on Sundays that the workers consider that by working on Sundays they have a stake in those large companies. That is why we shall support the position taken by USDAW.

The common practices that have been embodied in the voluntary agreements are important and the House should note them.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), I am concerned that the voluntary agreements should stick and, for that reason, I read them into the record tonight. The Argyll group pays double time; ASDA pays double time for full-timers and time and a half for part-timers; Boots pays between time and a half and double time; Dixons pays between 1·7 and 2·3 time, depending on age and grade; Kingfisher pays between time and a half and double time, depending on grade; Sainsbury pays an average of 1·9 time; Tesco pays double time and W. H. Smith pays an average of time and a half.

I believe that those companies, having made voluntary agreements with workers who work on Sunday, must stick to those agreements. If the Bill becomes law, we shall be watching carefully, as will their representatives in the trade unions, to see that they honour their promises.

Having said that, I come to the Dispatch Box, as I did on previous occasions, to say that voluntary agreements are no substitute for the statutory agreements that we have sought. We are quite clear that, although we appreciate those agreements having been made and believe that they were made as a result of Opposition pressure for better worker conditions on Sundays, we would once again ask the House, and all those Conservative Members who have said that they are concerned about workers' rights, to support the amendments to ensure that the amount of time that people work on Sundays is limited to eight hours, that there is enhanced payment for those workers and that those payments, which are the rationale for their working, are the means by which we can ensure that people who work on Sunday do so voluntarily. I commend the amendments to the House and urge the Minister to reconsider.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This debate follows closely those that we had two weeks ago in Committee. I shall therefore try to be brief, though there are some differences worth remarking.

I am flattered that the hon. Lady was so obviously listening to what I said previously. Amendment No. 15, on the period of notice, seeks to encapsulate in statutory form what she took my meaning to be. She was right up to a point. I certainly did argue that no doubt some larger shops with larger staff could accommodate a shorter period of notice than many smaller shops with fewer staff. I am glad that Opposition Members recognise that there is such a distinction. I feel rather churlish that I cannot accept the revised proposal, much more realistic though it is.

Some large shops would find that one month would cause genuine and unreasonable difficulty, especially those that require skilled and knowledgeable staff, such as garden centres and electrical shops. Many reputable traders, such as John Lewis, Burton, Unwins and Coolings nurseries, have explained that three months—not one month—could present their businesses with substantial problems.

They obviously share some of the expectations that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—who, sadly, is not in his place—expressed in Committee when he said from his very different perspective:

"There are many valid and important reasons"

for an employee to want to opt out, including joining

"a sports team or a social club, which has its main event on a Sunday."—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 329.]

People may well want to drop Sunday working for such reasons, but they are considerably less likely to change their job altogether. There are many reasons, as the hon. Member for Mossley Hill explained, why people might want to opt out of Sunday working and we can sympathise with them, but we should also consider the interests of the employer.

The employee is getting a new, long-lasting, special right to opt out. The employer also needs consideration. He has his business to run and he needs sufficient notice from employees opting out to do so properly. The law ought to provide the minimum manageable for reasonably efficient employers, in all their difference sizes, varieties and circumstances. Better placed employers—the hon. Lady mentioned some—will be able to improve on three months. I am glad that many leading members of the SHRC guaranteed less than three months—one month, in many cases. Other employers are not so well placed. I am sure that they will seek to do better, when they can, for valued employees who give good service or in emergencies. In the latter case, I hope that all employers will improve on the one month's notice that the Opposition would write into the Bill. In a real emergency, one month can be far too long. For statutes, I remain convinced that the right length of notice should remain three months. I hope that the House will agree.

10.45 pm

We also gave the content of amendment No. 18 a thorough airing in Committee and I shall not weary the House by rehearsing that debate. I see no virtue in putting a limit on the hours of Sunday shop work when, rightly, it does not apply to weekdays or in other areas of business and commerce. I can imagine some employees working in large shops regretting that opening and earning hours will be as short as they will. Equally, I accept that some employees in small shops would find the eight-hour limit that the hon. Lady proposes longer than they would ideally like.

Whether or not to work on Sunday in a particular job, for a particular length of time, should be the choice of the worker. I see no justification for suddenly obliging a small shop such as a newsagent, which has for years legitimately opened from 8 am until 5 pm on Sunday, to shut at 4 pm to the annoyance of his customers, or to employ another worker for the extra hour. The Opposition have not begun to make their case for amendment No. 18, and I hope that the House will reject it.

When we discussed pay a fortnight ago, the issue was double pay—pure and simple, and a real and full-blooded one. Amendment No. 19 takes the form of an anaemic shadow called enhanced pay. It is not a weighty amendment, because its terms could be met if the employer paid a premium of no more than 1p an hour for Sunday work.

Amendment No. 61 is half full-blooded, with double time to be paid by large shops, and time and a half by small shops. I am grateful to the Opposition for half listening to me. Of course it would be easier for profitable large shops to pay higher wages than for many small shops, but that is not an inviolable rule to be written into the statute. Some large shops are not highly profitable. Garden centres, for example, often operate on small margins, while some small shops are extremely profitable.

It is hard on a shop of 3,050 sq ft to have to shut after six hours on Sunday when its rival of only 2,900 sq ft can remain open, and it would be most unfair to add an obligation on the larger shop to pay double time when its competitor can satisfy the law with time and a half. Employers and employees must, in their joint long-term interests, be free to make their own arrangements on wages—taking into account the circumstances of the particular business, requirements for flexibility and different incentives for different parts of the day, different days of the week and different parts of the country.

I am glad that many large profitable shops are committed to paying premium rates, but I cannot advise the House other than to vote against the amendments, which would have the effect of driving some shops out of business or preventing them from opening on Sunday if they wanted to do so. Either way, there would be fewer jobs. Wage-fixing would prove the enemy of employment while reducing the range and quality of retail services available to the public.

Mr. Ray Powell: Rarely can I say that I share the Minister's opinions, particularly in respect of amendment No. 19. There might have been a printing error, because my name is among those associated with that amendment. I would not have supported it, and I share the Minister's view that it gives nothing by way of an enhanced payment to persons working on Sunday.

I am speaking to amendment No. 61 on the basis that it is one of the most important amendments to be considered by the House today. It would introduce a statutory right—I emphasise statutory—for double-time payments for shopworkers employed on Sundays in shops of more than 3,000 sq ft, and a half payment for shopworkers employed in smaller shops. Having laid out the main arguments in support of the amendment, I shall explain why I have drawn the distinction between the rate that is being set for shopworkers in large and small shops.

Although in principle I and my hon. Friends would argue that all shopworkers should be remunerated alike on Sundays, we must take into account the enormous financial pressures that are imposed on small shops. Evidence supplied to us by Outlets Providing for Everyday Needs —OPEN—and by an independent research company reveals that many small businesses already face the threat of closure as a result of the growing trend towards out-of-town shopping centres. The introduction of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, which will remove all restrictions on weekday trading hours, poses another major threat to small shops. Fears have been expressed by small shops that the introduction of double-time premiums on Sundays will be the last straw for traders and will force them out of business.

In response to the representations that we have received, I have introduced in the amendment a concession to small business in the form of time and a half payment as opposed to double-time. The amendment therefore represents a fair compromise for the retail sector.

I now wish to present the main reasons why I am urging hon. Members today to vote in support of the amendment. Throughout the Bill's progress—indeed, before it was even published—hon. Members on both sides of the House asserted that enforceable and effective protection for shopworkers' rights must involve a central element in any reform of trading law. Hon. Members looking at the Sunday Trading Bill may on first reading be impressed by the eight pages of employment protection provisions that are included in it. However, I warn hon. Members that, although those provisions appear principled, in reality they will offer extremely limited protection for shopworkers. The only way that the House can guarantee that all work done in shops on Sunday is voluntary is by supporting the amendment and introducing statutory premiums for Sunday work. I stress the importance of specifying a particular rate for shopworkers.

Hon. Members will be aware of an amendment that was tabled by some of my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, with my name attached, that seeks to introduce the right of shopworkers to be paid more on Sundays than they are throughout the week. With respect, that amendment is not worth the paper that it is written on. If passed, it would mean that shopworkers would be entitled to a penny, or even half a penny, extra for working on Sundays. Industrial tribunals would not have the jurisdiction to set a fair wage for shopworkers on Sunday. The livelihood of shopworkers would rather be solely dependent on their employers' generosity. If the House wishes to honour the rights of shopworkers and protect them from exploitation on Sundays, it is critical that hon. Members support the amendment.

Hon. Members will no doubt be aware of the recent agreement made between USDAW—my union—and the SHRC companies which supposedly included premium rate pay for shopworkers on Sunday. I am astounded that a union with the experience of USDAW could be conned into believing that the agreement will be lasting and will offer anything to their members for the future. The agreement states that the stores would deviate only if there were a significant change in the circumstances in which retail work was rewarded. The House and USDAW must open their eyes today to the reality that no shopowner or retail business will pay premiums once Sunday becomes deregulated.

I urge hon. Members to support the amendment, to ensure that both retail workers and those employed in other parts of the labour market are in future guaranteed a decent standard of living that will provide for the needs of their families, including children.

I know that hon. Members wish to proceed to a vote so that we can debate Third Reading and people can go home to their beds—if, that is, they are not stopped from doing so by candle-holding demonstrators outside. However, I want to refer to the whole issue of worker protection, including voluntary working and double-time payments on Sundays.

We could reasonably have a longer debate on employment protection, but we had a lengthy debate on that subject when we discussed new clause 4, moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase)—you were in the Chair then, Mr. Deputy Speaker—so there is no need to reiterate much of what was said then.

I received a letter from William Connor, deputy general secretary of my union, USDAW, dated 10 September 1993. The union had supported the Keep Sunday Special campaign since 1986. Five months ago, it decided to send all hon. Members—but, in particular, sponsored Members —a letter about Sunday trading, providing an update on recent developments. It gave support, financial and otherwise, to my private Member's Bill—a two-year effort —to ensure that the Keep Sunday Special proposals were upheld in the House.

The letter describes my Bill as "the Powell Bill". It says:

> "The Union fully supported the Powell Bill . . . that . . . contained the critical elements of worker protection, namely, voluntary working and double-time payments for all Sunday working. This position was endorsed by the 1993 Annual Delegate Meeting"

which took place in May. To my knowledge, no other annual meeting of members has taken place, and no reversal of that opinion has ever been expressed. Only the executive committee of USDAW adopted a different policy. I mention the letter because the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has referred to USDAW on numerous occasions. If that decision had been reversed, we might not now be discussing what is virtually a Government Bill—supported by a number of Opposition Members, if by no one else. That needs to be investigated. Had it not been for the decision, more support would undoubtedly have been given to the Keep Sunday Special proposals, and we would have been debating them tonight.

The deputy general secretary goes on:

> "On the 19th May 1993, at the meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, I moved the following Emergency Motion, which was carried unanimously: *Shop Hours Legislation and Workers' Protection.*
>
> This NEC welcomes the further progress of Ray Powell's Shops (Amendment) Bill in the House of Commons on Friday, 14th May, when two of the Government's proposed options on total and partial deregulation were voted upon and decisively rejected by a large majority.
>
> It congratulates Ray Powell and those Labour MPs who have maintained a principled and consistent stand on sensible reform of shop hours legislation, including the critical elements of worker protection.

[Mr. Ray Powell]

> Given the level of exploitation amongst part-time workers, as graphically portrayed in last Monday's BBC Panorama programme, it believes that the worker protection measures of voluntary working and double-time payment for Sunday working embodied in the Powell Bill, which maintained cross Party support through all the Committee Stages, are the minimum safeguards required to protect shopworkers."

That document was sent to me by the deputy general secretary of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers in September of last year, and was the policy of the Labour party until recent weeks, as I see it.

When we saw extracts in the *Sunday Shopper* of a pact that has been made, in an article which was headed:

> "Handshake seals new Sunday pact"

which my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) mentioned earlier, the article did not tell us the small print that is recorded. I have sent a copy to all hon. Members so that they can read the small print. The small print is not about double time and not about protection for workers. Let me read what the small print says. It says that they—the employers——

> "reaffirm their statement of September 17th 1993 that they will continue to pay current premium rates of pay to Sunday employees. They will only deviate from this if there is a significant change in the circumstances in which retail work is rewarded and only after appropriate consultation. The employers recognise that a premium will be required to attract sufficient high quality employees for Sunday work."

I take it, therefore, that anyone who was a party to that agreement will clearly understand that if they find that trading and profitability are not what they expect, the employers will do the same as they threatened to do with USDAW: they will rip up those papers and do away with 55,000 of the union membership. It is a blatant falsehood to try to present to the House the claim that they have made a pact and agreement that has protected 55,000 shopworkers.

Let us bear in mind also that we are not only speaking about 55,000 shopworkers in Tesco, which is protected by USDAW; we are speaking about 2½ million shopworkers, most of whom are not protected by any union.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Does my hon. Friend accept that by his principled and consistent stand he has gained the respect of both sides of the House? His consistency stands in marked contrast to the behaviour of those people who have stood on their heads on that issue.

Mr. Powell: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment and I will ensure that he is paired next week.

I am convinced that I have given the House sufficient to think about—including the Minister. If Opposition Front Bench Members and the Labour party are not prepared to accept the Bill that the Government have presented to the House, without the qualified protection that we demanded in Committee, on Second Reading and in the special pleading on employment protection, I ask the House to support amendment 61.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am pleased to support amendment No. 61, to which the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) referred. No one has worked harder than he to protect those who will suffer if the Bill is not amended again. I pay tribute to all that he has done before and during our consideration of the Bill. I shall say something in a moment about those who should have taken a little more notice of what he was saying.

Amendment No. 61 is far preferable to what I call the "ha'penny" amendment tabled by members of the Labour Front Bench, which would achieve premium pay at the minimal level of a ha'penny an hour. It is designed to secure double time in large shops and time and a half in smaller shops, and to do so on a basis that can survive, as opposed to the basis of the pact or agreement, which does not have that capacity.

Let us be clear that we are not seeking protection only for shopworkers, many of whom do not belong to a trade union; the amendment would also be a disincentive to trade on Sundays. The intention is that those who are wondering whether to embark on Sunday trading should consider the fact that there is not sufficient trade to make it a profitable exercise overall and should therefore be deterred.

If they embark on Sunday trading, they will almost certainly damage small shops in their area, and might even damage themselves. They might as well face the facts from the beginning and be presented with a financial disincentive at the outset. That is one of the purposes of the amendment.

When the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) said that she was not fooled by commercial interests, I did not know whether to laugh or cry. She and some of her colleagues did not support the Conservative Members who worked with some of us to try to ensure that shops did not open. By refusing to be around at the given moment, she created a situation in which she could not win on the vital employment protection amendments, but was bound to lose.

Ms Ruddock: Will the hon. Gentleman help me and the House by telling us whether he voted in favour of the double time amendment that I moved on behalf of the Labour Front Bench in Committee of the whole House?

Mr. Beith: Yes, I did, as far as I can recall.

Ms Ruddock: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman's name does not appear in the record.

Mr. Beith: In that case, I was not present—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The House is getting restless, and I am having great difficulty in hearing what the right hon. Gentleman has to say. If the House settles down, we can get on with the business.

Mr. Beith: I clearly was not present.

The essential point is that if all those who are concerned about people working on Sundays had been on the same Lobby on the crucial issue of whether shops open at all on Sundays, there would have been no doubt about the result, and the problem that we face now would not have been so acute. Amendment No. 61 may gain some support from Conservative Members—I hope it does—but it is not a gamble that the hon. Lady and her colleagues should have been prepared to take.

As the hon. Member for Deptford mentioned individual votes, she may care to explain to me later why the leader of her party voted against keeping shops closed on Christmas day and Easter day, which I found extraordinary.

We are debating Government amendment No. 35, but grouped with it are two other amendments: one, which stands in the name of the hon. Lady and her colleagues, affords no significant protection; the other, which stands in the name of the hon. Member for Ogmore, affords significant protection. If the hon. Gentleman is able to press that amendment to a Division, I urge hon. Members of all parties who are concerned about those who will be affected by the legislation to support it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 22, page 13, line 18, after 'means' insert

'subject to paragraph 10A(2) below'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*.

Amendment proposed: No. 19, in page 14, line 16, at end insert—

'Right to enhanced pay for Sunday work

9A. A shop worker shall be entitled to remuneration from his employer in respect of shop work undertaken on a Sunday at a rate of pay which exceeds that which he earns in the case of shop work undertaken by him for that employer during his normal working hours on a weekday or in the case of a shop worker required to work only on a Sunday, at a rate of pay which exceeds that earned by a shop worker carrying out similar shop work for that employer during his normal working hours on a weekday.'. —*[Ms Ruddock.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 279, Noes 317.

Division No. 144] **[11.09 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Denis Turner and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rucliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard

Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendments made: No. 23, in page 15, line 3, at end insert—

'Employer's duty to give explanatory statement

10A.—(1) Where a person becomes a shop worker to whom paragraph 4 above applies, his employer shall, before the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which that person becomes such a shop worker, give him a written statement in the prescribed form.

(2) If—

(a) an employer fails to comply with sub-paragraph (1) above in relation to any shop worker, and

(b) the shop worker, on giving the employer an opting-out notice, becomes an opted-out shop worker,

paragraph 6 above shall have effect, in relation to the shop worker, with the substitution for "three months" of "one month".

(3) An employer shall not be regarded as failing to comply with sub-paragraph (1) above in any case where, before the end of the period referred to in that sub-paragraph, the shop worker has given him an opting-out notice.

(4) Subject to sub-paragraph (5) below, the prescribed form is as follows—

"STATUTORY RIGHTS IN RELATION
TO SUNDAY SHOP WORK

You have become employed as a shop worker and are or can be required under your contract of employment to do the Sunday work your contract provides for.

However, if you wish, you can give a notice, as described in the next paragraph, to your employer and you will then have the right not to work in or about a shop on any Sunday on which the shop is open once three months have passed from the date on which you gave the notice.

Your notice must—

be in writing;
be signed and dated by you;
say that you object to Sunday working.

For three months after you give the notice, your employer can still require you to do all the Sunday work your contract provides for. After the three month period has ended, you have the right to complain to an industrial tribunal if, because of your refusal to work on Sundays on which the shop is open, your employer—

dismisses you, or
does something else detrimental to you, for example failing to promote you.

Once you have the rights described, you can surrender them only by giving your employer a further notice, signed and dated by you, saying that you wish to work on Sunday or that you do not object to Sunday working and then agreeing with your employer to work on Sundays or on a particular Sunday."

(5) The Secretary of State may by order amend the prescribed form set out in sub-paragraph (4) above.

(6) An order under sub-paragraph (5) above shall be made by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'

No. 36, in page 16, line 32, after 'period' insert

'(in this paragraph referred to as "the contractual Sunday hours").

No. 37, in page 16, line 33, at end insert—

'(2) Where, under the contract of employment, the hours of work actually done on weekdays in any period would be taken into account in determining the contractual Sunday hours, they shall be taken into account in determining the contractual Sunday hours for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above.'

No. 60, in page 17, line 3, leave out from 'for' to end of line 5 and insert

'"by virtue of any provision of Part IV of this Act, other than section sixty-two, is" there shall be substituted "is lawfully".'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I call for a Division on my amendment No. 61?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amendment was not selected by Madam Speaker.

Mr. Powell: Could I have an explanation why?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker does not give explanations.

Order for Third Reading read.

11.25 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

For many years the Shops Act 1950 has been acknowledged as needing thoroughgoing reform. I know of no other law that generations of hon. Members have tried so hard to repeal, revise or amend with so little success. It has taken this unique Bill to give the House the chance to break the pattern. It is by providing Parliament with the opportunity—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the House settle down? It is very difficult to hear the Minister speaking.

Mr. Lloyd: It is by providing Parliament with the opportunity to choose between the major options for change that we have been able to take advantage of the belief on all sides of the House that, one way or another, Sunday must be sorted out and to begin to find our way through this complex and controversial issue.

Although the Bill is a Government Bill, we have been neutral between the options and have helped even-handedly the various campaigning groups in the preparation of their section of the Bill. Although Sunday trading is an issue which has aroused passionate feeling, our debates have been marked largely by good humour and much good sense, and I think that all of us who have taken part in it have valued—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should have thought that hon. Members on both sides of the House would be keen to listen to the Minister, but it appears that many of them are not. I should be obliged if they would listen.

Mr. Lloyd: I think that we have valued the discussion, which has been so comprehensively and completely cross-party and has not followed the normal party political divide.

Although our personal views on how far the law should regulate shop opening on Sundays have varied, there has been common ground. We have all recognised that the Shops Act 1950 has outlived its time and that we need a new law which is clear, respected, enforceable and enforced. We also all agree that, whatever our view of Sunday shopping, Sunday is a special day and that if shops are to open more freely on Sunday shopworkers who make Sunday opening possible should have a continuing choice as to whether to work on Sunday.

[Mr. Lloyd]

The party difference has been marked by the imposition of normal party Whips on matters related to employment terms and conditions, but party differences should not be allowed to obscure the comprehensive and radical arrangement that the Bill makes for present and future shopworkers to withdraw from Sunday working if that is their wish. In this respect, all shopworkers will have gained a continuing right, not a once-and-for-all choice, to decide whether they are available for work on Sundays.

No matter how clear the law, it serves no purpose if it is ignored. The Standing Committee decided—in my view, rightly—to support an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) to increase the maximum fine for breaches of the law to £50,000. The House is indebted to him for that initiative. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) drew our attention to the position of leaseholders who might have been required to open on a Sunday even if they did not wish to do so because their lease required them to trade during normal business hours. I am grateful to her and for the opportunity to bring forward an amendment which I believe goes to the heart of her own and others' genuine concern on the issue.

Likewise, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), who raised the fears which we all understand of people living near large shops whose Sunday mornings could be disturbed by pre-breakfast deliveries. We have been able earlier this evening to give local authorities the muscle to ban all such deliveries from taking place before 9 am.

I am grateful to all those who have worked constructively in Committtee and on the Floor of the House to improve the Bill, and I am grateful to the campaign groups, successful and unsuccessful, who worked long hours with my officials to refine and clarify their options. I wish particularly to mention the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), with whom I generally disagree, but whose tenacity and ingenuity in his cause I recognise and respect. I also mention with deepest respect my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), with whom I am more regularly in agreement on other issues. He has taken a close, continuous and highly principled part in our deliberations on the Bill wherever possible.

All those efforts have produced a Bill that is not exactly what any of us would ideally want. All our experience shows that, on the subject of Sunday trading, differences within and between parties and in the country at large are too great for that to be possible. But we now have a Bill that is clear and enforceable and will commend itself to the majority of people in the country.

Dr. Wright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lloyd: No, I will not give way.

People want the muddle of Sunday trading to be sorted out after years of failed attempts, and I do not believe that they will readily forgive us if we miss the hard-won opportunity to do so. I hope that the House will give the Bill a resounding Third Reading.

11.32 pm

Ms Ruddock: Like the Minister, I intend to be brief and not to detain the House for long.

The Bill has been difficult and controversial, not least because of the strong feelings held on both sides of the House, particularly in the Labour party. The Labour Front Bench team have been rigorously neutral on the options that have come before the House. We said from the outset that Labour Members would be free to choose and best represent their constituents as they saw fit. Our task was to unite our party around the issue of employment protection and, as the Minister acknowledged, it is on that issue that the House has been divided.

Now that a decision has been taken on the options, with a limitation on large shops opening and liberalisation for small shops, if the Bill is given a Third Reading we shall expect those provisions to be rigorously enforced. *[Interruption.]* We can assure all hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who interrupts from a sedentary position, that we shall be resolute in trying to ensure that the workers and our constituents are protected, and that the law is properly enforced.

We sought throughout to improve on the employment protection conditions. We never said that it was necessary to have double-time payments, but we believed that it was vital to strive for those payments because they were the conditions under which workers were most likely to volunteer for Sunday working. We said that essential to any liberalisation in the Sunday trading laws was the right of existing workers to opt out of Sunday working and the right of future workers to say that they would not work on a Sunday. That provision is contained in the Bill.

We wanted further to clarify that workers thus provided for could opt in and out more than once, and the Government accepted that request. We believed that it was necessary for workers to be absolutely clear about the rights that they would acquire under the Bill. Again, the Government tabled an amendment to meet our request. As the Minister acknowledged, we sought to deal both with the difficult issue of disturbance from deliveries and to protect leaseholders from being forced to open on a Sunday. Once again, our requests were met.

I thank the Minister for the way in which he has worked to meet our requests and for the courteous way in which he personally has dealt with my requests at meetings with him. We have striven for more, however, and we shall remain at odds with the Minister over that.

I join the Minister in thanking members of the Committee for the way in which they have worked and the speedy progress that we were able to make. I join him also in thanking the campaign groups, all of whom I dealt with and liaised with over a considerable period and with whom there were courteous exchanges.

It remains only for me to assure the House that, while we have pursued the question of employment protection on party political lines, at this point on Third Reading Opposition Members are free to vote as they choose.

11.34 pm

Mr. Alton: I join the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) in thanking the Minister of State who, throughout the Committee proceedings and again tonight, has been a model of how any Minister should deal with Opposition spokesmen during proceedings on a Bill.

He has been courteous and, despite the fact that we have disagreed on many parts of the Bill and shall continue to do so, I thank him warmly for the way in which he has dealt with points that Members have made.

My reservations about the Bill, which I expressed when the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) introduced his excellent private Member's Bill last year, have remained. As we have now reached Third Reading, I remain more concerned than ever about the nature of this legislation.

For nearly 1,000 years, this country has had laws to regulate trading on Sundays. For the first time, we are to be without a regulatory framework. Before giving the Bill a Third Reading, the House should seriously consider the implications for family and community life. At a time when one in three families is collapsing and up to a million elderly people do not see a friend, relative or neighbour during the course of an average week, it should be clear to us that what is missing in today's society is time for people to spend with one another. In the absence of a traditional Sunday, people will not have time to spend with their families and visit elderly people or their children.

We are putting an additional commercial and materialistic pressure on life. Our country is already sufficiently devoid of spiritual value and we should think carefully before giving the Bill a Third Reading as it will further suppress the spiritual nature of life in favour of materialism and consumerism.

My other reason for urging hon. Members not to give the Bill a Third Reading revolves around the issue of employment protection. Labour Members can pride themselves that, throughout this century, they have fought for the rights of ordinary working people. They must share my concern that, without proper protection for workers, double-time payments or any of the protections that we might properly expect for ordinary people, many hon. Members have nevertheless voted for legislation which, even before the minor amendment made earlier, may even require people to work on Christmas day and Easter day.

What will happen to the 2·2 million retail workers, most of whom have no trade union protection—only some 300,000 or 400,000 of them belong to trade unions—as a result of the Bill? They will be exploited and will not have time to spend with their families, all in the name of so-called "choice." We should learn that choice should not become God.

Whatever the vote this evening, the fight will not be over but will be resumed in the House of Lords. I hope that the Bishops' Bench will give the country a lead and that, when the Lords' amendments come here, the House will reject the Bill if it fails to do so on Third Reading today.

11.38 pm

Mr. Cryer: First, a number of hon. Members will oppose the Bill because they have a religious point of view. That is important, but it is not why I oppose it. I oppose the Bill because Sunday has been gained, for whatever reason, as a day of respite both for workers and for those who do not work. It is clear from the amendments proposed today, which sought to protect those who live near big supermarkets, that the pollution of noise and work will affect not only people who work on Sundays. If we want a reasonably though not entirely quiet Sunday, the Bill must be defeated on Third Reading.

Secondly, it is clear that the protection that the labour Front Bench sought for workers has not been achieved. The requirement for doube-time payments has gone. Workers will be given the alternative of a fairly complicated formula and will have to resort to industrial tribunals.

In today's society, where work is short, workers will be frightened to stand up to management and there will be hundreds and thousands of dismissal cases if the Bill is enacted. There is no provision either in employment protection legislation or in the Bill for reinstatement and the compensation for unfair dismissal is paltry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) has shown principled determination, as have many Opposition Members, although not, I regret to say, Opposition Front Bench spokesmen and women.

On those two grounds, the Labour party should oppose this legislation. It does not support the workers or decent, quiet Sundays and I hope that enough hon. Members from both sides of the House will vote against the Bill to defeat it.

11.40 pm

Mr. Ray Powell: I shall be brief as I know that hon. Members want to vote. I must thank those people who helped me with my private Member's Bill. I was fortunate —if one can call it that—to be drawn third in the ballot immediately after the last general election.

I must warn hon. Members not to get too excited if they are among the first 10 names to be drawn. They might think that they will be able to introduce a Bill that will be enacted, but they could spend the next 12 months working on it and find only frustration. If one is among the first 10, the Fees Office will send a cheque for £200 to help with legal fees and advice. If a private Member's Bill does not have the blessing or support of the Government, the hon. Member will have to pay for all the research and even, on occasions, for spare pens and envelopes and will receive little support.

When I introduced my Bill the Government decided to set up a shops unit, made up of civil servants who were very helpful. The Clerks of the House and their assistants were also very helpful, as were you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and other occupants of the Chair——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is very enjoyable, but the hon. Gentleman should refer to the Third Reading.

Mr. Powell: Members on both sides of the House who supported the Keep Sunday Special campaign and its option on Second Reading also gave me great support. The Committee was very cordial—we did not take long over debates or make the sort of lengthy speeches that we have heard tonight from some hon. Members. The staff of the Keep Sunday Special campaign should receive special recognition for their consideration and their work.

I must remind the House that hon. Members who devoted their time to trying get a Bill on the statute book and to alter the Shops Act 1950 did so primarily because we believe that we must keep Sunday as a special day. There was no ulterior motive, no cash incentive, just a belief that we should leave to our grandchildren and their grandchildren what we have enjoyed in our lifetime. If the Bill's provisions reach the statute book, this country will be deprived of that which is enjoyed by 300 million people in Europe. I repeat the advice of some of my hon. Friends —that hon. Members should vote against Third Reading and tell the Government that we do not want the Bill.

11.44 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth: Earlier in our proceedings the Minister on the Treasury Bench was the Secretary of State for National Heritage. It is rather interesting that he is here to see the demise of a great English heritage, the quiet Sabbath, the Sunday well spent.

As a member of a minority party in the House, I am happy to defend the Sabbath and the rights of workers. The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) thought that we should not take part in the debate. I am glad that one hopeful measure was passed and that Easter day, the day of Resurrection, may yet herald hope for the nation.

As some hon. Members have said, those who go to church will continue to do so, and I pray to God that we shall not rely too much, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) suggested, on the leadership of the Bench of Bishops to do much for the nation. We certainly cannot say tonight that the Anglican Church is the Tory party at prayer if that party continues to destroy some of the nation's heritage. I agree with those who say that we should go through the No Lobby rather than give the Bill an unopposed Third Reading.

11.46 pm

Rev. William McCrea: I am another representative of a minority party in the House and I say without apology that my party will take its stand for the Lord's day. We believe that this country would be blessed if we took such a stand. Moving away from that and giving the Bill a Third Reading would be a retrograde step and could not bring the blessing of Almighty God upon this nation, as was sought in days that are past. Some hon. Members can be rightly proud of holding to that principle, even though they were frowned upon by other hon. Members for so doing. It was even suggested that some hon. Members had no right to speak in the debate, although we all have equal voting rights on this important legislation.

I say especially to Opposition Front-Bench speakers that some people will live to regret the day they put their hand to such legislation. Many Opposition Front-Bench speakers joined with Ministers in nodding approval during our proceedings. They say that they are interested in workers' rights, but that will prove to be false because they built on a false and rotten premise. Front-Bench speakers will hang their heads in shame when it is proved that workers' rights have not been protected.

One of the amendments suggested handing to workers a penny piece instead of genuine rights. I speak on behalf of my colleagues when I say that I shall vote against Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 311, Noes 218.

Division No. 145] **[11.48 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fisher, Mark
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David

Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Sir Keith
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dame Angela Rumbold and
Mr. John Marshall.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Butterfill, John
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clelland, David
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Knapman, Roger
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robathan, Andrew

Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Sheerman, Barry
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Stevenson, George
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Trimble, David
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Jack Thompson.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Neil Latimer (Imprisonment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

12.1 am

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The case of Neil Latimer, who was convicted with three others of the murder of Adrian Carroll in Armagh on 8 November 1983, is complex and disturbing. In the short time available to me, I hope to show that the continued imprisonment of Mr. Latimer, who has served just over 10 years of a life sentence for that murder, is unsafe and unjust. The importance of the issue is well illustrated by the attendance tonight, and the fact that the Secretary of State is on the Front Bench to reply. I am grateful to all.

On the day of the murder, Neil Latimer was a member of a 13-man patrol from the Ulster Defence Regiment. Those convicted, now known as the UDR Four, have always maintained their innocence; the other nine members of the patrol have corroborated that. Moreover, the evidence of every witness called by the Crown, except for witness A, detracted from the prosecution case.

Among those whose evidence was disregarded was the principal of the local further education college, a site engineer and a contractor engaged in road works in the area, a gardener who saw a car leave the scene at speed, a police constable on patrol in the street along which Neil allegedly made his escape, a neighbour of Mr. Carroll's, a workmate who walked a few yards behind Mr. Carroll on his way home, and Elaine Faulkner, who saw the killer.

Yet the testimony of the alleged eye witness—witness A—was given greatest credence. Three of the UDR Four were freed almost two years ago as a result of an appeal, but Neil Latimer's appeal was dismissed, mainly on the ground that he alone had been identified by witness A.

It was proved during the appeal that 39 pages of interview notes and alleged confessions had been rewritten by the police. On that basis, Messrs. Allen, Bell and Hegan were released, and a number of police officers are facing charges relating to tampering with evidence. I cannot elaborate on that matter as it is sub judice, but 16 of those 39 pages had related to Neil Latimer.

When Mr. Carroll was murdered, no one saw the shooting, but Elaine Faulkner—now Elaine Dunn—an office worker out to post letters, gave evidence that, about 50 yards from the scene of the shooting, she encountered a man who brushed past her, then walked ahead of her for a few yards, before taking a gun from his pocket and going into the entry where Mr. Carroll was murdered. A few seconds later, Miss Faulkner heard shots.

She went almost immediately to the police to report what she had seen and give a detailed description of the person she had seen go into the entry, including what he was wearing. She indicated that he was as small as or smaller than her own 5 ft 4 in. Later, in court, Miss Faulkner gave evidence that the gunman was not Neil Latimer, whom she knew well and who is about 5 ft 10 in tall. As a result of Miss Faulkner's description, the police next day issued an appeal for information, giving details of the gunman and what he was wearing. The case was reported widely, although not always accurately; the RUC continued to investigate.

Then, two weeks after the incident, a new witness alleged—not to the police, but to two local priests—that she had seen a man, dressed in distinctive clothing similar to that worn by the gunman, getting into a UDR Land Rover a few minutes before the shooting. She identified the man as Mr. Latimer. The new witness was witness A. On 29 November 1983, Neil Latimer was arrested on the basis of the statement that witness A had given to the priests. As a result of questioning by the police, he made a number of statements over the next few days.

Significantly, however, the actual confession that was ultimately used against Latimer in court was not made until after the police had, for the first time, formally interviewed witness A on 2 December. It is obvious from the content of the various statements that he made that Mr. Latimer was little more than putty in the hands of his interrogators, and concurred with almost everything that was suggested to him.

Throughout the trial, witness A was found by counsel for the defence to be devious and inaccurate; but, as she was an alleged eye witness, it was important for her testimony not to be discounted. The trial judge, Lord Justice Kelly, stated:

> "The evidence of Mrs. 'A' is of the greatest importance to the Crown case against Latimer".

That was despite his admission in the summing-up of the evidence that

> "Mrs 'A' did reveal inconsistencies in her evidence, mistakes, some faulty recollections, some contradictions, some inconsistencies between her evidence in court and what she said in her statements to Fr. Murray and to the Police. Many of these were labelled 'lies' by defence counsel. I need not set them out exhaustively. Here are some: she undoubtedly hedged about admitting a conviction for larceny of a pound of butter in 1967, she was wrong as to when she came forward for the first time to Fr. Murray and to the Police, not 6 or 7 days and 10 days, but 14 days and 24 days respectively. She did not make her statement to Fr. Murray in the Parochial House, but in her own home. She did try more than once to telephone him. She was quite wrong in denying that she sought directory enquiries as to Fr. Paul's telephone number. The BBC 9.00 pm news contained no mention of the Carroll murder that evening and certainly not a description of the gunman or anyone running . . . She was confused as to how many soldiers in Lonsdale Street were about, or got into the Landrovers. She only assumed but did not see Latimer and the others getting into the back of the Landrover. She showed contradiction as to whether the Landrovers at the time had headlights on. She said they had back doors, but admitted that she could not see the back. She described the garment worn by Latimer as a dark brown anorak . . . Mrs. 'A' said the events occurred in Lonsdale Street in daylight, fairly bright, clearly visible, although the lights of the College were on and the headlights of the Landrover in one of her accounts were on . . . I have noted all the discrepancies, mistakes, inconsistencies referred to as 'lies' by the defence. I must say that these are all peripheral".

It should be noted that the Land Rovers did not have back doors, and that the coat worn by the killer was a light blue duffel coat, but had been incorrectly reported in a local newspaper as having been a brown anorak. It is little wonder that Lord Justice Kelly pondered the matter when he asked:

> "Why should Mrs. 'A' invent her story? I have asked myself this many times during the course of this trial".

He responded to his own question in saying:

> "I have interposed it to some defence counsel during their eloquent closing speeches. I have not found any reasonable answer other than that she is not inventing it, and that her story is true."

There the matter might have rested if my secretary had not, on 31 July 1990, received a telephone call from someone who stated that he was Roman Catholic but knew that the UDR Four were innocent. He said he was astonished that witness A, who he alleged was known for her exaggeration and lies, had been accepted as a credible witness.

I investigated and was able to confirm that that was true. A few months later, I received, from an anonymous source, a copy of that lady's medical notes, which I asked a well-known and well-respected consultant psychotherapist, Dr. John Alderdice, who is also the leader of the Alliance party in Northern Ireland, to evaluate.

Dr. Alderdice's opinion is contained in the recent publication, "Witness for the Prosecution", which, with other booklets pertaining to the case, is in the Library. He confirmed that witness A had been a patient in St. Luke's mental hospital in 1964, and that she was recorded as imagining men running around her house with guns, trying to kill her. Let us remember that there was no terrorism or common usage of guns in Northern Ireland in 1964, or for long afterwards.

Dr. Alderdice states:

> "she was described as being hallucinated and persecuted, and was felt by the admitting doctor to be a danger to herself and to her children".

Later he records that Dr. McCallum, who was a doctor in the hospital,

> "notes that she had had an 'unstable upbringing' and expressed the view that 'this must have an effect on her future stability'."

Dr. McCullum's assessment was:

> "Witness A was so given to 'fantasy' when telling her side of the story that it was hard to sort out the true story".

The lady's husband, when interviewed, told how he had, for the first five years of their marriage,

> "defended her in what turned out to be lies".

He discounts most of the stories that witness A told the doctors as being untrue. In one instance, she had said that her husband and she were both keen to move back from the country into the town, but he responded by saying that he had no intention of moving, that that sort of thing was typical of her, and that, if they did move, she would be unhappy again in a very short time.

Dr. Alderdice points out:

> "It is worth noting that, in interviews with the husband, he is described as being co-operative, convincing and giving a good description of things."

Alderdice's opinion, based on Dr. McCallum's assessment, is:

> "the evidence of her early history of 'rejection' by her mother, who died in childbirth, and her father, who abandoned her in a more active way would be very congruent with this type of disturbed personality construction, and Dr. McCallum's use of the terms 'Mixed Psychoneurotic Reaction', and then on the second admission, 'Psychopathic Personality', are again absolutely in line with such a picture.
>
> The material in these notes would therefore suggest a very unhappy and unstable woman with a disturbance of personality which would make her unreliable and difficult in relationships and the disorder is likely to be lifelong, though it may with certain circumstances be modified as she grows older, and with long-term phychological treatment".

I would point out that the records show that witness A refused to submit to any long-term treatment.

Dr. Alderdice concludes:

> "If the question is asked, 'Would such a patient be a reliable witness', I would have to give the opinion that, on the evidence of these notes, one would be advised to be extremely cautious in setting too much store by a witness with such a personality and history. Such a patient could be given to fantasies and stories that are more to do with her own wishes than with objective reality, as is pointed out a number of times in these notes".

The idea of deliberate deception or conspiracy, which the trial judge had considered, appears to have been wide

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

of the mark, but he would have had no reason to consider the possibility of a psychiatric factor. Nor would the judges in the 1988 appeal.

Like the trial judge, the 1988 Court of Appeal judges could have had no inkling of the contents of witness A's medical notes. The same applied to those people who subsequently sat in the 1992 Court of Appeal. Here, Lord Chief Justice Hutton also ruled out comparison with other cases where confessions and interview notes had been tampered with when he asserted:

> "The case against Latimer is completely different from the case against the Guildford 4, the Birmingham 6 and Silcott, Braithwaite and Raghip. In the case against Latimer there is, for instance, the very important evidence of Witness A which strongly confirmed his confession".

Lord Chief Justice Hutton continued:

> "Accordingly the position is that either Witness A's evidence and Latimer's confession are incorrect or Mrs. Dunn's evidence is incorrect. Therefore, under section 2 of the Criminal Appeal (Northern Ireland) Act 1980 the crucial question for this court is the following one: is it safe and satisfactory to uphold the conviction of Latimer on the basis that the Witness A evidence and Latimer's confession made on the night of 2nd/3rd December are correct and Mrs. Dunn's evidence is incorrect?. . . We are satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that Mrs. Dunn's evidence that the gunman was not Latimer and that the gunman was much smaller in height than Latimer is incorrect and that, in truth, Latimer was the gunman."

However, Latimer's confession, like those of Allen, Bell and Hegan, has been wholly devalued because of the extent to which it has been rewritten and altered by the police, so the direct comparison falls between the evidence of Elaine Faulkner, who went to the police within minutes, and that of witness A, who did so 24 days later.

Witness A, who knew Neil Latimer less well than Elaine Faulkner, had her evidence accepted that Latimer was wearing glasses and a tartan cap, although she had allegedly viewed him from a considerably greater distance than had Elaine Dunn, who had been within inches of the gunman.

I have run out of time, but I argue that there should be a referral, again, of Neil Latimer's case to the Court of Appeal. I draw attention to the fact that well over 200 right hon. and hon. Members from every party in the House feel strongly enough about this apparent injustice to have signed early-day motion 525. I have personally spent too long as a soldier and a politician opposing terrorism to have devoted the past five years of my life to trying to obtain freedom for Neil Latimer without being convinced that he is the victim of a gross injustice.

The reality is that, in this case, confessions were extracted in unreasonable circumstances, as was shown when Private Warton was found not guilty and discharged during the original trial. Notes and confessions were tampered with, as was shown when Allen, Bell and Hegan won their appeals. There has never been one iota of forensic evidence produced to link any of the UDR Four with the murder, and there is now serious doubt about the reliability of witness A's evidence.

The latter, together with what has gone before and the way in which it conflicts with evidence given by others, must make us ask whether, if the death penalty still existed, we would send Neil Latimer to the gallows on the basis of the evidence given by witness A. If the answer is no, surely he should be freed and the necessary referral made to the Court of Appeal without any further delay.

12.17 am

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has campaigned assiduously on behalf of Mr. Neil Latimer, and I welcome his success in securing this Adjournment debate.

I shall explain at the outset my powers to refer a case to the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland. They are the same as those available to the Home Secretary in England. I emphasise that the judgment about guilt or innocence in a criminal case has to be entirely a matter for the courts, and that Ministers cannot substitute their own assessments of the evidence in a case for that of the courts.

However, I am always ready to consider representations about any alleged miscarriage of justice to see if there is a justification for using my power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal of Northern Ireland, if necessary for a second time. Such a reference effectively constitutes in law an appeal or, as the case may be, a further appeal, by the convicted person.

There is a criterion which, consistent with my predecessors, I would normally expect to be fulfilled before I would use this power. It is that there is some new evidence, or other consideration of substance, which has not previously been brought before the court by the defendant and which now appears to cast doubt on the safety of the conviction.

I remind the House that Mr. Latimer's case has already been before the courts on three occasions. The first two were the trial of the four UDR soldiers, of which he was one, and the appeal to which they had an automatic right. In 1991, after very careful consideration of representations made to him, and the production of new evidence, my predecessor referred the cases of the UDR Four back to the Court of Appeal.

The new evidence had been produced as a result of electronic document analysis—known as ESDA—carried out on the police interview notes relating to the four men. The tests showed that some of the police interview notes had been rewritten, and that those parts of the notes had not been made at the time of the interviews, as had been claimed at the trial.

In a very fully argued written judgment, delivered on 29 July 1992, the Court of Appeal unanimously quashed the convictions of Winston Allen, Noel Bell and James Hegan on the grounds that they were thereby rendered unsafe and unsatisfactory. However, the court was unanimously satisfied on separate evidence, including his admitted confession statements, as to Neil Latimer's guilt, and that his convictions were safe and satisfactory.

The Court of Appeal drew attention to the fact that, in giving evidence at the trial, Mr. Latimer accepted the accuracy of the police evidence as to his statements of admission. The Lord Chief Justice for Northern Ireland, in the judgment on behalf of the whole court, said:

> "We are satisfied that the ESDA findings in relation to the interview notes of Latimer do not create a doubt as to the correctness of his convictions because of his own evidence at the trial as to what happened in the interviews and as to what he said in the interviews, it is clear that on the night of 2nd-3rd December 1983 he confessed to murdering Mr. Carroll. We are further satisfied that those confessions were true and were the confessions of a guilty man and not of an innocent man who, by improper police conduct, was pressed into confessing to a murder which he had not committed."

The judgment of the court continued:

> "No one reading the full transcript of the evidence of Latimer at the trial, and reading that transcript in an impartial way and with common sense, can doubt that he was a guilty man who, from a very early stage in the interviews, realised that, by reason of the information which Witness 'A' had given, the police had a case against him that he was involved in the murder of Carroll, and who in the second interview on the day of his arrest said that things looked bad for him, and in the third interview told the police that he had shot Carroll, but tried for a period through a number of interviews to protect the other soldiers involved with him. But eventually, after the police had taken a further statement from Witness 'A' on 2nd December, in which she confirmed that she had seen the mock arrest of Latimer in Lonsdale Street and him getting into the landrover, and the police had told him of this statement from Witness 'A', Latimer on 2nd December made a full and truthful confession of what had happened and of his part in it."

The Court of Appeal was clearly satisfied that Mr. Latimer's written statement made in December 1983 was true in describing his part in the murder plan and how he shot Mr. Carroll, and that it was admissible in evidence against him. That part of the statement that described the parts played by Messrs Allen, Bell and Hegan was not admissible in evidence against them, and as a matter of law the court was not entitled to have any regard to that statement in considering the Crown case against them. The Court of Appeal drew a clear distinction between the total weight of evidence against Mr. Latimer on the one hand and Messrs Allen, Bell and Hegan on the other.

The involvement in the case of the woman known as witness A has been closely scrutinised, and indeed is the focus of the booklet "Witness for the Prosecution" prepared by the hon. Gentleman, to which he has referred in his speech tonight. While witness A did not see the murder being carried out, the gunman was observed by another witness, Mrs. Dunne, who gave the police a description of his appearance and clothing.

Witness A told the police that, shortly before the shooting, she had seen a man, whom she knew to be Mr. Latimer, dressed in clothing that resembled the description of that worn by the gunman. She was cross-examined on the basis not that she was mistaken but that she had concocted her story.

It is true that the witness Mrs. Dunne, who saw the gunman, also knew Mr. Latimer and said that he was not the gunman. It is clear from the detailed written judgments of the court of trial and the Court of Appeal that the conflict between that woman's evidence and that of witness A was considered most thoroughly by the courts. In that context, the Lord Chief Justice said the following:

> "Witness A's evidence, if it is true, establishes that a few minutes before the shooting of Mr. Carroll, Latimer, dressed in civilian clothes, was behaving with members of a UDR patrol in a most unusual manner. Moreover, according to Witness A's evidence, Latimer was wearing a tartan cap and gold-rimmed glasses, and, according to Mrs. Dunne's evidence, the gunman who shot Mr. Carroll a few minutes after Witness A had seen Latimer in Lonsdale street was wearing a check or tartan cap and gold-rimmed glasses. After his arrest Latimer, on the night of 2nd-3rd December made a full confession confirming Witness A's account of what he had done in Lonsdale street and going on to describe how, after he had got into the landrover in Lonsdale Street, dressed in civilian clothes and wearing a cap and glasses, he had gone on to shoot Mr. Carroll. However, Mrs. Dunne stated in her evidence that the gunman who shot Mr. Carroll was definitely not Latimer and that the gunman was only 5 foot 1 inch or 5 foot 2 inches in height and was smaller than her, whereas it is the fact that Latimer is 5 feet 10 inches in height."

The judgment continues with a passage that the hon. Gentleman has just cited, so I need not repeat it. I pick the quotation up at the point at which he stopped:

> "We are satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that Mrs. Dunne's evidence that the gunman was not Latimer, and that the gunman was much smaller in height than Latimer, is incorrect and that, in truth, Latimer was the gunman. We are so satisfied because, for the reasons we have already stated at length, it is clear that Witness A's evidence of seeing Latimer dressed in civilian clothes getting into a landrover in Lonsdale street was true. The arguments that her evidence as to what she saw in Lonsdale street is true and is not a wicked concoction are, in our opinion, unanswerable. In addition, for the reasons we have stated, we are satisfied that Latimer's confession given verbally and in writing on the night of 2nd-3rd December 1983 was not an untrue confession made by a man pressed into making it by improper pressure from the police and by a desire on his part to get away from Castlereagh police office. It is clear that his confession was a truthful confession made by a man who realised the game was up."

That concludes this passage from the judgment.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Secretary of State, before leaving that point, admit that four other accused, including Warton, made confessions clearly admitting their part in the killing, and that the trial judge dismissed the case against Warton when he discovered that the accused had been so emotionally pressurised that he was encouraged to write his last will and testament? In the wake of all this, Warton cried with emotion because he thought that he would never get out of prison in his parents' lifetime, and he was persuaded to sign a confession.

Will the Secretary of State concede that such pressure on people who are used to obeying those in authority—none more so than soldiers—is totally intolerable, and negates any value that a confession might have?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is not a question of conceding. It is not for me to defend or uphold the judgment of the court; it is for me to try to apply the criterion that has been applied by my predecessors.

As to the hon. Gentleman's factual point about confessions made by the other defendants, what has been said is broadly true, and I certainly do not dispute it tonight. As I have indicated, I have to consider whether there is something new by way of evidence—evidence that has not previously been before the court. I remind the House that this has already been referred to the Court of Appeal, where each of the points already alluded to by the hon. Gentleman was made by counsel on behalf of Mr. Latimer and was rejected by the court.

My reason for setting the matter out in such detail so far is that I think it important that the House should hear the basis on which the trial judge initially convicted Mr. Latimer, among the others, and the basis upon which the Court of Appeal, while allowing the appeals of the other three, considered it safe and satisfactory to uphold the conviction of Mr. Latimer. It is not for me to substitute my judgment for that of the Court of Appeal, but it is for me to explain at this juncture how it is that the Court of Appeal argued that conclusion.

The hon. Gentleman will know that I carefully considered further representations made to me last year, about which I wrote to him on 11 January this year. The very proper purpose of the hon. Gentleman's speech tonight has been to assert that fresh material is now available which calls for a yet further reference to be made.

That material comprises what are claimed in his booklet "Witness for the Prosecution" to be medical notes relating to witness A in 1964 and 1965—it has to be said, some 18 years before the events with which the case is concerned

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—and a professional opinion on their significance obtained by a psychotherapist who, as the hon. Gentleman immediately made clear, had not examined witness A.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that careful consideration is being given, as it should be, to the totality of the material to which he referred and to the points that he made in his booklet, which he supplemented in his speech tonight. He will understand that the matter has to be examined in the context of the constraints upon my power to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, which I have already described this evening. He will know that I cannot yet express a concluded view.

However, the hon. Gentleman has my assurance, and I am glad to give it, that the matter is being carefully considered and will be considered with the proper care that it requires and deserves, as will be the points that the hon. Gentleman has made tonight. I undertake to communicate with the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible as to the result.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 24 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Bournemouth-Swanage Motor Road and Ferry Bill *(By Order)*

Sheffield Assay Office Bill *(By Order)*

Federation of Street Traders Union (London Local Authorities Act 1990) (Amendment) Bill *(By Order)*

University of London Bill *(By Order)*

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill [*Lords*] *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 3 March.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994.

Oral Answers to Questions

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Tenancy Laws

1. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government are taking concerning reform of the agricultural tenancy laws; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): We have held extensive and constructive consultations with all relevant interests on tenancy law reform. We are now finalising details so as to be ready to introduce legislation as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Mr. Moss: Is not the joint industry agreement a major breakthrough which removes any final obstacles to the introduction of legislation that will dramatically increase opportunities for new entrants into farming?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right to say that reform is very much needed to increase lettings and opportunities for new entrants. It was tremendously good news that last December all the parties concerned—the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association, the Tenant Farmers Association and the Young Farmers—reached agreement on the reform package. That shows that they all appreciate the urgent need for it.

Mr. Llwyd: Given that the abolition of the wages council was meant to introduce some flexibility into the formulae and resulted in people being paid less than before, is not it another case of the Government looking after their own, as young tenants will be offered 12 or 18-month tenancies? What reception does the Minister think a young entrant into the industry armed with an 18-month tenancy will get at a bank?

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman is very much prejudging the issue. Clearly, landlords and tenants will reach the agreements that they mutually need. As for his comment about the banks, there is no evidence that banks will take that attitude. Landlords will offer a range of tenancy agreements—some will be long, some will be short and some will be medium-term. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Young Farmers support the measure.

Birmingham Wholesale Market

2. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will visit the Birmingham wholesale market to discuss the quality of the produce.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I have already visited the Birmingham wholesale market—on 21 January —as part of my project to help to strengthen the horticulture industry.

Mr. Hawkins: When my hon. Friend undertakes his next visit, will he take the opportunity to see the splendid range of produce produced in my constituency and in his next door? Will he join me in welcoming the fact that, as a result of the North Western electricity board's announcement yesterday that it is cutting prices for horticulturists, thus ensuring that VAT on fuel is completely negated before it comes into force, the Government's policies seem to be working to the advantage of those in our constituencies?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for introducing a local note into his question. I am delighted by the news about NORWEB. Lower electricity prices are important to many horticulturists for their plant propagating activities. With that additional facility available, I am sure that his point about the quality of produce will be well met. The study that I am undertaking is designed to ensure the best possible display for that excellent produce.

Mr. Spellar: When the Minister is visiting markets does he discuss with those who work there the disastrous effect that the deregulation legislation will have on markets throughout the country?

Mr. Jack: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman has not visited the same markets as I have. I have found a universal welcome for the Government's approach to deregulation, not only in horticulture or markets, but throughout agriculture, where people can see that we genuinely have their interests at heart in reducing paperwork and improving systems.

British Food

3. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to promote British food.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The British food industry is one of this country's major successes. We are doing everything that we can to assist and enhance that success.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, which will be warmly welcomed in Croydon. Will she please confirm the contribution that is made to British exports by the British food industry and give a warm welcome to the work that is done in that respect by the organisation Food From Britain?

Mrs. Shephard: It is a pleasure to pay tribute to the work of Food From Britain, which is now focusing on what it does best—the promotion of exports. Last month, I launched Continental Challenge, which was a conference—well-attended—for continental retailers and our producers. The follow-up work from that conference will be taken forward by Food From Britain with regional events, some of which may be in Croydon, and other work directly with producers. Our food industry is already doing well in exporting. For example, exports of lamb have increased by 76 per cent. over the past three years. We are now the second largest manufacturer in Europe of mozzarella cheese and are poised to export that also. There are many other successes of which to speak.

Mr. Hardy: What action will the Minister take to safeguard and promote the interests of Britain's pig producers, who face deep anxiety?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's latter point. The pig industry is going through a difficult time. We know that it is a cyclical industry, but the present trough—if I may put it that way—is pretty deep and difficult. The problem is oversupply, largely from the EC. What we are doing principally is ensuring that if any other EC state is providing illegal state aid to its pig industries, it will be pursued by the Commission.

Mr. Lord: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will acknowledge the enormous part that is played by the British apple in the British food industry. I am sure that she will be aware also of the difficult conditions that the British apple industry now faces. If she has not already done so, I urge her to see a delegation from the apple producers of this country as quickly as possible to listen to all their problems, and to their solutions, which in many ways seem sensible.

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that both I and my hon. Friend the Minister of State have met representatives of the apple industry, although we are always happy to receive more delegations. We are well aware of the difficulties that the industry has been facing because of low prices over the past two seasons. We need a reformed fruit and vegetable regime from the EC, for which we are pressing at the moment. We also need each and every person in Britain to eat just one more Cox's apple every week—it should not be a hardship—a practice which I can commend to the House.

Mr. Tyler: Can I press the Minister a bit further on the crisis facing the pig sector? The production and marketing of pork is extremely important, as I am sure that she will acknowledge. The problem is not only state subsidies in other member states but subsidised marketing and assistance with all forms of support in other states. I ask her to address her mind particularly to the differences between the animal welfare standards that we seek to achieve in this country, which are on a different time scale from those that are being sought in other member states.

Mrs. Shephard: Certainly. We must concentrate on state aids that can be proved to be illegal. That is the point. We have in our sights at the moment a particular state aid, helpfully announced by the French Government by press release last September. There can be little doubt about their intention. If the French Government are found to be state-aiding their pig industry illegally, they will be contributing directly to the difficulties of our producers. That must be stopped. I raised that question again with Commissioner Steichen this week. Work on that is proceeding. On animal welfare, the hon. Gentleman is right that our producers do not have a level playing field. I make no apology for that. I am glad that this country has a strong and well-developed animal welfare lobby. We must live with that concern, which is so strongly felt by British people. I believe also that humanely produced products can be more popular on the market.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern in the dairy industry about our lack of self-sufficiency in milk and about the threat of quota cuts? That concern is now being compounded by anxiety over milk marketing; that, in turn, gives rise to the fear that such action will lessen the supply of milk in the United Kingdom, increase prices and possibly lead to milk processors investing in plant abroad rather than in this country. That would reduce opportunities to produce British food and add value to it in this country, which would obviously have a detrimental effect on the whole agriculture industry.

Mrs. Shephard: I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the deregulation of the milk market is actually an incentive for processors to set up in this country. However, I regret the current delay in the setting up of Milk Marque as much as he does. It is a matter of great concern to both producers and processors and, of course, to 50 million consumers.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

4. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the progress of the scheme for decommissioning fishing vessels.

Mr. Jack: The results of the 1993 fishing vessels decommissioning scheme have provided a 10 per cent. contribution towards the achievement of our multi-annual guidance programme reduction target.

Mr. McFall: The Minister will appreciate the increasing frustration of British fishermen at what they see as the Government's wholly discriminatory policy and interpretation of the rules. The fact that the French fishermen, who took violent action, received £30 million in state aid from their Government only reinforces that frustration. When will the Minister live up to the promise that he made after the 2 December High Court ruling, discuss the implications with both the EC Commissioner and the industry and come back to the House with an improved decommissioning scheme?

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. I was interested by the comments of the secretary of our own National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, who denounced the French Government's payment of aid. He said that it was not what the fishing industry required. He did not consider it to be the right way forward.

If the hon. Gentleman had been present at our last Question Time, he would have heard me report to the House that I had had a discussion with Commissioner Paleokrassas about those very matters. We are now embarking on discussions with the industry: one has already taken place north of the border with the Scottish federation, and another will take place early next month with the NFFO, when we shall discuss technical conservation and other measures to help us achieve our targets.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that a decommissioning scheme alone will not solve the problem of the shortage of fish and that it is now even more vital to agree technical measures, including net sizes? Will my hon. Friend report to the House what progress is being made in discussions with the industry on such measures?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is right to point out that the way in which to achieve the multi-annual guidance programme capacity reduction target is to adopt such measures as licence aggregation. The fishing industry, both north and south of the border, has done a good deal of useful work in presenting proposals for technical conservation measures. I assure my hon. Friend that we will take those proposals seriously. As I said a moment ago, we shall be meeting fishermen's representatives early in March to discuss a possible way forward.

Mr. John D. Taylor: How many fishing vessels have been taken out as a result of the decommissioning scheme? How many additional vessels have joined the British fleet during the same period? As the Minister is now adopting a positive attitude to decommissioning schemes, will he consider a further expansion of the present scheme?

Mr. Jack: On 21 September, I announced that 142 vessels had been successful. Of those, 137 have proceeded with decommissioning. I cannot tell the right hon. Gentleman exactly how many new vessels have joined the fleet during that time. I should point out that, to complete the criteria for payment for decommissioning, a vessel must be so disabled—as the order puts it—that it cannot fish; in other words, it must be dismantled. I am sorry, but I cannot at this moment tell the right hon. Gentleman precisely how many vessels have been dismantled.

Mr. Hicks: May I impress on my hon. Friend the urgent importance of introducing a programme based on technical conservation measures? Is that not really the way forward? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that there is no suggestion of returning to the draconian limitations of days at sea?

Mr. Jack: The reduction in effort targets cannot all be achieved by technical conservation measures. We are at a very early stage in evaluating the worth of the package that the industry has put forward. Technical conservation causes some pain to fishermen because, effectively, it means lower catch rates. My hon. Friend knows that our other efforts to reduce fishing capacity catch levels through days at sea are now the subject of a case in the European Court. We obviously await the outcome of that to assist us in our further thoughts for fishing policy.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister agree that, no matter what the outcome of the case in the European Court, or his discussions on technical measures and efforts at limitation, decommissioning will always be a central part of any scheme to reduce capacity of our fishing fleet? That being the case, will the Minister use the £750,000 underspend of the first round of decommissioning to consider as quickly as possible those applicants who were not successful? Secondly, will the Minister make it clear to the industry when fishermen can apply for the second round so that they can plan for the future, rather than being in abeyance, as they are at present, and racked by uncertainty?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman will know from debates that we had in the House before Christmas that I certainly did not rule out decommissioning making its contribution towards effort reduction. He has asked me a number of parliamentary questions and sent me letters on the subject of the underspend. I hope that the assurances that I have given him in reply to those, showing that I see no good reason why that money not should not take its place in any successor schemes, will provide assurance on that subject.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me about applications for future decommissioning. It was always going to be the case that we would want to consider the final outcome of the first tranche because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, we have sectoral targets for the multi-annual guidance programme and I want to ensure that in any future arrangements whatever resources we deploy in that area are deployed as effectively as possible.

Sheep (Chernobyl)

5. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about how long she expects the restrictions on sale of sheep from lands contaminated by Chernobyl to last.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): More than 93 per cent. of the holdings originally under restriction have been derestricted and the remaining restrictions will be lifted as soon as possible, consistent only with the need to ensure the continued protection of the food chain.

Mr. Bennett: I welcome the fact that another series of farms was released from restrictions in January. Can the Minister assure us that those restrictions will not have to be reimposed and that the land is now perfectly safe? Has the effect of the Chernobyl disaster on those areas had any long-term effect on the breeding ewes in the areas and has the Minister any idea, other than saying "as soon as possible", when the final restrictions will be removed? Is he also satisfied that food products coming into Britain from other parts of Europe are being subjected to the same rigorous tests as those that have been applied in Britain as a result of Chernobyl?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that quite a few holdings have been taken out of restriction in the past 12 months. There are now 592 holdings under restriction, compared with 9,000 when the restrictions were introduced. The Government, as the hon. Gentleman knows, place the highest possible emphasis on ensuring the safety and quality of our food supplies. That is why we have such a prudent and thorough monitoring method. As to when the restrictions will end, the hon. Gentleman knows, because he takes a keen interest in the subject, that those areas have difficult land—poorly drained, peaty uplands—which lacks the minerals that could chemically immobilise the caesium. It is impossible for us to tell when they will be completely cured, but we continue to monitor in a prudent and thorough manner.

Mr. Garnier: I sympathise with the farmers affected by the restrictions, but does my hon. Friend agree that while those restrictions are in place it gives the public, at home and abroad, a better chance to taste Harborough sheepmeat? While it is likely that the differential in price between sheepmeat on the hook and on the hoof will, in due course, diminish to extinction, while that differential exists will he do all that he can to enable Harborough sheep farmers to export live sheep without hindrance from those across the channel?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend raises an important point. It is perfectly possible, provided that the rules are stuck to, for animals to be properly and humanely transported. We remain anxious to ensure that an equal regime is in place throughout the continent and I can assure my hon. Friend that I am fully aware that people on the continent prize Harborough sheep as much as we do here.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Although there have been restrictions on the sale of sheep in Chernobyl-affected areas since 1987 on human health grounds, there have been no restrictions on the sale of cattle from the Green Lane farm in Kelsall on animal health grounds. It is not good enough for the Minister to say that the bovine immuno-deficiency virus causes only a transient rise in temperature in the affected cattle when Black's Veterinary Dictionary suggests that it is a potentially very dangerous pathogen of cattle. What is he going to do to avoid the spread of the disease?

Madam Speaker: Order. I doubt whether the hon. Gentleman's question relates at all to that on the Order Paper. In that case, I call Sir Peter Tapsell.

Sir Peter Tapsell: In view of repeated reports of the steady deterioration in the condition of the huge number of nuclear warheads stored in the Ukraine and Russia, does my hon. Friend accept that the danger of future nuclear fallout in this country has to be kept very much in mind? Does his Department have any scheme ready to tell farmers what to do if there is a recurrence of anything of the nature of Chernobyl? For instance, may I put it to him that when I recently—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Sir Peter Tapsell: It is a question.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have a statement to make on these matters later in which all hon. Members will be interested. We are not in debate; I should like a direct question please.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Is my hon. Friend aware that when I flew over South Korea in winter—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked his question, and I am sure that the Minister heard the first part, to which I am entitled to ask him to respond.

Mr. Soames: The House will be anxious to know what my hon. Friend saw in Korea. He makes an important point about nuclear accidents of this type. It is plain that we have learnt a great deal from Chernobyl. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has a fully equipped and extremely sophisticated emergency response headquarters and a plan of action in the event of any such unfortunate recurrence. I assure my hon. Friend that we will be fully prepared for almost any eventuality.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Minister acknowledge just how difficult it is to eke out a living on the uplands, especially in Wales? Will he also acknowledge that it is very difficult for those who run their sheep on Chernobyl-affected pasture to make a living and that many of us believe that the Government's regime for upland areas is neither as imaginative nor as generous as it should be? Will he take action?

Mr. Soames: It has been my experience that every Government scheme is deemed by the Opposition to be neither imaginative nor generous. The scheme to which the hon. Gentleman referred has stood the test of time and served farmers extremely well. Help given to the farmers centres on mark and release arrangements which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, enable controls to be applied with the minimum disruption to normal farming practices, and the associated compensation payments mitigate the adverse economic effects. He should be quite satisfied with that.

European Union Regulations

6. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will ask the agricultural attachés at British embassies to report on the level of compliance in each member state of European Union agricultural and animal welfare regulations and obligations.

Mr. Soames: We regularly seek information from our agricultural attachés about compliance with Community law in their host member states.

Mr. Harris: Is my hon. Friend aware that, following my visits to our embassies in member states, I am far from convinced that our diplomats, especially the agricultural attachés, are on the ball in monitoring what is happening —or what is not happening—in the member states? For example, several questions have today been asked about non-compliance and national aid. What specific information does my hon. Friend receive? Will he give some posts a rocket in order to ensure that Ministers are well informed, because many countries are getting away with murder in terms of Common Market regulations?

Mr. Soames: As my hon. Friend knows, Ministers are always extremely well informed on those matters. I shall ensure that his concerns are passed to the administration. May I make it clear to my hon. Friend that we always find that, in dealings with the agricultural attachés, we are able to find out all the information that we need. However, it is true that enforcement is a matter of great concern to everyone in the country and a level playing field is something for which we all seek to strive and I will ensure that his remarks are passed on.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Minister aware that cruelty to animals being exported is now endemic and that it is a growing problem? Is not that a case for which Ministers should introduce the doctrine of subsidiarity?

Mr. Soames: No. We believe that animal welfare is not a suitable subject for subsidiarity. It is a pan-European problem and it will not make anyone in the country feel any better if animals are badly treated in Spain when they are well treated in Britain. We want to see a properly enforced regime for animal welfare across Europe, in which people will have complete confidence that animals will be safely and properly transported in a humane manner.

Mr. Sykes: Is the Minister aware, that in many European countries, people do not obey their own laws, never mind those that come from Brussels?

Mr. Soames: That is not the sort of penetrating question that I expect from my hon. Friend. The fact—[*Interruption.*] The fact is that in this country we have a traditionally high standard of compliance and high standards in the way in which we apply the rules in our public life. It is not quite the point for us to always consider that everything is done better here than elsewhere. What matters is that enforcement of the rules must be carried out across Europe on an absolutely equal basis. That is the aim of Her Majesty's Government.

British Food

7. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she is taking to promote the sale of British vegetables.

Mr. Jack: My colleagues and I take every available opportunity to extend and encourage the production of high-quality British vegetables with the objective of helping to boost those sales.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that at the end of the past war, the health of the nation improved mainly because of the large consumption of home-grown British vegetables? It is well known that the Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), is a self-confessed and practising carnivore. Would not it be better if, instead of having him as a bad example of excessive meat eating, we had a Government campaign to promote the health-giving properties of British vegetables? By that I do not mean the vegetables sitting on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Jack: If that is the best we can do for dig for victory, God help us. However, I have some good news for the hon. Gentleman. In May, the Health Education Authority is to conduct a campaign to boost the consumption of, among other things, home-produced vegetables. That campaign is to be supported by such notables as sergeant Strawberry and captain Carrot. As the hon. Gentleman remains one of the self-professed socialists on the Opposition Benches, I suggest that he volunteers as private Beetroot, because he is red all the way through.

Mr. Pickles: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the plight of lettuce growers and their concern over the proposed regulations on nitrate? I thank my hon. Friend for the work that he has done, but is he in a position to reassure my constituents, whose jobs are at stake because of the regulation on the nitrate levels of lettuce? How far has he got with the Commission?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is a perfect advertisement for the lettuce growers' product. May I assure him that, at the December Agriculture Council, my right hon. Friend the Minister raised the important point of nitrate levels and their application at different times of the season and the way in which they affect British growers. Current work is considering a further new regime and I shall tell my hon. Friend of the outcome of those discussions.

"Back to Basics"

8. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further contributions her Department plans to make to the "back to basics" policy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *849*.

Mr. Grocott: Is the Minister aware that that is a pretty thin answer to a question about a policy which the Prime Minister tells us is to permeate the work of all Departments? I can give that answer only one mark for technical merit. Would it not be far better if the Minister came clean with the House and admitted that she has not a clue what relevance the "back to basics" policy has for her Department because, like everyone else in the country, she has not a clue what "back to basics" means? Is it not worth saying, for once, that that was a meaningless answer to a meaningless question about a meaningless policy?

Mrs. Shephard: I understand that the hon. Gentleman recently regretted that there was not much farming interest in his constituency. However, I should have thought that even he should know that farming and the production of good food are about as basic as one can get. If he has difficulty with the concept, I know of quite a few farmers who would like to put him right.

Mr. Gallie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that getting back to basics in the food market will mean that food can compete on equal terms in whatever market, especially in Europe? Does she also agree that the United Kingdom salmon farming industry is now under threat because of dumping from Norway, and can she advise what steps can be taken?

Mrs. Shephard: I must say that I rather agree with my hon. Friend. He will, of course, welcome the discussion that the Minister of State, Scottish Office is having with the Norwegian Fisheries Minister and he will also wish to support that Minister's argument that the key to the long-term solution lies through co-operation and agreement between producers. I am sure that he will strongly urge the Scottish salmon producers to meet their Norwegian counterparts as soon as possible to get the process of dealing with the industry's problems under way.

Dr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that there is nothing more basic than the living standards of farm workers and their families? Now that the consultation exercise has demonstrated such overwhelming support for the Agricultural wages board, and the farmers as well as the farm workers have come out in support of it, is it not clear than any move to abolish or weaken the board could be motivated only by political dogma? When will the Minister remove that threat from farm workers and their families?

Mrs. Shephard: We have had many representations about the future of the Agricultural wages board, the majority of which have been favour of its retention. During last month's agriculture questions, I said that I would meet representatives of the Transport and General Workers Union, and I have now done that. I am considering the matter and I hope to make an announcement before Easter.

British Food

9. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are taken by her Department to increase the sales of British food in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We are giving help and encouragement to our very successful food producers, processors and manufacturers to help them to meet the needs of customers in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that typically helpful reply. Does she agree that fresh British food is among the best in the world, and that it would do much for the health and prosperity of the British people if we could persuade more British consumers to buy home-grown produce?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that British produce is among the best in the world. Our British retailers are now increasingly labelling British food with its place of origin, which obviously helps to persuade the British consumer to buy British. Ultimately, however, the consumer has the right to go for quality, and it is quality which we should aim for in promoting British food.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister aware that farmed salmon is one British food which could soon no longer be with us unless the Government act in Europe? Is she aware of the report by Ernst and Young—a firm of consultants that the Tory party tends to hire and whose views it normally accepts—establishing that £300 million worth of illegal subsidy has been given by the Norwegian Government to their salmon farming industry over the past four years?

Why have the Government not established those facts and why do they now refuse to act on them? Does the Minister realise that 6,000 jobs and an enormous amount of public investment is at stake unless the Government take seriously the problems of the salmon farming industry and put it at the top of their priority list in Brussels?

Mrs. Shephard: I am very well aware of the importance of the salmon farming industry in Scotland. I am also aware of the amount of investment that has been put in and the number of jobs involved. The hon. Gentleman will understand that the decision on the type of safeguard action to take against alleged dumping and the level of, say, minimum import prices are matters for the Commission. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) a moment ago when I said that these matters were being firmly taken forward by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: May I welcome my right hon. Friend's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) in respect of the continued work being done by retailers to identify British produce. Is she aware of the independent survey done in my constituency of Hereford which showed that 64 per cent. of consumers would alter their purchasing habits if they were made more aware of the origins of the produce that they buy? Will she step up her efforts when talking to major supermarket operators, so that they make it even more clear and follow the excellent example of the Superquin supermarkets in Dublin, which clearly identify Irish products in every shop? Will she ensure that that kind of effort takes place in Britain so that we can buy more British produce?

Mrs. Shephard: I will certainly continue every effort to promote British food, whether it is for consumption at home or abroad. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the Strathclyde food project which is bringing together producers, processors and retailers in promoting exactly the kind of activity that he advocates.

Bovine Somatotropin

10. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on developments since the consideration of bovine somatotropin by European Standing Committee A on Wednesday 9 February.

Mr. Soames: Following the decision of the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers, which was reported to the House on 17 December 1993, we shall be carefully considering all subsequent developments, including those following last week's extensive Standing Committee debate, in coming to a final view on the future of the current BST moratorium.

Mr. Loyden: While I accept the need for the criteria to be met in full on these matters, does the Minister consider that the delays are having an adverse effect on British production and jobs and investment in my constituency? Is not it surprising that the United States, which is considered to have very high standards with regard to regulation, has already agreed to marketing?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. As he knows, the basic scientific principles of safety, quality and efficacy have already been proved in this situation. I am fully aware of the significant investment made in his constituency by Lilley which has developed a factory at Speke at a cost of £40 million and where there are 150 jobs. It is critical not only for that reason but for the reason that if the decision went against BST, it having passed all its scientific hurdles, it would send entirely the wrong signal to the rest of the European Community and those seeking to invest in the Community about the sense of urgency and understanding that the Community has of modern science. It would be a very poor decision.

Wholesale Market

11. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will support the Fresh Produce Consortium's study into the working of the wholesale market.

Mr. Jack: I can confirm that we are already giving active support to this study by means of a £10,000 grant towards the cost of the Fresh Produce Consortium study into the future of the wholesale markets.

Mr. Carrington: Does my hon. Friend agree that the wholesale markets play a vital role in ensuring low prices for the consumer in fresh produce? Is my hon. Friend concerned about the efficiency of those markets? Will he ensure that they get all the assistance necessary to improve the way in which they operate for the benefit of the consumer?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome, and there is universal welcome throughout the House for a question on wholesale markets. I can assure him that the study is designed to look at matters of operation and location of wholesale markets to ensure that, in future, they can serve those who put something like 40 per cent. of Britain's horticultural products on to the market through that vital outlet.

Mr. O'Hara: Does the Minister agree that a product such as bovine somatotropin, which has satisfied all the criteria of quality, effectiveness and safety to the full satisfaction—

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to question No. 10. This question is about the Fresh Produce Consortium's study.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Connarty: I thank the Prime Minister for that interesting information. Is he aware that the independent living fund appears not to be working properly, and that only £500,000 out of the £4 million allocated is likely to be disbursed by the end of the financial year? That means that £3.5 million will go back to the Treasury. If those figures continue for next year, £9.6 million out of £11 million will go back to the Treasury, and only £1.4 million will go to those who need it.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that the problem with the trigger mechanism is that a social service department must spend £200 per week on someone who is applying, and that 57 authorities have not submitted a single name? Will he give an assurance that he will look seriously at that trigger so that the poorest and most disadvantaged in society are not denied the help that they require?

The Prime Minister: The independent living fund exists to help people who face particular difficulties. If there is a mechanism that creates particular difficulties—I am not aware of the particular point that the hon. Gentleman raises—I will examine it, and see what the situation is.

Q2. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Moss: Does my right hon. Friend agree that schemes that attract private investment for public projects are enormously valuable? Will he join me in completely rejecting a scheme that was launched early this week which would leave all the risk on the back of the taxpayer? Is not it typical of Labour that its scheme is unbelievable, badly thought through and fundamentally dishonest?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly keen to see the public and the private sectors working closely together. That is desirable and attractive, and it is something which we have sought to do for some time with considerable success. It has to be made clear that if the private sector does get involved, it needs a degree of freedom and it ought not to be a way of effectively disguising what are, in reality, public expenditure increases.

Mr. John Smith: On Tuesday this week, the Prime Minister, in answering a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston), told the House that the net disposable income of people of all ranges of income had increased since 1979. The Prime Minister must know that that was not correct. Will he now withdraw that remark?

The Prime Minister: No, I shall not withdraw it. The latest edition of "Social Trends"—

Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Speaker: Order. The House is obviously not aware that Ministers may read from the Dispatch Box.

The Prime Minister: In fact, I was about to quote, as it might be helpful to the House if I do. The latest edition of "Social Trends" found that

> "before housing costs, the real median income of the bottom fifth increased...between 1979 and 1990-1991".

Those figures, of course, were taken at the bottom of the recession before there was a distinct improvement in the economy and in the position of most people.

Mr. John Smith: Did the Prime Minister look at the publication issued by the Department of Social Security —by his own Government—which made it clear on page 1 that the real income of the bottom 10 per cent. decreased both before and after housing costs were taken into account? Which is correct—the Prime Minister's assertions or what his own Department has published?

The Prime Minister: I responded earlier by quoting what was actually said in "Social Trends". I will say this to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Since 1979, real incomes have gone up sharply for vulnerable groups; more than 40 per cent. for pensioners; up for the unemployed and up for those in work but on relatively low pay. There is an improvement in living standards at all levels, even among those who are the least well off.

Mr. John Smith: Can I take the Prime Minister to the precise point on which we are in dispute? Does he maintain that the real income of the bottom 10 per cent. of the population increased between 1979 and now?

The Prime Minister: I quoted to the right hon. and learned Gentleman— [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will answer the question. The right hon. and learned Gentleman put the question in his own way. I will answer the question in my own way. I refer him to "Social Trends", which relates to the original question. The figures for the poorest 20 per cent. relate to a time when we were in recession and mortgage rates were high. I stick to the points that I made a few moments ago.

Mr. Clappison: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the recent news that output investment continued to grow in the last quarter of 1993? Is not that clear and compelling evidence that, despite the efforts of the Labour party to create gloom, Britain is on the road to recovery and leading the rest of Europe out of recession?

The Prime Minister: There are very few people now who doubt the fact that the British economy has been growing for six or seven quarters, that we have a rate of growth at present larger than that of any comparable European Community country and that we are set to grow again throughout this year and through next year. Not only are we growing, but we are doing so with interest rates at a very low level—lower than they have been for very many years—and inflation also at a low level and likely to stay at a low level.

Q3. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: Is the Prime Minister aware that information supplied through parliamentary answers to me on 41 quangos shows that 127 members of those bodies are associated with firms that directly finance the Tory party? Can he tell me whether that is a highly unlikely statistical coincidence or yet another example of that lot over there getting their cronies' snouts in the trough?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Gentleman a little something about the membership of quangos. Perhaps I might mention some of the well-known contributors to the Conservative party and Tory supporters who are members of quangos. Margaret Hodge, for example, on the Local Government Commission; Baroness Blackstone, for example; Baroness Jay, for example. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is also on a quango—the British Film Institute. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Not a single Government contributor or supporter among them.

Mrs. Roe: Has my right hon. Friend seen the figures published today that show that new car registrations are rising strongly? Is not that further evidence of continuing economic recovery and a return of consumer confidence?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is becoming more apparent that consumer confidence is returning, not just in the figures for car sales and car registrations, but in the figures for retail sales and in several other figures. The depth and spread of the recovery are certainly continuing. It is steady and I believe that it will continue to be steady and grow throughout this year.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Prime Minister accept that I am very proud to be a member of the unpaid board of governors of the British Film Institute? Will he comment on the lack of Government action in helping to finance and develop the British film industry which is a very important industry, not only for the cultural representation of this country but because it both creates employment here by making films and develops Britain's image abroad, which cascades down to British manufacturing industry? Will he give a guarantee that he will support the industry in the future?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the work that he does for the British film industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about its future?"] I shall come to that, if hon. Members will just relax. I am told that the hon. Gentleman does an excellent job on the board of the British Film Institute and that he has been appointed to it because of his personal abilities and not because of his political affiliations, as is the case with all appointments to such public bodies, without exception.

As regards the future of the British film industry, I am keen to see it thrive. One of the areas that will benefit significantly from the establishment of a lottery is the arts in general, a part of which I hope will be the British film industry. It is likely over the years that it will provide considerably more resources for the arts as a whole, and very probably the film industry as well, than even the most benevolent level of Government funding is likely to do, whatever Government we may have. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman and his fellow members of the British Film Institute will fully support it.

Sir Jim Spicer: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, following the break-up of the Soviet Union, all the former republics of the Soviet Union are entitled to be treated not as falling within the natural sphere of influence of Russia but as free and truly independent states?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I can certainly confirm that that is the case. We are seeking to develop diplomatic, commercial and trading relations with a large number of them. In the past few weeks, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been here to discuss trading opportunities, and my right hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry, the Foreign Office and other Departments have been in contact with a number of the other new republics.

Q4. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Prime Minister, during the course of the day, read the independent report, published today, on the murder of Jonathan Zito in December 1992? It condemns the community care programme under which the murderer was receiving treatment and from which he was discharged because of lack of resources. It also condemns the way that the Government have underfunded the social services programme in London. Less than an hour ago, I was talking to Jayne Zito, his widow, and she asked me to request the Prime Minister to meet her and explain to her why her husband should have been murdered because of lack of resources provided by the Government.

The Prime Minister: Everyone must be deeply sympathetic to the dreadful murder of Mr. Zito and the appalling effect that it has had on Mrs. Zito's subsequent life. No one will dispute that. *[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentlemen do me the courtesy of listening to the reply? It was a dreadful incident and we must seek to learn what we can from it. It is significant that the report supports the principle of community care and specifically concludes that most mentally ill people, including those suffering from schizophrenia, are living safely in the community. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the principle of community care is widely accepted in each and every part of the House, and has been for a long time. He may be aware of the remarks of Professor Norman Sartorius who confirmed only yesterday that:

> "Our recent developments in improving mental health services will ensure that the UK continues to lead the world in this area."

I believe that to be the case, and we will continue to do that. I will consider the hon. Gentleman's request, but it would perhaps have been better, if he were genuinely concerned, if he put the point to me privately and not in the way he has.

Q5. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ottaway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with retail sales up, productivity up and confidence in the small business sector sharply up, the last thing that British business needs is so-called "business plans", which are nothing but a failed Opposition policy that does nothing to help the British economy?

The Prime Minister: I certainly believe that what is most needed for the health of business is to ensure that we have a low inflation economy, the right business tax structure to encourage investment, and interest rates as low as we can keep them. Those are the ingredients which will encourage investment within this country, and from abroad, which continues at a high rate.

Question Time (Speaker's Statement)

3.30 pm

Madam Speaker: I have a statement to make to the House.

I am becoming increasingly concerned at the way in which Question Time is developing. Both questions and answers are getting longer and there is a growing tendency to regard Question Time as an opportunity for debate rather than question and answer. As a result, the number of questions to departmental Ministers that are reached on the Order Paper has declined still further from the position reached in 1989-90, when the Procedure Committee looked at the subject and made certain recommendations in a report which the House approved in October 1990.

I commend to the attention of all hon. Members part II of the report entitled "The Quality and Effectiveness of Question Time". In particular, the Committee stated:

> "Accepting that there will always be some subjects of topical interest or controversy on which an extended line of questioning would be appropriate, the Speaker should nevertheless have the full support of the House in seeking to increase the number of tabled questions reached, by curbing the length of both ministerial replies and supplementaries and, in particular, by trying to ensure that supplementaries consist of a single question rather than a dialogue of queries."

I propose, from now on, to enforce that recommendation. In particular, I shall aim to call fewer supplementaries and I shall expect Members to confine them to a single issue. Equally, I shall look for brief answers from Ministers and also the answers should be restricted to the point that has been raised—*[Interruption.]* Order. Is the House interested? [Hon. Members: "Oh, yes, Madam Speaker."] This matter is very important.

I shall need, and I expect to receive, full co-operation from all Members on both sides of the House: from Ministers; from shadow spokespersons; and from Back-Bench Members in all parties.

Those hon. Members who have been successful in attaining a relatively high place on the Order Paper have a right to expect their questions to be reached and to have an opportunity to put a supplementary ahead of other Members who may not have tabled a question at all. At present, not enough hon. Members are getting that chance through lack of discipline by their colleagues, including those on the Front Benches. I am determined to change that situation.

Business of the House

3.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week. The business will be as follows:

Monday 28 February—Motions on the European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their member states and the republics of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Romania) orders.

Motion on the Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) order.

Motion on the European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) regulations.

Motion on the European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) regulations.

Motion on the Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) order.

Motions on the Scottish Revenue Support Grant reports. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Tuesday 1 March—Opposition Day (5th allotted day): until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate described as "Misuse of Overseas Aid Funds," followed by a debate described as "The Need for Investment in Education" on motions in the name of the Liberal Democrats.

Motion on the Community Care Special Transitional Grant report.

Wednesday 2 March—Opposition Day (6th allotted day): there will be a debate entitled "The State of Manufacturing Industry" on an Opposition motion.

Thursday 3 March—There will be a debate on Welsh affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Friday 4 March—Private Members' Bills.

Monday 7 March—Motion on the Building Societies (EFTA States) order.

Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) order.

It may also be for the convenience of the House to know that the House will be invited to approve motions relating to the House of Commons Members' Fund on Friday 4 March.

It will certainly be for the convenience of the House to know that, subject to the progress of business, it is proposed that the House should rise for the spring Adjournment on Friday 27 May until Monday 13 June.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. In particular, I thank him, on behalf of all Members, for his early notice of the dates of the Whitsun recess, which confirms that we are to have a break around the date of the European election. Many hon. Members will have anticipated that, but it is very helpful to know it. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I should appreciate it if hon. Members' conversations were a little less noisy.

Mrs. Beckett: I should like to ask the Leader of the House to arrange for an early statement from a Treasury Minister on the progress of a proposal made last autumn by Asea Brown Boveri to start the supply of new trains for the Northern line at the end of 1994. I stress that what is needed is specifically a statement from a Treasury Minister. London commuters need the trains, but the train makers need the order. The proposal has no up-front cost and comes, we believe, within Treasury guidelines. It seems that the roadblock is in the Treasury.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that we are seeking Government time for a debate on Bosnia.

I ask him to arrange for ministerial statements, first, on what seem to be a series of U-turns on the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill in another place and, secondly, on the fact that the Education Bill was given its Second Reading there 14 weeks ago but has not been heard of since. If the Government intend to abandon these Bills, it would be very helpful for the House to be told.

Finally, I have to say that there is concern among Welsh Members on all sides of the House at the fact that the Welsh affairs debate this year will not be on St. David's day.

Mr. Newton: I shall take the right hon. Lady's questions in reverse order, as I sometimes do.

On the question of the debate on Welsh affairs, I must, however gently, make the point that there would have been more scope for discussion of this matter had the usual channels been operating. Also, such debates have not always taken place on 1 March. Indeed, in roughly three years out of seven that is, in effect, impossible. It is probably for the general convenience of the House that the debate this year should take place next Thursday.

With regard to the Education Bill and the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, which are being dealt with in another place, I replied to an hon. Member on the corresponding occasion last week that it is entirely appropriate that comments related to the progress of those Bills should be made in the House in which they are currently being considered. The right hon. Lady may find that she will hear more of the Education Bill before too long.

I repeat the comment that I made last week: that of course we always keep under review the possible need for a statement or a debate on Bosnia. I think, however, that everyone would wish to express pleasure at the way in which matters went in Bosnia in the early part of this week.

The hon. Lady said that she wanted a Treasury statement on a report. I understand that she is expected to see the Financial Secretary about the matter, and I should like to leave it to that meeting.

I am grateful for the right hon. Lady's generous recognition of the advantages of an early statement about the Whitsun recess, which I have sought to make in line with the spirit of the Jopling report.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 649 in the name of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), which deplores the lack of progress made in the adoption of the recommendations in the Jopling report?

[That this House notes that it is now two years since the Select Committee on Sittings of the House published its report (Jopling Report); deplores the fact that there has still been no action; believes that the procedures and sittings of this House are in urgent need of reform; and calls on the Leader of the House to provide an early opportunity for this House to vote on the reforms proposed by the Select Committee.]

Even more significantly, does my right hon. Friend recall early-day motion 9, which was tabled in the previous Session of this Parliament, signed by more than 100 Opposition Members, including the Opposition deputy Chief Whip, which urged that there should be an early debate on the subject? Would my right hon. Friend therefore consult the Leader of the Opposition and urge him to overcome his pathological objection to any reform so that we can have a genuine debate on the subject in the House?

Madam Speaker: Order. That is an example of what I have just asked not to have.

Mr. Newton: I have seen early-day motion 649, and I recall early-day motion 9 in the previous Session. I am much encouraged by the number of Labour Members who are making it clear that they want progress on the matter. I hope that they will be prepared to impose that view on their Front-Bench team.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that, notwithstanding the fact that next week's Welsh day debate is on St. Winwaloe's rather than St. David's day, the Government remain committed to holding a Welsh day debate in Government time as near to St. David's day as such time permits?

Mr. Newton: I think that my good faith in the matter has been shown by my announcement about the debate.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time as soon as possible to debate early-day motion 520, which was signed by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) and no fewer than 56 Opposition Members?

[That this House condemns the massive and unacceptable pay increases and perks awarded to the Chief Executive and directors of Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries Ltd., bearing in mind the Government's strictures on excessive pay awards, exorbitant beer price increases for Banks' products in recent years, and the company's failure to enhance their employees' pay and conditions by any recognisable comparison with that awarded to its directors, together with the company's offensive decision to make a political donation of £10,000 to Conservative Party funds; believes that the present Chief Executive and directors are unfit for office; and calls for their immediate resignation.]

That shows that the Labour party's industrial policy is still based upon unlawful interference in the wages and the prices charged by private companies such as the Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries. Will he please allow the Labour party the opportunity to show that its policies are based on arbitrary interference in private property?

Mr. Newton: I confirm that everything I have seen of the Labour party's so-called "Business Plan for Britain" makes it a recipe for damaging interference in the success of business in Britain.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Should we not debate next week Madam Speaker's extremely important statement? Is the Leader of the House aware that I had to be away from the House for 12 weeks before Christmas and that, during that time, I watched "Westminster Live"? I was frankly appalled at the way in which the House of Commons came over on that programme. For Prime Minister's questions, should not we consider having closed questions rather than the ridiculous open question system, which has caused so much of the trouble?

Mr. Newton: I shall confine myself to saying that we are all pleased to see the hon. Gentleman back and in such brief form.

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Does my right hon. Friend recall that on several occasions I have asked for a debate on the future of British civil aviation? Given the recent report of the seven wise men to the Commission in Brussels, and the fact that there is great concern about the state of negotiations between Britain and the United States, which are of vital importance to British airlines, is it not time that we found time for a debate on that subject, since apparently we can spend many hours discussing sexual perversions?

Mr. Newton: I will of course bear my hon. Friend's representations in mind, but I cannot promise that in the near future.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): May I endorse the call by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) for a debate on public companies and their greed and avarice in recent times? Many chairmen and directors of companies are claiming for themselves far more than they are prepared to pay the workers in their industries, and far more than they are prepared to consider the needs of the people who buy their products. I make no apology for my early-day motion, or for any word in it. I support it, and I am asking for a debate on it.

Mr. Newton: It appears that the hon. Gentleman is simply confirming the interpretation of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): May we have an urgent debate early next week on socialist plans for Europe, as signed up to by the Leader of the Opposition, given that those plans would double the EC budget and massively increase taxation and borrowing in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: The very first debate I announced today is on a number of orders connected with Europe. I cannot be quite sure whether those points would be in order, but my hon. Friend might have a try.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Why is there no Government statement or debate on the latest estimated job losses at British Gas of 25,000? When a major company announces the biggest single redundancy package in history, do the Government accept no responsibility, given their activities in the gas market? Does the Leader of the House understand why many British Gas workers believe that, if it were possible to go to gaol for economic crimes, Ministers and senior management would be behind bars?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman puts his point in characteristically overheated terms. He is talking about a successful British company, which has been successful because it has been prepared to ensure that it operates efficiently.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): During the long list of orders that my right hon. Friend read out for Monday concerning Europe and eastern Europe, will he ensure that there is a statement about the know-how fund for Russia? Most taxpayers will be anxious to ensure that no taxpayers' money is to be used to send the mayor of Lambeth to Moscow to advise Russia on democracy.

Mr. Newton: It is highly unlikely that any money from the know-how fund is going in that direction.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a debate on procedure, so that we can discuss your important and significant ruling, Madam Speaker—which, if I might humbly say so, I think would penalise regular attending Back Benchers and favour those who simply turn up to put questions into the Table Office and attend the Chamber only when they know that they will be called?

Mr. Newton: That is perhaps the point of order that the hon. Gentleman wished to raise with you earlier, Madam Speaker. It might be more appropriate if it were raised in that form. I certainly do not intend to raise questions about your statement, which I thought was clear and sensible, and welcomed by most of the House.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): May I join my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) in calling for a debate on rather wider European matters than those scheduled for Monday to enable us to draw a real distinction between the preparedness of the Opposition to sign up to every jot and tittle of a European socialist manifesto while my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is determined to defend Britain's interests?

Mr. Newton: There is a much wider debate, albeit not under a European heading, on Wednesday—the Opposition Supply day on the state of manufacturing industry. It is clear that, if the Opposition were in a position to sign up to the socialist policies that they espouse in Europe, the state of manufacturing industry would be grim indeed.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In view of the tragic fatal accidents involving schoolchildren, may we have a statement on how the Government plan to improve safety standards in buses and minibuses, especially when carrying schoolchildren? Does the Leader of the House agree that the compulsory installation of seat belts would be a far more effective measure than the ill-thought-out suggestion being considered by the EC working party of a complete ban on double-decker buses, when there is no conclusive evidence that the safety record of double-deckers is any worse than that of conventional single deckers?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's point about double-decker buses, with which I suspect many of my hon. Friends, and, indeed, Opposition Members, will have much sympathy. On his first point, I do not want to add to what I recall my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister saying in response to a question that he was asked by a Back-Bench Opposition Member last week.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on Hong Kong so that the House may demonstrate its support for the actions of the Governor?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate on that matter, but my hon. Friend might like to make that point to the Foreign Secretary, when he is answering questions next Wednesday. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be grateful.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to debate, as a matter of urgency, what is happening to the Lomé convention in relation to the banana producers of the Caribbean, who are not only going bankrupt but are being destroyed by the lack of action of the EC?

Mr. Newton: I will bring that question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and others with an interest in the matter, but I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): With roughly 12,000 mobile telephones being stolen every month, may we have an urgent debate on what the Government can do to stop them being recycled as rechipped telephones?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate— *[Laughter.]*. One of my hon. Friends suggests that my reply should be, "I will ring you back."

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate on the disturbing recommendations of the inquiry into the murder of Jonathan Zito, particularly the need to make good the shortfall in medium-secure places in south-east London, and acute psychiatric beds in inner London?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on the same issue at Question Time. She will also know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced a number of proposals in August last year to improve the care of the more vulnerable mentally ill people in the community. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will look carefully at any further lessons that can be drawn from that important report.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Without wishing to be repetitive, will my right hon. Friend give urgent consideration to a serious statement on the implementation of the Jopling report on the business of the House? Like me, he must be aware of the views of the public, business men and people in considerable positions in this country about recent events in the House and the way that things are being dragged out totally unnecessarily, which is giving a most appalling image of the House to the rest of the country and to the world.

Mr. Newton: Of course, as I have said before, I will give serious consideration to that, but I would make the point to my hon. Friend that, in many ways, we have made significant progress towards some of the aims of the Jopling report by the way in which we have nevertheless managed to conduct business.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to tell us what representations the Government are making to the BBC regarding its decision to withdraw "Today in Parliament" from Radio 4 FM? It is already—if one is a Back Bencher in this place—like trying to smuggle messages out of prison. We cannot afford it to get any more difficult.

Mr. Newton: I note the point; it was raised from the Opposition Front Bench last week. I will follow it up in the way I outlined then.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to have a general debate on 15 years of Tory rule, to bring to people's attention what a marvellous thing it is that standards in Britain have improved so much over the past 15 years that—to take a random example recently highlighted by the press—an elderly ex-miner nearing pensioner age can behave with such vigour and sprightliness that now, in Tory Britain, he can maintain a foreign mistress in yuppieland?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a debate next week.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): May I return to more serious matters? Will the Leader of the House reconsider his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), and agree to a debate on the lack of resources for the mentally ill—not just in London, but in the rest of the country? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that today's report said that a hundred Christopher Clunises could be at large in the country because of that lack of resources? Is he aware that in Calderdale, where we have only 77 acute beds for the mentally ill, it is proposed to close nearly half those beds?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I said to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), except that the hon. Member for Halifax really ought to look at some of the figures before making such comments. She should note, for instance, the increase in the number of community psychiatric nurses, and many other measures of the increase in resources.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on corruption in local government so that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) can have an opportunity to condemn Jim Brookes, the Labour leader of Monklands district council?

Mr. Newton: Although such an opportunity was kindly arranged by the Opposition, I think that the debate that will follow these questions provides another. Unhappily, I see no sign of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): The London Boroughs Association called today for urgent action to reduce the dangerously high and rising levels of air pollution in the capital, caused by vehicular traffic. Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate next week —perhaps a combined debate, involving both the Department of Transport and the Treasury—on why public transport in the capital is significantly underfunded, not least the Northern line?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) raised effectively the same point, in a slightly different form. Perhaps I could leave my earlier answer as it stands.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): As it is unlikely that the Labour party will mention it in next week's debate on manufacturing industry, will my right hon. Friend find time for us to discuss Labour's proposal to end tax-cutting competition among European Community member states? It would seriously damage competition in this country— which has low levels of corporation tax—and, indeed, increase unemployment.

Mr. Newton: That would clearly be spot on for next Wednesday's debate on manufacturing industry.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House answer a question about injunctions issued to the

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

press? Will he investigate the number of injunctions that have been issued to the press, and the media generally, by and on behalf of Tory Members—including Ministers—during the past 15 years, and in the last few years in particular? Now that the Government have decided to raise the issue, I think that we ought to open the books completely.

Mr. Newton: I genuinely have some difficulty in fathoming precisely what point the hon. Gentleman thinks he is trying to make.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): When my right hon. Friend arranges a debate on Europe, will he ensure that it is drawn widely enough to encompass early-day motion 618?

[That this House notes the hypocrisy of the Liberal Democratic Party over its policy on Europe; recalls the statement of Liberal Democrats' spokesman on Europe, the honourable Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, that 'the Nation state in terms of the old concept of sovereignty has seen its day' (Official Report, 26th June 1991, column 1365); contrasts these remarks with his party's new policy of 'decentralised federalism'; believes that this new policy is contradicted by a long list of centralising proposals supported by the Liberal Democrats which include signing up to the Social Chapter, signing up now for a timetable for a single currency, a common defence and security policy, a common immigration policy, a common rural policy and, most significantly, accepting majority voting in the Council of Ministers, meaning the end of the national veto; believes that they have sought to disguise centralising policies, designed to create a United States of Europe, in decentralising rhetoric; and believes this to be a blatant attempt to mislead the electorate in the hope of gaining political advantage in the forthcoming European elections.]

That would enable us to highlight the Janus-like tendencies of the Liberal Democrats, who advocate "decentralising federalism" while signing up for the centralising social chapter.

Mr. Newton: That is a debate that I really would have liked to arrange—and, frankly, I think that the Liberal Democrats should have scheduled it for their Supply day next week. It would have been interesting to hear what they said.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we have an early debate on the resurgence of fascism and racism in this country—not least in the light of the filthy literature put out by Combat 18, which calls for the repatriation of non-whites, in body bags or alive, and the weeding out and execution of Jews? Can the Attorney-General please be given an opportunity to tell the House why such people are not being prosecuted? If it is because the law is too weak, will he tell us when we can expect a change in the law?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend theAttorney-General will be here to answer questions next Monday, but I will, in any event, draw the matter to his attention. From the sound of the publication, no one on either side of the House would wish to defend it for one moment.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): May I put it to my right hon. Friend, as Leader of the House of Commons, that I for one have the greatest respect for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and that, if we do not stop these guttersnipe attacks on one another, the whole House of Commons will be brought into disrepute?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I am sure that other people will have listened to it with care.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House create time for a debate on the standards of conduct in public life and public administration as they affect local government? Will he especially have the debate held around early-day motion 363?

[That this House notes that the Conservative Mayor of Stourport-on-Severn, Councillor Patrick Duffy, forged an election candidate's nomination form in order to split the vote; considers that the use of bogus candidates to split the vote is a squalid manipulation of the election process; and calls on the Conservative Party leadership to issue a statement disowning Councillor Duffy, who continues as Mayor of Stourport-on-Severn.]

That will enable Conservative Members, and the Government especially, to explain to the House why Councillor Patrick Duffy remains the Conservative chair of Stourport-on-Severn after having admitted forging an election nomination paper, and remains the mayor, and why there has been no condemnation from Tory central office of that attempt to manipulate the electoral process. It is not good enough for the judges to say that there is a technical deficiency in the law: it is outrageous, and it should be condemned.

Mr. Newton: I have no direct information of the case that the hon. Gentleman mentions, but the Government would condemn the use of forgery, whatever shape it took.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Has my right hon. Friend had any request from the Labour party to use one of its Supply days to outline its taxation and spending policies, when perhaps the shadow Chancellor, who claims that the Labour party has no spending commitments, could hear from the shadow Health spokesman, who intends to abolish compulsory competitive tendering in the health service, at a cost of £140 million?

Mr. Newton: That is another point that, with minimum ingenuity, could be got in order next Wednesday, since nothing is clearer than that those spending commitments would mean new burdens on British industry.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Many hon. Members make use of early-day motions during questions on the business statement, and use them fruitfully. However, in some quarters of the House people are criticising early-day motions, and want them controlled and restricted. Should we have a debate about early-day motions and the use, as well as occasional abuse, to which they can be put? Abuse has to be controlled by voluntary action, as we should have seen at Question Time today.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman will put down an early-day motion to that effect, I will consider it.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I have asked my right hon. Friend before, and I have today written to him, about the Isle of Wight order, giving effect to a unitary authority on the Isle of Wight. I wonder whether he would be so kind, when he replies to my letter, as to consider the opportunity for the order to jump the queue that has been caused by the logjam created by the present impasse in Parliament, as the employees of all three local authorities on the Isle of Wight are worried about their job prospects and we want to make a start? As my right hon. Friend knows, we are the first unitary authority in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: I have not yet seen my hon. Friend's letter, but he has mentioned it to me several times, and I can assure him that I have not forgotten it, even without the letter to remind me further.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange an urgent statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland about the ecological disaster around the coast of Scotland, where more than 55,000 sea birds have been washed up? The reason they died is totally unknown. Does he realise the urgency of the matter, and the extent of the concern among bird lovers in this country—there are a million of us—who are demanding an urgent scientific investigation and an explanation to ensure that the wildlife of Great Britain remains living and not washed up dead on the shores?

Mr. Newton: I cannot, as I think that the hon. Gentleman will understand, promise an early debate on that specific matter, but I have no doubt that my right hon. Friends, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, will carefully look into what he has said.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I support the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) for a debate on early-day motion 618 so that we can have the opportunity to identify what, if anything, will be left of our national democracy after the Liberal party has finished handing over powers to Europe and down to expensive, unwanted and unnecessary regional assemblies.

Mr. Newton: With the growing chorus of demand for a debate on those matters, I must necessarily give it consideration. I just wish that I thought that it would encourage the Liberal Democrats to give consideration to their policies.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): In view of the fact that the Sessional Orders were blatantly ignored on Monday evening when a demonstration took place outside the House, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement to assure us that he will ensure that no such illegal demonstration takes place again, and that, should it happen again, the Metropolitan police commissioner will be able to move in quickly and ensure that the situation does not get out of hand?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend, but I think I am right in saying that the Serjeant at Arms has written to the commissioner in the wake of Monday's events, and that you, Madam Speaker, made some observations on the subject on Monday night.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend impress on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the desirability of having a debate on the planning regime for opencast mining before the present consultation period on the mineral planning guidance 3 expires?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that request to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate, if not next week, some time in the near future, on thalidomide victims? He will be aware that the child victims are now parents themselves and householders, so their situation has changed. There is now a need for a review to see what the Government can do to assist those people.

Mr. Newton: The right course would be for me to bring the hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Having been Minister of State for Health a number of years ago and involved in some aspects of this tragedy over the years, I well understand the concern that the hon. Gentleman has expressed.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): To return to an earlier subject, will the Leader of the House take the time and use his position to try to influence hon. Members, but especially Conservative Members? The intrusions into people's private lives that we have seen in the past few weeks have been outrageous, and I am thinking particularly of what has happened in the past week to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Will he use his influence—I know that my colleagues will do the same—to try to stop this nonsense and allow people to lead a normal existence?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that it would be right to relate any comment of mine to a particular case, but the hon. Gentleman's remarks, like those of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell), will have been noted and heard with respect by all hon. Members.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Following the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), will the Leader of the House look up early-day motion 651?

[*That this House is deeply concerned at the BBC's decision to cease broadcasting 'Today in Parliament' on Radio 4 FM from 28th March; believes this seriously questions its Charter obligation to broadcast 'an impartial account day by day' of proceedings in both Houses of the United Kingdom Parliament; and calls upon the Director-General of the BBC to immediately reverse this decision, which will deny an estimated 135,000 daily listeners to the programme access to it on FM.*]

It is an all-party motion which reflects the strong feeling in the House that the BBC could be breaching its obligations to report Parliament properly if it were to go ahead with the plan to stop broadcasting Radio 4's "Today in Parliament" on FM. Bearing in mind the fact that the serious newspapers no longer report Parliament's daily proceedings, is there not an even greater responsibility on the BBC to continue to report Parliament? Would it not be most unfortunate if that were changed?

Mr. Newton: It is a matter for the BBC, but, equally, all of us hope that the real concerns expressed in the House will be carefully considered by the BBC.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Will the Leader of the House tell us whether the Secretary of State for Health is prepared to make a statement about the report of the inquiry into the Christopher Clunis case and the murder of Jonathan Zito so that we can question her on what she is going to do about that excellent but damaging inquiry and what action she will take?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring the hon. Lady's request to my hon. Friend's attention but, for the moment, I do not intend to add to what I said a few moments ago and what my right hon. Friend said during Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I wonder whether the Leader of the House could find time in the business of the House to debate the possibility of legalising the supply of cannabis for people who have multiple sclerosis? While he is at it, could he also consider the possibility of debating early-day motions 280 and 432?

[*That this House calls for the establishment of a Royal Commission to review the prohibition of the use of cannabis and to examine alternative options for control of the drug within the law; notes that millions of British citizens use cannabis for recreational and therapeutic purposes every year and that notwithstanding the enormous resources devoted by law enforcement agencies its popularity and availability continues to increase throughout all parts of the United Kingdom and across all sections of society; also notes the growing body of evidence which testifies to the medicinal and therapeutic properties of cannabis and its relative safety compared with other legalised drugs; and believes that the prosecution of thousands of otherwise law abiding citizens every year is both hypocritical and an affront to individual civil and human rights and that these resources would be better spent on improved drug education, health and welfare programmes.*]

Mr. Newton: Such is the number of early-day motions that I am unsighted on the content of the two that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but I shall of course consider them and his request carefully. As for the specific point he made, it is obviously very much a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but it would need very careful consideration indeed.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In view of the Prime Minister's recent and welcome interest in the British film industry, could we have a debate as early as possible on that industry because of the difficulties it faces? May we debate, for example, the potential closure of the Elstree studios and the potential closure of the BBC studios at Elstree, so that we can regain our position as one of the leading film-making countries in the world? A debate is important, because it is an industry which is too often ignored.

Mr. Newton: As a result of the most interesting exchanges at Prime Minister's Question Time, that matter has already had more public exposure in the past hour than it has had for quite a long time. At the moment, I cannot promise a debate as well.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Leader of the House realise that there will be anger about the postponement of the St David's day debate, which will be held on the saint's day of St Winwaloe—a Cornish saint who has several churches dedicated to him in one Liberal Democrat constituency? Why cannot the Liberal Democrats have a Winwaloe's day and allow the Welsh to have St David's day? In the past, there have been serious reasons for changing that date, but there is none in the current year. Will the Leader of the House make amends by ensuring that, in the St David's day debate, we can address the House in both the languages of Wales?

Mr. Newton: The latter question is a matter for you, Madam Speaker, rather than for me. I am glad that the debate did not end up on the day of a Scottish saint, which would have left me in even more trouble.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I underline the point made to the Leader of the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) about the possible legalisation of cannabis? I refer him to early-day motion 280, which I have tabled.

[*That this House calls for the establishment of a Royal Commission to review the prohibition of the use of cannabis and to examine alternative options for control of the drug within the law; notes that millions of British citizens use cannabis for recreational and therapeutic purposes every year and that notwithstanding the enormous resources devoted by law enforcement agencies its popularity and availability continues to increase throughout all parts of the United Kingdom and across all sections of society; also notes the growing body of evidence which testifies to the medicinal and therapeutic properties of cannabis and its relative safety compared with other legalised drugs; and believes that the prosecution of thousands of otherwise law abiding citizens every year is both hypocritical and an affront to individual civil and human rights and that these resources would be better spent on improved drug education, health and welfare programmes.*]

An important debate is taking place on that issue outside the House, which involves not only aging hippies, but a large number of bodies such as police enforcement agencies, magistrates and doctors, and we should also have that debate here.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Falkirk, East raised the point in respect of sufferers from a particular disease, where the issues raised were somewhat different, if I may say so. The hon. Gentleman has raised it in a more general sense, and he knows well that the Government believe that what he is proposing would send out the wrong message to society about our attitude to drugs.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the Leader of the House ask his hon. Friend the Minister for Energy to make a statement on what lies behind the Government's decision, conveyed to me yesterday in a written answer, that the enhanced redundancy payments which are currently being made to redundant mineworkers will end in April? Such a statement would give hon. Members on both sides of the House the opportunity to ask questions on why the Government are breaking their promise to Conservative Members, which they made to get them out of difficulties during the pit closure campaign 18 months ago.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate, but I shall—

Mr. Barron: A statement.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate or a statement, but I shall bring the question to the attention of my hon. Friend.

Points of Order

4.13 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In my question to the Leader of the House, I wrongly referred to the Opposition deputy Chief Whip as having signed an early-day motion. I had confused him with another Don, who is a Liberal. I would never accuse the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) of being a Liberal. May I correct the record and unreservedly apologise to the hon. Gentleman?

Madam Speaker: It is refreshing to hear an apology across the Floor of the House these days.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I have dealt with that point of order.

Mr. Bottomley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry. I thought that the hon. Member said that it was further to that point of order.

Mr. Bottomley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You made a statement about the way in which questions and answers should be given. There was a time when Members who had tabled a question were able, on occasion, to be called for a second supplementary question. May I direct your attention to that, not so that you make a statement, but to consider that there may be times when that would be appropriate again in the future?

Madam Speaker: I was attempting—I think I had the support of the House—to implement a decision of the House. I want to see Question Time improved, and I want Back Benchers to be able to put their questions and more questions that are tabled to be reached. I tried to be helpful to the House. Of course I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman says. I am always open to suggestions.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to press the matter, but, as you know because you have been in the House for many years, some Members assiduously attend all Question Times, and they are not numerous.

I hope that, in the way in which you intend to manage the House, you will take into account those regular attenders, and recognise that some of us are concerned that, if the House became no more than a place where one came to table questions in the hope that one of them would come up in a ballot, the very character of Question Time, which has been built up over many decades, would change. I am sure that you would have grave reservations about that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am taking no further points of order on that subject. I have made a very important statement today, and I hope that hon. Members will reflect on it.

In answer, I would simply say that I am also concerned about Members who assiduously table questions but who, because of the luck of the draw, do not get a place high on the Order Paper. I notice them; I spend a whole morning doing research on the subject, and I am concerned about those Members, too. But of course—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, wait. I very seldom have things to say in the House. A little patience from the hon. Gentleman, please.

I must inform the House that of course I am not giving up the discretion that I have as Speaker. What I read out to the House today was in accordance with a report that has received the approval of the House, and I want to be helpful to all Members in it.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I shall take no further points of order on that matter.

Mr. Banks *rose—*

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East) *rose—*

Madam Speaker: None at all on that matter. Is this on another matter?

Mr. Banks: It is on questions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No. No further points of order on that matter. I have dealt with it.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is this on a different matter?

Mr. Connarty: Yes, this is on a different matter. I have noticed the way in which the ballots go and, as you know, Madam Speaker, I have been fortunate in coming up early. However, my son is a computer student at university and he tells me that it would be possible to have a weighted computer system whereby people who come up early are weighted so that there is a chance for other people to come up in the ballot in a more sensible way, rather than the random selection every day, which makes a bit of a nonsense of putting one's name in. Would it be possible to do that with the computer system in the House?

Madam Speaker: We carry out those procedures under the present rules of the House. If the hon. Gentleman wants a weighted computer system, he could suggest it to the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Banks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is not only the names that appear on the Order Paper that signify Members' attentiveness in submitting questions. Now that the procedures here have been changed, questions beyond a certain number do not appear, so many people put in questions that never appear on the Order Paper. If you intend to study the Order Paper, may I suggest that you study the computer printout, so that you also know who has tabled questions?

Madam Speaker: If hon. Members were to examine my statement and reflect on it, they would find it extremely helpful. I made the point that there will always be subjects of topical interest or controversy, on which an extended line of questioning would be appropriate. The House has to have confidence in me to ensure that hon. Members are allowed to continue that line of questioning. It is important that the Executive are answerable to the House, and I want to see that that is the case.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If there is to be an extended line of questioning, can you be more generous in allocating it when private notice questions are requested?

Madam Speaker: I thought that I was always very generous with private notice questions. However, the hon. Gentleman has been a Member of the House for a long time, and he will appreciate that they have to meet certain criteria. If they do, they are accepted. We shall now move on to the Opposition day motion.

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Unelected State Bodies

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.17 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the rapid growth in expenditure by quangos and in the use of contractors to provide public services; notes that these organisations are not publicly accountable to elected representatives; is concerned that their proliferation has been accompanied by a loss in the quality of public services, by increased fraud and waste, and by falling standards in public life; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to review the progression towards an unelected state.

When the Government came to office one of the key elements in their programme was the winding down of the state. What was not made clear at the time was that the Government were just as committed as any other Government to control of the state, but they wanted the control to be vested in their own fiefdom and removed as far as possible from any democratic influences.

The result is that today patronage is playing a bigger underhand role in British society than at any time since the days of Lloyd George. The public, constitutional and democratic power structure based on elections and votes has been steadily whittled away and replaced by a private, unconstitutional and undemocratic power structure based on patronage and money.

The scale of this process has not been fully recognised. It goes a great deal wider than honours and quangos. Certainly the Tories have handed out gongs and chairmanships of quangos aplenty in exchange directly or indirectly for money. It is much less realised that the Tory Government's opening of lucrative new markets through market testing and privatisation of public services, and the award of major contracts abroad without tender to their corporate friends, is clearly associated with donations to the Tory party.

The general message is clear: the more one serves the Tory party's interests and preferably contributes to its coffers, the more likely one is to get an honour, a key position in the new magistracy and favourable access to contracts.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall give way in a moment.

The more one gets an honour, power or contracts, the more likely one is to reward the hand that feeds one, and that is Tory patronage written today.

Mr. Tracey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way so early. At this early stage of his speech, it is important for him to say something about the situation in Monklands council, which has been extremely well researched by the media and where, clearly, there are serious examples of the sort of thing that he is seeking to criticise. Let us not have Labour Members standing on a pedestal, which should be giving way underneath them.

Mr. Meacher: Obviously the hon. Gentleman had a short ministerial career because he is not very good on interventions. The fact is that—

Mr. Tracey: Answer the question.

Mr. Meacher: I shall answer the question. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has fully answered this point. He wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland—I am glad to see the Secretary of State here—on 1 February. As the point has been predictably raised, I shall read what my right hon. and learned Friend said:

> "As you will be aware allegations of impropriety of various kinds have been made against Monklands District Council by, among others, Conservative Members of Parliament. So far as I am aware none of these allegations have been substantiated by any appropriate authority.
>
> However, I was much concerned to read in the Scottish press that your Ministerial colleague, Allan Stewart, who is responsible for local government in Scotland, has made allegations of financial irregularity and political corruption. This creates an entirely new situation. Allegations made by a Minister of the Crown—especially a Minister responsible for local government—cannot remain uninvestigated. They must either be substantiated or withdrawn."

That is the key point.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang) *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman has had the letter. I am sure that he would also like me to read out the last paragraph:

> "I therefore invite you"—

that is, the Secretary of State—

> "to exercise your powers under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, section 211 to cause a local enquiry to be made into the matters raised by your colleague. I ask you either to take this action or to invite him to withdraw his allegation."

If the right hon. Gentleman would like to tell us which he is doing, I shall be glad to give way.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman would have enlightened the House if he had read out my reply to the Leader of the Opposition in which I pointed out that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State had made no allegations but merely repeated and reported allegations made by Labour party supporters in Scotland. I further invited the Leader of the Opposition to let us have the evidence accumulated by the Labour party in connection with its inquiry into possible misdemeanours in Monklands district council. I have asked twice for that information, and I am still waiting for a reply from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meacher: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman is backing off from what the Under-Secretary said. My right hon. and learned Friend replied to that letter on 3 February, and said:

> "Your colleague, Mr. Stewart, was happy to repeat allegations about 'jobs for the boys'. You must surely be aware that it is a statutory duty on all Scottish councils to ensure that all staff are appointed on merit."

If there is a matter which requires public investigation, it is for the Secretary of State for Scotland to set up a public inquiry. Let us have no more cheap taunts. I will move on.

We know that honours and company political donations are connected. Only 5 per cent. of companies currently donate to the Tory party, and yet more than 50 per cent. of the honours awarded to industrialists since 1979 have gone

[Mr. Meacher]

to directors of firms which contribute to Tory funds. I am told by a statistician that there is less than one chance in a million that that is a coincidence.

The role which quangos now play in the patronage stakes is of increasing significance. Let me make it clear at the outset that there is nothing inherently wrong with quangos. There will always be a certain number of them, and quite rightly so. The continued existence of some of them is highly desirable in principle, particularly those such as the BBC, the Boundary Commission, the Local Government Commission and a string of others. Those quangos were set up to be independent from the Government and to exercise their best arm's-length judgment on highly sensitive or controversial matters. I hope that that is agreed on all sides.

There are three worrying things about quangos. First, they are unaccountable, even though they now exercise substantial powers. That is different from the situation in the past. Many of the old quangos in the 1970s were different. They were purely advisory bodies, and some were little more than talking shops. Where they had executive roles, local councillors were often on the board, or a reasonable spread of interests was represented.

Today, quangos are powerful vehicles of patronage, wielding far greater powers and spending far more public money than ever before. Quangos, and to some extent central Government, have taken control out of the hands of local government, urban development corporations, London Regional Transport, higher education, grant-maintained schools and further education. Indeed, quangos have removed any say that local government ever had in the running of the major services of health and training. Those two services spend £19.5 billion a year, which, I submit, is a huge transfer of power from elected authorities to the patronage state.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman quite rightly says that he is concerned about patronage. Will he therefore remind the House who was appointed chairman of Great Ormond street hospital in the last days of the Labour Government in 1979? Will he remind the House who that lady was?

Mr. Meacher: That is an absolutely extraordinary question. The Government appoint those who are chairs of public bodies or of non-departmental public bodies, as quangos are now known.

Mr. Richards *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: I am sorry, but it is one dog, one bite. If the hon. Gentleman is stupid enough to ask such a silly question, he will get a straight answer. The Labour Government made the appointment, as anyone would expect.

The second disturbing thing about quangos—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: I am sorry, but if that is the standard of interruption which I am to get, I am not prepared to waste the time of the House with such trivialities.

The second disturbing thing about quangos is the enormous sums of taxpayers' money which they dispose of without any say-so of the taxpayer. They have already taken over from elected local authorities the spending of some £24 billion of public money, and it is estimated that, by 1996, they will dispose of £54 billion—roughly one-fifth of all public expenditure. I submit that for a party that prides itself on safeguarding the taxpayers' money to put sums of that magnitude into the hands of persons who are accountable to no one and nothing except the say-so of the Secretary of State is an act of stunning irresponsibility.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman asserted that local government no longer has a say in the sort of services that he is talking about. Would he care to comment on the fact that in my area to the west of London several Conservative councils put on the agenda for their council meetings the closure of a hospital. They have a say. A Labour council funds a pressure group. Is not that also having a say?

Mr. Meacher: I am most grateful for that intervention. Perhaps I should allow more interventions like that because what the hon. Gentleman says absolutely makes my point. I believe that the Conservative flagship borough of Wandsworth has decided that health is not a matter which should be left to local quangos but ought to come back under local elected control. That is exactly our argument. If the hon. Gentleman really takes the view that he has just expressed, I hope that he will join us in the Lobby tonight.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Does my hon. Friend share my anxiety and that of many people in the south-west about the running of the west country ambulance trust? It spends £24 million a year of taxpayers' money, yet I cannot obtain an answer from the Secretary of State for Health about the running of the trust. Instead, I am referred to the chairman of the trust. The trust is being run by a chief executive who treats it as his own business. His management style is such that if he had been in the Gestapo he would have been thrown out for unreasonableness.

Mr. Meacher: That is a point which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster may want to take up when he replies to the debate. In several parts of the country it is difficult to get an ambulance. The target in the citizens charter of 14 minutes for a call-out is not met in two thirds of cases. There is a real problem. I am sure that the Minister will want to respond to that point.

The third disturbing feature of quangos is their membership. Gone are the days when there was a reasonable balance of interest. Let me make it clear that no one on this side of the House will object to Tories or business men as long as there is reasonable balance.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I want to make my point.

The choice today, which is Tory Ministers' choice, is heavily partisan. Do not take my word for it. I am sure that Conservative Members will not. In *The Independent on Sunday* of 28 March last year, under the headline "What Happened to Democracy", Baroness Denton, then a junior Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry who had made more than 2,000 appointments, said:

> "I can't remember knowingly appointing a Labour supporter."

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): As Baroness Denton is not a Member of this House and cannot reply herself, I must give the proper reply. She wrote to the newspaper to explain that

that comment was taken out of context. She explained that not only did she not know whether she was appointing Labour members, but she did not know whether she was appointing Conservative members. She did not look into the political backgrounds of people who were appointed. That is the proper position, and that, I hope, is the position that the hon. Gentleman supports.

Mr. Meacher: That is very interesting. The fact that it got the Minister to his feet shows how sensitive the matter is. We should like to know whether it is true that Conservative central office checks through the best information available about political affiliations and uses that information to make appointments. Is that true or is it not? *[Interruption.]* It is not a question of reading papers. Is it true or is it not?

Mr. Waldegrave: Conservative central office does not make appointments to state offices.

Mr. Meacher: I must say—

Mr. Waldegrave *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: Hold on a moment.

Mr. Waldegrave *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Let me point out to all Front-Bench Members that when one Front-Bench Member is at the Dispatch Box the other Member must respect that.

Mr. Meacher: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The sensitivity, or perhaps the naivete, of that response betrays the extreme concern of the Tory party about the way in which it operates. No one suggested that Conservative central office makes appointments directly. What we believe is that it very carefully obtains the fullest information available and that the information goes to Ministers and is used by them to ensure the situation that exists today, where the membership of quangos—call them what you will—is overwhelmingly Conservative. It is not an accident. It has been determined by careful research. Is that true or not?

Mr. Waldegrave: Is the hon. Gentleman putting the following proposition to the House, that Transport house and the Labour Whips' office take no interest in appointments?

Mr. Meacher: All parties in the past have been concerned that a reasonable share of their own supporters achieve these positions. What we see today is something on a completely different scale, the ruthless elimination of everyone who is not of a Conservative persuasion, and it is patently clear from the way that the right hon. Gentleman entirely avoided answering my question that the answer to it is yes.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton) *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: No, I will not give way again.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way, although he may regret it because I want to step in to support the Government. We have an example in Wales which demonstrates that Ministers do not know the political affiliations of members. When the Secretary of State for Wales appointed David Rowe-Beddoe chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, one of the most important quangos in Wales, he told us that this appointee had no Conservative connection. We later found out that Mr. Rowe-Beddoe, quite rightly, had put on his CV that he had collected money for the Conservative party when he was in Monaco and was an important member of Conservatives Abroad. But Mr. Redwood told us that he had not read the CV. So there you are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us have proper decorum in the House. I should be most grateful if hon. Members would remember, when talking about a Secretary of State, that it is "the hon. Member" or "the hon. Minister" or "the Secretary of State".

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Oh, come on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not know who said "Oh, come on", but I should be grateful if he would desist in future. If it was the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), I hope that he will desist.

Mr. Garrett: I will certainly desist.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am most grateful.

Mr. Meacher: I am glad to see that even in this case, somehow or other, a Conservative Secretary of State managed to make the right decision, from his point of view, even though it was apparently for the wrong reasons or through lack of available evidence.

Mr. Streeter *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: No, I will not give way.

What I want to tell the House now illustrates, in a way, the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) made. I have here a letter written to Mr. Ahmad in my constituency by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), chairman of the Conservative party, inviting him as a director of the Oldham training and enterprise council to make a contribution to Conservative party funds. I happen to know the gentleman very well. I mention this now, not because there is the slightest danger that he might contribute to Tory funds but simply to point to the assumption that if one is a member of a quango such as a TEC one is very likely to be a Conservative supporter.

Mr. Waldegrave *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: I wonder who is making this speech, me or the right hon. Gentleman. It is his fourth intervention, I think.

Mr. Waldegrave: It may be of interest to the hon. Gentleman to know that my association sent a request for funds to my Liberal opponent at the last election, which shows that these requests are not always sent to supporters of our own party.

Mr. Meacher: We shall draw a veil over those comments.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): Further to my hon. Friend's theory about the membership of quangos and letters soliciting funds for the Conservative party, does that explain the letter sent to the Labour leader of Liverpool city council from the same organisation? Am I correct in assuming that it is because he is a nominee to the Merseyside development corporation?

Mr. Meacher: I should think that that is extremely likely. Clearly, the Tory party is so bereft of funds and so reliant on the comprehensiveness of its appointments to quangos that Tory Members think that they can write to anyone and get some money.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way again.

The Economist got it right. It is not a flag waver for the left, but about a year ago, in an article nicely entitled, "Subsidiarity begins at home", it said:

> "What powers Ministers have taken for themselves they are giving to their friends."

Indeed they are. The choice is overwhelmingly Tory men who are in business. Quango board memberships read like a list of Tory nomenclature. For example, analysis of the membership of 372 health trusts, which includes the latest shadow fourth wave of trusts, shows that 61 per cent. of trust chairmen have a business or financial background —*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members seem to think that that is right and defensible. In addition, 8 per cent. are either solicitors or barristers, while less than 4 per cent. have a health background.

Nobody would deny that business men have a contribution to make to the running of social services, but to pack those bodies with three or more business men out of every five members, when only one in 25 has health expertise, is taking bias to the point of absurdity. The reasons for packing those quangos, which, judging by some of their members, should be called "egos"—extra-governmental organisations—are all too clear.

Is it a coincidence that Sir Christopher Benson was appointed chairman of the Housing Corporation when he also chairs the Sun Alliance, which donated £50,000 to the Tory party in 1992? He is also associated with MEPC and the Costain Group, both of which also made substantial donations to the Tory party. Is it a coincidence that Mr. Neil Clarke was appointed chairman of British Coal, when he was formerly chief executive of Charter Consolidated, which gave £26,000 to the Tories? Is it a coincidence that Sir David Nickson was appointed chairman of Scottish Enterprise, when he is also a non-executive director of three companies that contribute to Tory party funds, including £70,000 from Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and £53,000 from Hambros? Is it a coincidence that Sir Nigel Mobbs was appointed chairman of the Department of Trade and Industry advisory panel on deregulation, when he is also chairman of Slough Estates, which gave £44,000 to the Tories, and also vice-chairman of Kingfisher, which donated £25,000?

I could go on and on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Well, go on then."] Conservative Members want to hear more. I am pleased to oblige. The chairmen of more than 20 public bodies have been appointed by Tory Ministers and are associated with companies that donate generously to Tory party funds. They include the takeover panel, the Welsh Development Agency, the Port of London Authority, the London Tourist Board, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Top Salaries Review Body, the Medical Research Council—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name the people involved."] I shall certainly name all those involved and am glad to do so. The Independent Television Commission is another such quango.

Those important public bodies are now so stuffed with Tory workers—that was a Freudian slip, as I meant to say Tory worthies, but they certainly work for Tories in view of the way in which they busily contribute to Tory party funds—that one genuinely wonders whether "quango" really stands for "quite assuredly now Government-orchestrated".

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Monklands district council issues two types of job application forms: green application forms, which receive preference, are handed out to the relatives of local Labour councillors; and other application forms for everybody else. Will the hon. Gentleman join me now in condemning that practice?

Mr. Meacher: I am struck that Tory Members, who are desperately anxious to derail this debate, can find only a single issue to raise. I have already dealt with that perfectly adequately. The power lies with the Secretary of State to set up a public inquiry if he so wishes.

On the corporate dimension, large, extremely lucrative contracts are often awarded without tender to a small group of favoured companies on the inside track which usually contribute to Tory coffers. Everyone now knows about the notorious £234 million Pergau dam project. It was not just a "very bad buy", as the permanent secretary called it, as a sweetener for an arms deal. He was overruled by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, no less, because it offered a huge construction contract to Balfour Beatty and Cementation, which are also major contributors to Tory party funds.

Over the past 15 years, £250 million of taxpayers' money has been allocated to foreign aid projects which the National Audit Office assessed as unviable or poor value for money. The beneficiaries of those projects, all with substantial aid grants, have been firms known for their Tory party loyalties. The projects include a power station in Bangladesh built by GEC; another construction project in Malaysia built by Biwater; two power stations in the Sudan built by NEI; and two power stations in Burma built by John Brown Engineering. The point is that most of those companies have received £50 million or more from the aid and trade provision. That is taxpayers' money intended for the relief of world proverty, but the Government have diverted it so that the principal beneficiaries are their own corporate donors.

Mr. Waldegrave: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I will give way when I have concluded this point.

There could not be a more blatant example of the manipulation of public money to procure private money and influence for themselves. We now know that what Lady Thatcher meant by "batting for Britain" was back to basics—the basics of the Tory party. She meant "back to my place where the Tory party funds are being stored".

Mr. Waldegrave: If I could show that trades unions gave money to the Labour party, would it mean that the appointments by the last Labour Government of trade unionists to boards were wrong?

Mr. Meacher: Of course it would not. No one is complaining that companies contribute to the Tory party. But when trade unionists contribute to the Labour party, they do so on the basis of having a political fund that has been voted for. When companies contribute to the Tory party, it is done without the assent of shareholders. There is no ballot and it is not a democratic process. That is an important difference.

There is another significant difference between the public policies of the Tories and their private dealings. In the public realm their line is compulsory competitive tendering, which is enforced to the limit; in the private world it is negotiations and secret deals. I have here a list of all the aid and trade provision awards that were made in 1992. There were 15 of them, but only one was made on a competitive basis. The right hon. Gentleman has a few questions to answer about this matter too. As he opens up large new markets for the private sector, through market testing and the privatisation of public services, perhaps he can now tell the House—if so, I shall be very glad to give way—why he would not even allow an in-house bid for the huge Inland Revenue information technology contract that he awarded to a foreign company. If he genuinely believes in openness and fairness as these very large markets open up, how can he justify not even allowing an in-house bid?

Mr. Waldegrave: The House has debated the "Competing for Quality" programme several times. It is perfectly clear that when it is right to take a strategic decision to contract out, it would be misleading to staff to waste their time with an internal bid. That is set out in the policy and in the White Paper.

Mr. Meacher: Those are weasel words from a characteristically more clear-minded man. It is perfectly clear that, in the case of a huge contract where special interests attach to the Tory party, all the philosophy about openness goes out of the window completely.

If the system of honours, Government placemen, patronage and favoured contracts in exchange, directly or indirectly, for money worked in the public interest, it would not be so objectionable, but it patently does not. First, the loss of public accountability is a fatal weakness. Instead of quangos having more rigorous procedures because of the lack of election, they have less. None of the members of these appointed bodies is liable to surcharge. Most of the bodies are not required to hold their meetings in public. Many, such as grant-maintained schools and training and enterprise councils, make their own arrangements for audit, which the Audit Commission recently condemned as

> "counter to principles which normally apply to the expenditure of public sector funds, principles which should not be surrendered lightly."

In addition, quangos are not subject to the jurisdiction of ombudsmen, and they are excessively secretive. That, of course, is only following the Government line as set out to the Scott inquiry just a week ago by a Treasury solicitor, who said:

> "It is damaging to the public interest to have any decision-making process exposed."

Mr. Waldegrave: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: I am only too willing to give way, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman's behaviour is an abuse of the House. He must have been on his feet seven times in the course of my speech, and he is about to make his own contribution.

The line taken in the words I have just quoted was repeated and endorsed as a philosophy of the Government a few days later by the Secretary of State for Defence. This suggests that "quango" might translate as "questions addressed with no Government openness".

Secondly, a system of Government private appointments and contracting out has not produced greater efficiency. If the argument for efficiency were made, we should have to take account of it, but it is not.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No. I have given way many times.

The right hon. Gentleman likes to claim that there have been savings of £100 million. What he does not say is that the cost of private consultancies has been at least that much — on the basis of some estimates, nine times that much. When extolling the merits of private contractors, the right hon. Gentleman likes to cite experience in the United States, where private contracting has been commonplace since the Reagan regime of the early 1980s. That experience is very interesting, and I have had a look at it. What it shows is that, far from improving the level of public service, the policy has resulted in wasted money, falling standards of service and exploitation of public sector workers, who have become increasingly demotivated and subsequently less productive.

Our third and, I think, the major objection to the whole system of private patronage and secret deals is that it is wide open to corruption and fraud. The recent Public Accounts Committee report entitled "The Proper Conduct of Public Business" is a scathing indictment—the most scathing in my experience—of the culture of some of these quangos. If the Chief Secretary to the Treasury thinks that foreigners are corrupt, he could have a field day if he were let loose on some of his own colleagues' appointees: the international director of the Welsh Development Agency, who served only nine weeks of a four-month posting to the United States and was then brought home on "gardening leave" for eight months until his fiftieth birthday, when he received a £228,000 retirement settlement; the so-called independent consultant used by the Wessex regional health authority, who turned out to be employed by IBM, and the subsequent waste of £20 million when the regional health authority was forced to abandon its computer system.

There are so many examples, including the case of the director of regionally managed services for the West Midlands regional health authority, who, according to the Comptroller and Auditor General, should have been dismissed for irregularities but was actually given an £81,000 pay-off. The latest example says it all. In Tory Britain, in the public domain, if one is incompetent, let alone guilty of misconduct, one is unceremoniously sacked. In the private domain one gets a golden parachute. That is what happens to people on quangos who misbehave.

Corruption is not confined to one organisation as opposed to another. Our charge is that the Government's policy of privately appointed bodies with secret meetings, privately arranged audit and an absence of surcharge facilitates—even encourages—corruption and fraud. That is not just my view; it is also the view of Peat Marwick, whose head of investigation said a few weeks ago:

> "More and more outsourcing in the public sector will mean more and more opportunities for procurement fraud. As more and more people outside the main buying departments become involved in the decisions, the scope for fraud grows."

[Mr. Meacher]

The power of the unelected state has grown dramatically in the last 15 years. It is still growing, and it should be cut back. The Labour party will bring a large part of the functions of appointed bodies back within the elected control of regional and unitary authorities. We shall subject these bodies to the same surcharge discipline as is applied, quite rightly, to local elected authorities, and we shall impose a much tighter public supervision system such as already exists in many other countries. The Opposition believe that democracy and openness should prevail—not patronage, sleaze or secrecy.

For all the reasons that I have set out, I strongly commend the motion to the House.

4.58 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'congratulates the Government on the reduction by 36 per cent. in the numbers of Non-Departmental Public Bodies over the last fourteen years as well as on the gains in value for money that have been achieved through the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering in local government and the Competing for Quality initiative in Whitehall; rejects the proposition that contracting for services implies loss of accountability; welcomes the continuous improvement in the quality, value for money and responsiveness of public services not least through the implementation of the principles of the Citizen's Charter; notes that this Government's establishment of the Audit Commission and the increased powers and independence given to the Comptroller and Auditor General have led to more effective control of fraud and waste; and applauds the Government's continuing commitment to high standards in public life.'.

It is always a pleasure to debate with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). As he obviously did not know the name of the Great Ormond street person who had been appointed in the dying days of the last Labour Government, I shall tell him that it was the excellent Mrs. Callaghan, now Lady Callaghan. I make no complaint about that. The hon. Gentleman described it as a triviality. Such matters are trivialities when they are Labour appointments but deep constitutional issues when they are Conservative appointments.

There is another point about which I ought to warn the hon. Gentleman before coming to the main part of my speech. If he is to argue that it is in all circumstances wrong for the Crown to claim public interest immunity for classes of documents of the kind in respect of which he was criticising, he ought to be aware of the fact that the last Labour Government did so on several occasions. I have before me a note of the 1975 Burmah Oil Company case, in which the Crown, in the shape of the Minister of the day, contended that it was necessary for the proper functioning of the public service for all such documents to be withheld. He should learn a little more about that subject before he criticises. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Scott?"] Sir Richard Scott knows that and much more about the subject.

My hon. Friends may remember that, during a previous debate, the hon. Member for Oldham, West made a fool of himself by purporting to show, by brandishing a leaked letter from a Department, that the public sector was inherently better at keeping secrets than the private sector. The motion tabled by the hon. Gentleman deplores the increases in spending, but his party has argued for spending increases on housing and health and attacks us when we try to bring spending under control, for example because of the growth in legal aid.

Let me explain how the hon. Gentleman has once again got himself into such an absurd position. The motion deplores the increase in spending by quangos. There are two definitions of quangos. The proper and strict one was first invented by Sir Leo Pliatzky in his review in 1979. He said that it was odd to use the American term "quango", which means quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation, to describe organisations that—according to the central part of the criticism of the hon. Member for Oldham, West—were essentially governmental. He proposed a change of name to non-departmental public bodies, which makes more sense although it is less easy to pronounce. He found that there were 2,167 such organisations in 1979. The number has now fallen to 1,389. That is an achievement of which my hon. Friends can be, and are, proud, although there is much more to do.

It is helpful of the hon. Member for Oldham, West to allow me to remind the House of that 36 per cent. drop in NDPBs since 1979 and I thank him.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): By how much have the costs of public bodies increased since 1979? I understand that those costs have grossly increased, although the figures quoted by the Secretary of State are correct.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is helpful because I was just coming to that argument. I shall give him and the hon. Member for Oldham, West their due. It is true that expenditure has increased and when one considers the statistics the cause is overwhelmingly clear. There was an increased spend by the Housing Corporation of £785 million—about 50 per cent.—and by Scottish Homes of £108 million in 1992-93 over 1991-92. Those are major providers of social housing, via such means as housing associations. The Housing Corporation figures include the widely welcomed £577 million package, which helped housing associations to buy thousands of empty properties to house homeless families. Is the hon. Member for Oldham, West against that? Surely he is not. He wanted far more expenditure by what he would call a quango.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister rightly said that housing association expenditure has increased, but that has been paralleled by even larger cuts in local authority expenditure. Instead of locally elected and accountable councillors making decisions on expenditure, unelected appointees are making them. The Minister is advancing the Opposition's argument and not the Government's.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have defended their overt policy that the shift to locally based housing associations should be made. In many parts of the country, the Liberal Democrat party has supported us in that policy. It has many distinguished representatives on those housing associations. We have made no secret of the fact that we believe that tenants obtain a better service from housing associations than from making even larger the huge publicly owned tenancies of local authorities in Leeds, Bristol or any of the great cities. It is right that we should be boosting the Housing Corporation.

Let us return to the figures. There has been another salient growth in spend with the Legal Aid Board and its parallel, the Scottish Legal Aid Board. Together, they grew by £250 million in 1992-93 over 1991-92. That is the other great increase in recent times.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The right hon. Gentleman discloses his intense defensiveness about the issue by evading the central charge made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). That charge did not involve the Legal Aid Board or housing associations—he never mentioned them. He said that major spending powers in the transport, the higher education, the grant-maintained schools, the further education and, above all, the health and training sectors had been shifted from the elected state to the unelected state. At today's prices, there has been £24,000 million of spending per year in those sectors since 1979. Will the right hon. Gentleman justify that extraordinary shift in power from the elected state and elected local people to unelected appointees of central Government?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman will hear such a definition. I started my speech with the proper definition of NDPBs. I shall deal with the wider definition in a moment, although he should know better than to say that the health service has never been responsible to locally elected members. It had a few locally elected people in it, but the great debate between Morrison and Bevan at its foundation was that it should not be controlled by locally elected members. Bevan and Cripps won that debate and so the health service was never controlled by locally elected people.

Mr. David Nicholson: The issue of scrutiny and accountability, which was raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), is most important to the debate. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a number of those services are subject to scrutiny by, in particular, Select Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee and the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner of Administration, on both of which I have served? Several other of their members are present in the Chamber. Those Committees have uncovered abuses in certain organisations such as the Welsh Development Agency. The Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner of Administration grills health trusts and others about individual abuses. Will my right hon. Friend speculate on what would happen to the NHS, especially in inner London, if it were controlled by local authorities?

Mr. Waldegrave: The arguments against that and for politicising local health decisions were well made all those years ago by Aneurin Bevan and remain valid today. He was right.

I mentioned the figures for the Legal Aid Board. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has made himself extremely unpopular with sections of the legal profession by seeking to control the exponential growth in expenditure in that sector. Will the hon. Member for Oldham, West support us in that battle? Of course not. The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) said that he would fight the changes tooth and nail. The hon. Member for Oldham, West wants far more funds for legal aid and far more expenditure by what he would call a quango. He does not seem to have produced a very powerful argument.

There is a second, more current and rather bogus definition of quangos, to which the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) referred. It was first used by *The Guardian* and was quoted without attribution by the hon. Member for Oldham, West. It includes many additional definitions besides the Pliatzky definition.

I shall explain *The Guardian* thesis for my hon. Friends who have not read the original article. It claims that there will be about 7,700 quangos by 1996, spending £54 billion —I think that that was the figure. There are various gradations in between, some of which were quoted by the hon. Member for Blackburn and some by the hon. Member for Oldham, West. It reached that figure by including the national health service, assuming that all hospitals will be trusts and by including, among other things, training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies, which are in the private sector, and police authorities.

The Labour motion deplores an increase, therefore, in health, training and police expenditure. If the hon. Member for Oldham, West goes on like that, he will shortly be suing someone for claiming that he is in favour of the control of public expenditure. My party has increased expenditure on the police and health service since it was elected. Those were our pledges and we have kept them.

The inclusion of trust hospitals and district health authorities as quangos enables me to turn the hon. Member's argument against him in another important respect. The health service reforms make local health appointments far more visible than they were before. People know who chairs and serves on the local hospital board, as they did with teaching hospitals until the reforms of 1974.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall complete my argument before giving way again.

District authority chairmen too have a high profile, seeking to analyse the health needs of their localities and to spend public money to meet those needs.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): As we are talking about health service appointments, does the Minister recall that when he was a Minister at the Department of Health he appointed Sir Robin Buchanan, who was then the chair of Wessex regional health authority, to be the chair of the NHS Supplies Authority? Does he also recall that a year before making that appointment he had received a confidential auditors' report criticising contracts that had been negotiated by Sir Robin Buchanan in Wessex? Why did he then make that appointment? Was it because Sir Robin Buchanan had been a long-serving member of the Conservative party and a Conservative councillor and protecting his position was more important than acting on the information that the Minister then had and that the House now has only as a result of the Public Accounts Committee inquiry?

Mr. Waldegrave: Of course not. It was because Sir Robin Buchanan was judged to be the best person for the task. It would have been quite wrong to have criticised him before any auditors' report had been undertaken or received. From time to time Ministers receive allegations of all kinds, but it would have been quite wrong to have judged him before the Public Accounts Committee had looked into the case.

Regional chairmen and boards also have a high public profile. They are indeed appointed. However, the hon. Member for Blackburn argues that there are more such appointments now than before the reforms. The exact

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opposite is the truth. There are now 3,500 such appointments as opposed to 6,500 appointments before. Let me remind the House why.

Under the 1974 system, there were three administrative tiers before reaching the hospital. *[Interruption.]* It was indeed set up by the last Tory Government. It was a bipartisan system, not opposed by the Labour party, but I am not defending it. We have reformed it and rightly so. The 1974 system had three administrative tiers—there were regions, there were areas, which we abolished in 1982, there were districts and there were very large family practitioner committees. That is why the total of appointed people amounted to 6,500, or 3,000 more than in the reformed system.

We now have the trusts, we have the regions, shortly to be brought down from 14 to eight and then—I hope and if the House agrees—abolished. We do not have areas because we have abolished them already. We are amalgamating districts into larger units. For example, in my area, the Bristol and District purchasing authority is one unit instead of three and we are doing the same for family health authorities, which are already smaller than the old FPCs. The net result is fewer appointments than there were in the unreformed system.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Will the Minister comment on his point about open government in terms of appointments to trusts? Three trusts have just been set up in my constituency: the acute hospital trust, the ambulance trust and the community care trust. Appointments have been made to those trusts. When I asked the chairmen of each of those trusts who had been nominated for appointment to those trusts, they refused to give me the names and said that it was none of my business. The only information that they were prepared to give me was that they had made decisions on the appointments to two of those trusts. They were not prepared to say who else had been nominated or how they had selected from the nominations.

Mr. Waldegrave: In a wide range of posts it is standard procedure not to publish the names of those who fail to be appointed. It would have been standard procedure for most appointments under the last Labour Government. It is of course necessary to know who is appointed, but that policy is quite right for those who may have applied in confidence.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Lichfield there are many more members of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the girl guides, the boys brigade, the boy scouts and the Women's Royal Voluntary Service who belong to the Conservative party than are members of the local Labour party? [HON. MEMBERS: How do you know?] I know because I go to the events because I am a good constituency Member. Does my right hon. Friend suppose that it is due to corruption in those organisations, or is it because more Conservatives are concerned with the community and volunteer to join such organisations?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know my hon. Friend to be a good constituency Member, but I had better not get too involved with the girl guides in Lichfield.

Mr. Richards: The central point raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is that he objects to Government appointees. Is my right hon. Friend aware that in the run-up to the last general election, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who was the Opposition spokesman on Welsh affairs, had drawn up a list of Labour party supporters that he intended to appoint to quangos in Wales? The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside has been challenged on that many times, as has the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), who was then the Leader of the Opposition. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor the right hon. Gentleman has denied that that list was drawn up.

Mr. Waldegrave: Were the Labour party to set out to persuade the House that it had never used political patronage in Wales, I do not think that it would get very far. The truth is that the old health service structure was far more replete with what *The Guardian* describes as quangos than the new structure.

Before we get on to the accountability argument, I should explain to my hon. Friends that we have not forgotten Margaret Thatcher's warning that

> "there will always be pressure for new bodies"

and her promise that

> "we shall be robust in resisting them"

— and so we have.

Since 1979, there has been a 36 per cent. reduction in NDPBs from about 2,100 to under 1,400. Among those abolished in the past few years alone, I choose at random the Open university visiting committee, the National Dock Labour Board, the Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases Managing Committee, the National Economic Development Office, the clothing and allied products industry training board and the Agricultural Statistics Consultative Committee.

Looking at Labour Members while I read out those lists, I felt a certain sense of indignation among the Opposition. The Labour party grieves for NEDO. *[Interruption.]* I was able to predict the hon. Gentleman's words. Did not the hon. Gentleman oppose the abolition of NEDO?

Mr. Meacher: Yes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Thank you very much. Did not the hon. Gentleman strongly oppose the abolition of the National Dock Labour Board? The Labour party grieves for those relics of the corporate state; it opposed their abolition. In 1992, the Opposition made it quite clear that if they were elected there would be a wild increase in the number of quangos, because they would set up new ones. They mentioned 17 different types of quangos in their 1992 manifesto, such as the cultural education commission, the regional development agencies, the national investment bank—I think that I know the noble Lord who might have been the chairman of that—the endless wages councils and so on.

Since the election, the proposed quangos are still breeding—the cultural education commission has now produced a cultural education partnership. The Labour party is, and always has been, the party of corporatism and has a nerve to use the arguments that we have heard today.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister has been sitting up far too late in bed reading frightening fairy tales about the huge numbers of quangos. The real point that he has not addressed has nothing to do with the numbers. First, it concerns the switch from advisory bodies—many of which we are perfectly happy to see go—to major executive functions which were previously held by local government. Secondly, spending has gone through the roof—it is taxpayers' money unaccountably spent—and, thirdly, membership is no longer balanced but overwhelmingly partisan in favour of the Tory party.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted with the hon. Gentleman's description of the last Labour manifesto as a frightening fairy tale. It is a pretty good definition.

I have already shown how the expansion in expenditure is overwhelmingly because of the increased health service spend, of which we are proud, and I shall return to accountability in a moment. In the health service under the present system there is a far more open and accountable structure of decision-taking than before. There is now a proper analysis of the health status of local populations. *[Interruption.]* Before Opposition Members say, "Nonsense", they should read their own party's document which entirely accepts the new structure of purchaser and provider that we have established. I am glad about that because their representative at the last election was much more equivocal about it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way once more.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): On the specific and important point about availability of information to the public, and the example of the health service that the right hon. Gentleman gave, is not it a fact that whichever Government were in power before, under the previous system, information about the finances of local health authorities was available to anyone who was interested? Under the new system with hospital trusts, that information is not available. If anybody, including hon. Members, asks for details about the business plans or accounts of hospitals, it is not given to them.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman, who is an expert on those matters, knows well that the trust hospitals produce annual reports, which have to be published. The district health authorities produce far more useable and interesting information, because it is now based on the analysis of health need set against the funds that are available to them. For the first time in the history of the health service, a proper debate about health priorities can now be had.

Mr. Davis: The right hon. Gentleman, undoubtedly inadvertently and through ignorance, is misleading the House. We are talking not about analyses of public health but about the financial figures. Is the right hon. Gentleman telling the House that if any hon. Member approaches a hospital trust in future and says that the right hon. Gentleman has given authority for that information to be made available, it will be? I assure him that in the past it has not been, and I and many of my hon. Friends have been refused that information by hospitals trusts.

Mr. Waldegrave: What I said is perfectly true. Hospital trusts must produce an annual report and must have a meeting at which they are cross-examined about it. Let me develop the argument a little further. A good report has been put out today by the King's Fund. Accountability in the health service is now far clearer than it was before: we now have providers who are in the job of analysing health need, providers who can compete to produce health care most efficiently, of the highest quality and with the best value for money.

Mr. Straw: I want to support the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). First, it is no good the Minister quoting the King's Fund report, because it is damning about the experience of trusts. Secondly, is the right hon. Gentleman aware—to give one example of the now-private running of what used to be the public's health service—that I asked the East Lancashire health consortium, which is about to become the East Lancashire purchasing authority, for its costings and also why it had moved the authority's headquarters to a business park in the borough of Pendle —straightforward questions. Had that same decision been made by a local authority, or previously by a health authority, those figures would have been available on the record. That information has been refused to me. Why?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) asked whether trusts give a proper account of their spending to the House and to local electors. The answer is yes. I shall look into the specific case that the hon. Member for Blackburn raises, because I accept his basic premise that there is no reason for secrecy in those matters. The hon. Gentleman then rather shot himself in the foot by saying that the King's Fund report criticised the reforms. I happen to have it before me, because I thought that he might make that mistake. Its conclusion is this:

> "The research shows"—

these are Professors Ray Robinson and Julian LeGrand, who presided over a wide group of other researchers—

> "that systems have now been put in place which offer the potential for real gains over the next few years."

That shows that the reforms are well based—

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich) *rose*—

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the Minister. As we are now dealing with information, and he has an obvious concern about the openness of Government, does he think it right that, on an issue of grave public concern, involving a highly publicised case of an 80-year-old woman who was lost in my district general hospital, a question that I asked back in November of last year about staffing levels in the hospital at that time has not been answered, despite seven repeated requests from my office to the chairman of the health care trust? Is it right and proper that someone in that position, responsible for managing a body with huge influence over the health care of people in the district, should refuse and decline to answer a simple straightforward question about staffing levels at a time when a serious problem occurred in the hospital?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am surprised by that, and that the hon. Gentleman has not tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who I am sure would have answered the question as she is responsible for the health service, as her predecessors would have been under the previous system.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West mentioned agencies and included them among quangos. He should

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know, and does know, I am sure, that agencies remain properly and fully members of the civil service. Their heads and staff are members of the civil service. If it is proper, they are privatised. The hon. Gentleman therefore need have no fear that accountability there has changed. I know that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) objects to the idea that he should have answers in the first instance from the heads of the agencies and prefers to get answers in every case from the Minister responsible. That is his right. If he insists on that, that will be done. I believe that many hon. Members—

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: I did say that I would give way no more, but I have mentioned the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Minister give a categorical assurance therefore that when I seek an answer from a Minister and refuse to accept an answer from a chief executive of a next steps or other agency, my wishes will be abided by and a Minister will reply to me? If he gives that assurance, that would be an important statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the first instance, the Minister will be likely—although not in every case—to refer the matter to the chief executive. If the right hon. Gentleman is dissatisfied with the reply, he has the absolute right to return to the Minister. The Minister remains accountable.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I must press on. The right hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make a speech.

The motion deals with management by contract and contracting out. That seems to me to be an odd matter for the Labour party to criticise when the hon. Member for Blackburn is on the Front Bench, because he is on record as roundly and strongly endorsing last year the concept of compulsory competitive tendering. In *Tribune*, he said:

> "There is a wide acceptance that the division between contractor and provider that CCT has produced has been sensible ... I have seen the case for CCT for the provision of basic services."

That piece of the motion seems to fall on the evidence of the hon. Gentleman. Many other Labour Members who are familiar with local government would endorse what he said on that occasion.

The second argument raised against the reforms that move central Government and local government towards the enabling role, and away from always seeking to provide everything that is needed, is that standards of propriety will fall and that the public service ethic—in the good sense—will be damaged. I refute that most strongly.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was even listening when I referred to him before. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he was."] I do not think that he was. It is not fair that he should try to intervene, because when I read out quite a long passage by him, he was not even listening.

We referred earlier to the PAC report, which stirred much interest recently. It is sensible report. I welcomed it at the time and welcome it again today. It says:

> "Some allege that the drive for economy and efficiency must be held back to some extent because of the need to take specific care with public money. Others argue that if economy and efficiency are to be forcibly pursued then traditional standards must be relaxed. We firmly reject both these claims. The first is often urged by those who do not want to accept the challenge of securing beneficial change. And the second is often put forward by those who do not want to be bothered to observe the right standards of public stewardship. Quite apart from the important moral and other aspects involved we consider that any failure to respect and care for the public money would be a most important cause of a decline in the efficiency of public business"—

quite right—

> "but there is no reason why a proper concern for the sensible conduct of public business and care for honest handling of public money should not be combined with effective programmes for promoting economy and efficiency."

I quoted that report at length because part of Labour's campaign—we heard it again today from the hon. Member for Oldham, West—is to try to misrepresent it as an attack on our public sector reforms. Nothing in the report does that, as I hope we may hear later.

Mr. Garrett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that I have given way enough. The hon. Gentleman will make his own speech at the end of the debate, in protected time.

On the contrary, the PAC report is a helpful reminder that we must ensure that the more effective audit arrangements that now exist relate properly to the more sophisticated and devolved structures that we now have. The PAC's checklist is helpful, and we shall ensure that all relevant public bodies are fully aware of the points that it has raised.

However, the House should be quite clear on one point. The growth in the authority and reach of our audit system and particularly the growth in value-for-money audit are the direct result of actions taken by the Government. Among others, there were Labour campaigners and I pay tribute to them. It was we who set up the Audit Commission in the Local Government Finance Act 1982; it was in 1983 that the National Audit Act was passed, making the Comptroller and Auditor General an Officer of the Parliament and giving him a value-for-money remit. We made a rod for our own backs, but I am proud of that.

Mr. Meacher *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. We know what he was going to say. The Act was passed under the present Government, having been introduced by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord St John of Fawsley.

I am reminded of a remark made by Harold Macmillan about spies, a subject that we debated the day before yesterday. He said that he hoped MI5 would never catch any more spies so that there would be no more spy scandals. In real life, we want MI5 to catch the spies and in real life we want the Comptroller and Auditor General and the PAC to do their work properly. If they were finding nothing, I would think that they were not fulfilling their duties.

In a public service the size of ours, a real watchdog will always find things if he is any good. That more is found and more pursued now is largely a sign of a more effective watchdog which has enormously developed the concept of value-for-money audit rather than the concept of lowered standards on the part of civil servants—which I refute as a slur on those public servants. Nor do I accept that our fellow citizens who may work for the public as employees of private firms under contract do not accept the duties laid on them properly. It is an insult to them to suggest that. I want to reaffirm that the true public-service ethos of dedication to service needs, equity and honesty, remains the ethos that we require and shall enforce, whether the service is supplied directly by public servants or through a contract, on behalf of the public, with a private firm.

Let me end by replying in kind to the silliest part of the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West. He argued that the Conservatives had extended state patronage. Labour, he said, was against the leviathan state. What poppycock! Let me remind the House of a fact that it can add to our near-halving of the number of appointed posts in the national health service. When we came to power, the state had about 7.5 million servants—local government officers, crown servants, nationalised industry employees and so forth. By last year, the figure was below 5.5 million and falling, although I admit that it was still too high.

Mr.Terry Lewis (Worsley): What about the quangos?

Mr. Waldegrave: The quangos are included in the figure. As I have said, it was still too high, but it was lower by 2 million than when Labour was in power—with all the associated reduction in patronage that that implies.

Virtually the whole of the great state industrial apparatus, with its hundreds of appointed chairmen and board members, has been returned—with the employees themselves—to the private sector, where such people belong and thrive. The Opposition complain about spending by organisations such as the Legal Aid Board and the Housing Corporation. We have paid for that spending many times over by reducing the amount of state-organised waste in the nationalised industries.

Let us Conservatives celebrate the turnaround from about £2.5 billion of taxpayers' money subsidising waste in old nationalised industries each year—

Mr. Meacher *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: No, the hon. Gentleman can wait. Let us celebrate the turnaround to the present position—a net inflow of £60 million a week from privatised industries, and a huge cut in the size and patronage of the state.

Mr. Meacher *rose*—

Mr. Waldegrave: I will give way once more to the hon. Gentleman, if he promises to remain seated after that.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman has now been speaking for 36 minutes, and he has not even mentioned the key point made by Opposition Members. Irrespective of the advisory and fairly unimportant quangos that have been removed, we are concerned about the quangos with substantial executive powers—and the fact that they have been packed with Tory appointees. When will the right hon. Gentleman come to that point?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have already dealt with the classic example that the hon. Gentleman picked—housing and the Housing Corporation. We have indeed increased the powers of the Housing Corporation, for a very good reason: we support the housing association movement. The hon. Gentleman has had plenty of opportunities to oppose that policy over the past 14 years, and we do not resile from it by one inch.

Many of the plum posts that have now gone were those to which Labour Governments used to appoint their friends in the old days, in the name of scaling the commanding heights of the economy. Those were the days of true state patronage; indeed, so many key jobs went to Labour's non-elected trade union cronies that it was not clear whether the state was giving patronage to the TUC or vice versa.

Here is a typical product of the corporate state under Labour. Let us remember Mr. Jack Jones. As *The Guardian* observed in a leader on 17 July 1978,

> "he may have retired but he is by no means idle. He remains—according to a recent written reply in the Commons—deputy chairman of the National Ports Council and a member of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the Anglo-German Foundation for the study of Industrial Society, the British Overseas Trade Board, the board of the Crown Agents, the EEC Economic and Social Committee, the Iron and Steel Advisory Committee, the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Disabled People, the National Economic Development Council, the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, and the UK National Commission for UNESCO".

Then there were Mrs. Jones's appointments. I have no time to go into them.

In 1977, 39 members of the TUC council between them held 180 state appointments. David Ennals simply fired 32 chairmen of health authorities whom he suspected of Conservative sympathies, replacing them with Labour placemen. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), in a famous scandal, fired Diana Macleod from the National Gas Consumers Council to appoint a Labour placeman. Incidentally, the Labour party is still at it: 21 governors were removed from Hull's schools last year and seven from the East Riding's schools entirely because the Labour party wanted to ensure maximum control and prevent applications for grant-maintained status.

The fact that Labour dares to attack us over appointments to quangos shows that it believes the British people have a very short memory. Those were the days of real power patronage—when poor Mr. Wilson bleated, "Get your tanks off my lawn, Hughie", as hon. Members may remember, when the Prime Minister's son-in-law became ambassador in Washington and when George Woodcock explained how to get on to the gravy train. This is how it was done, apparently:

> "seniority, the muscle power of your Union and competence. These are what you need to get a public job, and in that order of priority".

It was too much even for some of Labour's supporters. I have here an article from *The Scotsman*, dated 4 August 1978. One Councillor George Foulkes was very indignant about the whole matter: he was worried that the Scottish Office had so many posts to fill that

> "they were in danger of running out of enough experienced and 'creative thinking' people for the posts that needed to be filled".

I somehow do not think that Councillor Foulkes's definition of "creative thinking" strayed far from the Labour line.

I have a list of known Labour supporters whom we have appointed to posts. I am proud of that—and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made some play of one example at Question Time today. We do appoint people to public jobs on merit, and I do not claim for a moment that all the talent is on one side of the political spectrum.

We had difficulty with the health service appointments, because before the election the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) threatened Labour councillors and others if they were tempted to take posts on trust boards. As the House will remember, he went further and threatened NHS employees with dismissal if they carried

[Mr. Waldegrave]

out Government policy. [HON. MEMBERS: "That is not true."] It is true: the right hon. Member for Islwyn, then Leader of the Opposition, disowned him for it.

The Labour leopard has not changed its spots. In other areas, where Labour does not intimidate people—or, perhaps, where the people are not so easily intimidated; people like the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)—we find distinguished Labour supporters on quangos. I know that the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of the British film industry is extremely useful to the British Film Institute.

That is the proper tradition. That is the tradition that we shall maintain, that is the tradition of the House and the country. It is the tradition of fairness and impartiality, which my party will uphold, and it needs no lectures from Labour in doing so. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the amendment and make some sense of this absurd motion.

5.39 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): In response to a point of order before the debate began, Madam Speaker set the theme for the debate. She said:

> "It is important that the Executive are answerable to the House".

That is what the debate is about: the transfer of responsibility from Ministers who are accountable to the House to organisations which are not accountable to the House and can, therefore, behave in a reckless and dangerous manner without being held to account on the Floor of the House of Commons.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that in the national health service we have an "open and accountable structure". I shall tell the House of Commons how the open and accountable structure of the national health service operates as a result of the activities of and legislation introduced by the Government.

On 17 March 1993, my constituent, Lorraine Kelly, of 16 Bates street, Longsight, walked out of Burton house, which was affiliated to Withington hospital in Manchester. Lorraine Kelly was a diagnosed schizophrenic. She had entered Burton house on 3 December 1992 and her sister had asked for her to be placed in a secure unit. Lorraine Kelly was under close observation. She was supposed to be looked in on every five minutes because she had twice attempted to commit suicide. She was not looked in on every five minutes and on 17 March she walked out of Burton house. It was impossible to trace her until, on 1 May last year, her body was found in the Manchester ship canal.

Miss Kelly's sister first asked the Secretary of State for Health to inquire into that extremely serious matter. The Secretary of State for Health, as is characteristic of her when she is approached on a matter relating to an individual, immediately passed the buck. She passed the buck to something called the NHS management executive and it immediately passed the buck to the South Manchester health authority, from which nothing useful has been heard since.

However, the sister of my constituent was not prepared to accept the circumstances in which Lorraine Kelly was allowed to die, or perhaps to kill herself, just like that. She contacted the Mental Health Act Commission, set up under statute by the Government in 1983. On 22 April 1993, a person called Miss Teresa Quinn, signing herself as an administrative officer, wrote from the Mental Health Act Commission to say that Miss Kelly's query was receiving attention. Almost a month passed by and then another person, called Jeanette Wilson, an executive officer of the Mental Health Act Commission, wrote again to my constituent's sister, saying that it was sorry to hear of her death and recommending further action, not by the commission, but by my constituent.

My constituent persisted. In November last year, she received a letter from someone called William Bingley, who is the chief executive of the Mental Health Act Commission. I have discovered, after nearly a week of attempting to obtain information from a Government who believe in open government, that he receives £41,000 a year for being chief executive. He wrote to my constituent's sister, saying that the Mental Health Act Commission was pursuing two concerns. That was in November, more than three months ago.

On 7 December 1993, my constituent's sister received a letter from yet a fourth person in the Mental Health Act Commission, Anne Hill, administrative officer, saying that the commission was continuing to investigate my constituent's complaints.

My constituent's sister is taking legal action and she has now been told on the telephone that the Mental Health Act Commission will refuse to continue its investigation unless she drops her legal action. It is nearly a year since her sister disappeared and it is 10 months since her sister was found dead.

We have a totally unaccountable system in which a Secretary of State who should have responded to that extremely serious matter did not respond but passed the buck. The matter should have lain with the Secretary of State, but what has happened is that it has been passed from organisation to organisation, including the Mental Health Act Commission, which messes about, and has four people —no doubt paid substantial salaries—writing letters that refer scarcely, if at all, to letters sent by other employees of the Mental Health Act Commission.

We have here as vivid an example as it is possible to find of what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster called an "open and accountable structure": a person who should have been watched, a person who was suicidal, was not watched: a person walked out of a hospital and died in dreadful circumstances; and, nearly a year later, my constituent's sister might as well have forgotten about it because nothing has been done. That is what the Government are creating—a corporate state, in which responsibility is being transferred from Ministers accountable to the House of Commons to organisations, people and institutions who do not give a damn; and the reason why they do not give a damn is that they cannot be called to account on the Floor of the House.

When I first entered the House of Commons as a Member in 1970, it was possible to raise a matter and obtain a reply. Now one has a Secretary of State for Health, like other Secretaries of State, who is simply a postbox, drawing an extremely large salary and doing nothing for it to redress individual grievance, which is what the House of Commons is about if it is about anything.

Mr. David Nicholson: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman should make what appears to be a party political issue of a tragic and grave case of maladministration. Has he or his constituent referred that serious matter to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, who acts as the national health service commissioner, to whom constituents can refer matters directly without having to go through a Member of Parliament? The Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, on which the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and I both serve, examined a case from Wigan last week which was similar to the one that he mentioned, although not nearly as grave, and took it most severely.

Mr. Kaufman: I referred the matter to the Commissioner on Monday, but the hon. Gentleman is being impertinent when he says that my argument is a party political point. My constituent was in distress, and gave me permission to raise the matter publicly and to name her, because she was so angry that, nearly a year after she wrote to the Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. Lady had not responded to her and nothing had been done about it. I am afraid, therefore, that it is the hon. Gentleman who is making a party political point about a terrible example of negligence leading to death and human grief.

The Mental Health Act Commission is a statutory agency and that example of something that happened with the agency is something about which I have campaigned in the House since I returned to the Back Benches. It is not all the rubbish that the Chancellor of the Duchy talked about abolishing this quango or creating that quango; it is about transferring activities that were formerly the responsibility of Ministers accountable to the House to agencies which are no longer accountable to the House for their individual activities.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster nearly made a very important commitment. Referring to me gratuitously, he said that I was campaigning to get responses from Ministers and that I had the right to get responses from Ministers. However, when I intervened to ask whether that meant that I would receive a reply from a Minister when I had written about a matter that had been transferred to an agency—Opposition Members fairly said yes and that it also applied to other Members of Parliament—the Minister resiled from what he is on the record as having said: that I had the right to a reply from a Minister. He said that, of course, the agency would reply in the first place and that I should have the right to come back to the Minister.

If I refer back to the Minister, however, I do not have the right to a reply from him. Unless I make a complete pest of myself, as I have been doing for 18 months, all that will happen is that the Minister will refer the issue back to the chief executive of the agency, poor Mr. Michael Bichard, who wishes that I had never heard of him, just as I wish that I had never heard of him. The Mental Health Act Commission—a statutory body—is only one such agency.

Before a general election, at the end of a Parliament, civil servants are authorised to speak to members of the shadow Cabinet. Before the previous election, the Secretary to the Cabinet tried to persuade us of the virtues of "next steps" agencies and expressed his hope that, if a Labour Government were elected—it is very proper that he should anticipate that possibility and it is the right way for civil servants to behave in the run-up to a general election—they would continue the "next steps" agencies. That is all water under the bridge, but, if we had been elected, I am afraid that I should have done my best to stop the growth of those agencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The right hon. Gentleman is making a fair speech, but it is fair to put it on the record that the present leader of his party supported the "next steps" agencies at that time.

Mr. Kaufman: My right hon. and learned Friend did not and does not support the transfer of accountability away from the House, which is continuing relentlessly.

At the end of last year, there were 92 "next steps" agencies, in addition to 31 executive units of Customs and Excise and 33 executive offices of the Inland Revenue. The total number of civil servants in "next steps" agencies or working along "next steps" lines was 349,655 compared with 262,965 civil servants directly accountable to the House. A considerable majority of civil servants, therefore, are now working for agencies that are not directly accountable to the House.

The figures that I have just cited were for the end of 1993. Since then, more agencies have been created. We now have the War Pensions Agency, which has a budget of £55.8 million and a chief executive with a salary rising to £55,740, and from 1 April there will be a Prisons Agency. The existence of the latter means that if right hon. and hon. Members have a constituent in prison who, for example, wishes to be transferred nearer home on compassionate grounds, unless, like me, they are determined to make complete and continual nuisances of themselves, the Home Secretary will refuse to deal with the case and it will be transferred to the Prisons Agency. The Government are relentlessly creating these bodies, but, unlike the dock labour board or the Housing Corporation, for example, whose activities were created to be separate from the House, these agencies mean the direct transfer of accountability away from the House. That impinges on the right of right hon. and hon. Members to deal directly with Ministers on issues of individual grievances which is what this House is about, if it is about anything at all.

There is more. In the national health service, in addition to the Mental Health Act Commission, there are regional and district health authorities, trusts, consortia, purchasing authorities and God knows what else. In addition to the organisations that are publicly known, even if they are not publicly accountable, Ministers have made a number of informal arrangements.

If an hon. Member writes to the Foreign Secretary about an immigration or visa case, unless he is like me and causes trouble, he will get a reply not from the Foreign Secretary or another Minister at the Foreign Office but from a civil servant at the immigration correspondence unit. I refused to accept such letters and sent them back to Lord Howe, who became very annoyed and thought that I was exploiting my status as shadow Foreign Secretary. I was not; I was exercising my right as a Member of Parliament.

The same is true of immigration cases and dealings with the Home Office. If one has a problem with someone at a port of entry, one is supposed to talk to an immigration officer. I am not going to have a row with an immigration officer about a constituency issue because it is not fair to him and it is not fair to me. If I am to have a row, I shall have a row with a Minister because that is whom I am elected to have a row with and that is what he is appointed to do. He is not appointed to transfer problems to an immigration officer who operates within the rules. A Minister has the right to use his discretion to vary the rules, which is why one needs to be able to talk to a Minister.

[Mr. Kaufman]

When I first became a Member of Parliament in 1970, Ministers looked at almost everything. I dealt with members of the Conservative Government and I know that they examined individual cases. Now, however, they look at almost nothing. I want to know how a Minister can be held accountable for something that has not crossed his desk. That is the crucial issue. When I was a junior Minister, Ministers were given a boxful of letters to sign. They were in draft form, but Ministers read and signed them. Even if they did not read them, they signed them and were accountable for having signed them. Today, Ministers do not read them. Letters are passed across their desks on a conveyor belt and go to an agency, a unit, a trust or heaven knows what and the Minister is no longer held accountable.

It is curious that, in terms of the number of members of Administrations, this is the largest in the history of this country. Lady Thatcher's was once the largest, but the present Prime Minister has increased the membership even more. However, I do not know how Ministers spend their time. There are more than 100 but they have so little to do for which they are accountable.

I have been in correspondence with Madam Speaker on a most interesting matter referred to me by a constituent, Mr. C. Narrainen, who discovered that it is permissible for a member of the public to send a petition to a Member of Parliament without putting a postage stamp on it. I referred the matter to Madam Speaker and, after having had the matter investigated by the Serjeant at Arms, she told me that the Post Office had confirmed that an address or petition forwarded to a Member of Parliament or the House of Commons may be posted free of charge and set out certain conditions under which it should take place.

Parliament regards the right of redress of individual citizens as so important that it says that individual citizens may write to their Member of Parliament, send them a petition and not have to pay for sending it. But what is the good? They sign their petition and they are allowed to send it without a postage stamp, but they may as well not put it in a post box. They may as well put it in a litter bin, because when it comes here, the right hon. Gentlemen and Ladies on the Government Front Bench pay no attention because they are not accountable for what takes place.

The House of Commons votes supply. It does not vote that supply to be misused by agencies, but to be accounted for by Ministers. The House of Commons is about people. Thomas Rainborowe said in 1648:

> "The poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he."

The poorest he that is in England has the right to have his or her case considered by a Minister of the Crown and to get a response through his or her Member of Parliament. It is because the Government are destroying that right that the debate is so important.

6 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): If I understand the Opposition correctly, they are making some interesting claims. Their motion asserts that the use of quangos and contractors somehow undermines accountability, that it somehow lowers service quality, that it somehow increases fraud and waste and, most strange of all, that it threatens standards in public life. At the outset, it would be churlish not to admit that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) made quite an eloquent speech supporting such nonsense. Some of it was passionate, some of it, I must admit, was amusing and a little of it was even thoughtful, but absolutely all of it was wrong—for two simple reasons. In fact, the reasons are so simple that the Labour party ought to be able to grasp them.

First, the whole Labour case that we have heard today, and that, I fear, we shall hear in the future, is founded on false assumptions. Secondly, Labour's arguments are always riddled with muddle, with confusion and with misunderstanding. If one could ever disentangle that nonsense, it would reveal that the whole case is misguided and deeply damaging to the very institutions which it seeks to protect. As it always does, the Labour party seeks to make its case by using the same two totally false assumptions. The first is that, somehow, elected bodies, by definition, are more accountable than quangos. Secondly, for some reason that I have never managed to fathom, it assumes that public sector services, by definition, are superior to private sector services.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): They usually are.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman says that usually they are, but he needs only to examine what happens in the real world to discover that that is total rubbish. Both assumptions are not only false, but, as I hope to illustrate, utter nonsense.

Labour's first assumption, that elected bodies are somehow more accountable than quangos, reveals its lack of understanding at its absolute worse. When Labour Members assert that, they demonstrate that they do not understand the real meaning of accountability or understand the real role of elected representatives; worse still, they demonstrate that they do not even understand the true nature of local involvement in the whole process.

What are we to make of Labour's failure to understand what accountability is really about? We have heard a lot about what it is not about, but what are we to make about that failure to understand the truth? There are two amazing examples of that muddled thinking running through every attack that the Opposition make on quangos and on the so-called lack of accountability. The first bit of muddle is that Labour is always obsessed with the concept of accountability as power over something and as control of something, hence its preoccupation time and again with who runs what. While accountability is in large measure about power and control, it is also about something else, which is even more important: duty to other people.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Would the hon. Gentleman accept that accountability also depends on all relevant information about a body in question being in the public domain and being readily accessible to Members of Parliament and to the wider public?

Mr. Wilshire: That muddle is coming through again. The hon. Gentleman asks about accountability. Accountability has nothing to do with public bodies other than a public body being a part of the whole. Accountability, as I shall show in a moment, goes way beyond that. Confining any discussion to public bodies and elected representatives and the sort of argument that the hon. Gentleman is using demonstrates how bereft of understanding the Labour party is on that matter.

As I was saying, accountability is equally about duties, such as the duty to find the lowest possible cost and the duty to find the best provider, whether in the public sector or not. The hon. Gentleman is falling into the second part of the muddle that I keep hearing. The Labour party uses the words "accountability" and "democracy" as though they are interchangeable when, in reality, they are not. As the hon. Gentleman was in danger of demonstrating, when accountability becomes an obsession over the power and control in public bodies, two things happen. One becomes totally preoccupied with service providers and the provision of service and one begins to say that they must be accountable, therefore one must control them and so one must have information.

I was complaining about the hon. Gentleman because he instantly went into the "I must have" syndrome, which is deadly damaging. If one gets into that mind-set, one overlooks the duty to focus on the needs of people and so people exist only to use the services that one has deemed to be appropriate.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The hon. Gentleman has completely misinterpreted what I said. Will he answer my question about information? If information is not available, how does one begin to assess whether a body is in any way functioning properly, much less whether it is accountable in any objective terms to the House or to anywhere else?

Mr. Wilshire: During my attempts to obtain information when I served on other bodies, when I was a councillor and when I was here, I found that by working at it, I got the information that I needed. It is as simple as that. If the hon. Gentleman is having difficulty, perhaps he should examine his methods of trying to get information.

If one confuses accountability and democracy, one diminishes both. If one confines accountability to the public sector, one damages the elected representatives and freezes out any involvement at all of people who are not elected or of the customers and clients who use the services.

May I give one example of what I am trying to say? In the real world, not the fantasy world of the Labour party, a headteacher is not only accountable to the local council, although the Labour party would have us believe that that is what it is all about; in the real world, a headteacher is also accountable to pupils, to parents, to his profession, to staff and to local taxpayers. That is why I say that accountability goes so much further than the question of involving elected representatives in the process.

I shall say a word or two about Labour's failure to understand the real role of elected representatives. The hon. Member for Oldham, West thought that he was being clever in his reaction to my intervention, but it was a demonstration of my point. Labour's attacks on quangos and its wish to pack them with councillors reveal that it believes that elected representatives must have some sort of statutory role before they can make any worthwhile contribution. That simply is not true. If one believes that point of view, one ends up restricting the involvement of councillors in the bodies on which they sit. That again results in an obsession with service provision. For example, if a councillor can interest himself only in the services which are delegated by Acts of Parliament—the point that the hon. Member for Oldham, West was making when he was complaining that provision of certain services has been taken away from local government—issues such as hospital closures, vandalised telephone kiosks or a lack of decent shopping facilities in the locality could never appear on a council agenda, according to the hon. Gentleman's thesis.

That is the point that the hon. Gentleman ducked. Happily for us, even Labour councillors understand how wrong he is, because they do put such matters on agendas and discuss them. They understand that the real role of elected representatives goes far further than the bodies to which they can be appointed.

Similarly, the other point that the hon. Gentleman ducked is that if we followed his line councils and councillors would never be able to use their legal discretion to support pressure groups seeking to improve services in the public sector. Happily councils do exactly that, and long may they continue. If the Labour party does not understand that those are correct roles for local councillors, I am sorry, but they do not understand the nature of the beast that they are talking about.

The third muddle into which the Labour party gets itself centres on the question: what is the real nature of local involvement, be it in a quango or in a public sector service? When they seek to cure the imagined ills that they tell us about Labour Members cannot think beyond the simplistic solution of making local involvement mean local government involvement. Once again, they undermine the real role of councillors.

The blinkered thinking that we keep hearing from the Labour party exposes something else that it does not understand— the reality of local government taking place out there. [*Laughter.*] The hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) may laugh, but let him try to answer a question. If he has had the same experience of local government that I have, does he not agree that what I am about to describe is what happens in the real world? Labour Members seem to assume that the United Kingdom is somehow blessed with an enormous pool of elected representatives with sufficient time and adequate skills to serve on all the boards, committees and panels that they would seek to set up if they ever formed the Government.

My 11 years in local government taught me something different. Anybody who has served in local government knows only too well about the farce called the council annual general meeting. Somewhere on the agenda, at item 10 or whatever, is the appointment of representatives to outside bodies— the very thing that the Labour party wants to happen more. At that point in any AGM councillors are press-ganged to serve on dozens, if not hundreds, of bodies—

Mr. Lewis: Shame.

Mr. Wilshire: I and thousands of other councillors have sat through that process. Councillors are press-ganged into service, and no one explains the responsibilities or ever asks for a report back on what happened last year—

Mr. Lewis: My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that he felt that one of the roles of Members of Parliament and councillors was to act as advocates for the people whom they represent. I endorse that. The bodies that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is talking about are vital to the well-being of the people whom councillors represent. Typically, councillors live within the community that they represent. When I was a councillor— for far longer than 11 years— people used to knock on my door to secure my advocacy in various arguments with public bodies, and

[Mr. Lewis]

now that I have been in the House for 11 years, they still do. Tonight we are saying that there has been a huge transfer not only of power but of the spending of public money, away from locally elected councillors who are accountable and available, to business people who may not even live in the area.

The hon. Gentleman talks about councillors not having the time to go on outside bodies. The same argument applies to business people. I often wonder how they find the time to run their businesses as well as half of local and national government.

Mr. Wilshire: I struggled for a moment or two to understand what relevance the hon. Gentleman's intervention had to what I was saying, but I found out when he referred back to powers being taken away, and again demonstrated that obsession with powers.

The council annual general meeting is crucial to the case that I am making about why the Labour party's solution will not work. Nobody ever asks for the attendance records of outside bodies, because that would be deeply embarrassing. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster described his experience with the health authorities in Bristol. I do not know whether he recalls that when he and I both lived in that area I served on such bodies, but I know only too well that the attendance records for the appointed councillors from local authorities on all the health authorities in Bristol were desperately bad, whatever their political persuasion.

What happens when the reluctant appointees finally get to the outside bodies to which they have been appointed? They probably discover that meetings clash, and that they have council duties at the same time. They probably also discover that the bodies on to which they have been press-ganged require skills that they do not possess, and even that some of the meetings are so boring that they never bother to go again. That is the reality of local government. That is why relying exclusively, or almost exclusively, on councillors will not work.

Mr. Hall: I know that the hon. Gentleman speaks as a former leader of Wandsdyke district council. Does he claim that the experience that he has described to the House happens throughout local government? That is not my recollection of what happened when I was the leader of Warrington borough council.

Mr. Wilshire: It is nice to know that there is the isolated example that we could all follow, if only we knew where to find it. I do not suggest that everyone was as I described, but I was involved in local government for a long time, nationally as well as in my own council, and I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the experience that I have described occurred throughout the country, irrespective of the political party in control.

Finally, I shall say a few words about Labour's second false assumption— that public sector delivery of services is somehow or other, by mystical arrangement, superior to private sector delivery.

Mr. Garrett: It is in some cases.

Mr. Wilshire: In some cases yes; in other cases no. That claim reveals more of Labour's muddle and confusion on delivering services. Labour should concern itself with meeting people's needs. It is our real specialist task, whether we have been elected as Members of Parliament or as councillors, to ensure that needs are met, to listen to people's problems and to ensure that arrangements are made to meet their needs. It is not necessarily our task —certainly not exclusively our task—to meet those needs, either by providing the services ourselves or by poking our political noses into the businesses and organisations that provide the services.

If public services suffer from low standards, as the Labour motion suggests, and from waste and fraud, as Labour claims, that is more likely to arise from political involvement than from political disengagement. When Labour Members are busily attacking the private sector I always suspect that they are doing so in defence of their public sector union paymasters. The jibes that they use demonstrate that they simply do not understand. Labour's most common jibe is that privatisation does not improve services. Well, it did with British Telecom, as we find out if we listen to telephone users, and it did with British Airways, as we find out if we talk to regular air travellers.

Another jibe that the Labour party likes to use is that market testing does not save money. [HON. MEMBERS: "It does not."] Tell that to the millions of householders whose dustbins are now emptied by the private sector. A further Labour jibe is that quangos and contractors somehow lead to corruption. However, if I remember rightly, T. Dan Smith was a councillor, and Poulson went to prison for his dealings with local government contracts.

When all those jibes fail, the Labour party falls back on the few contracts in which it can find examples of things that have gone wrong. But in reality such mistakes are usually made because the contract rather than the contractor has got it wrong. And who writes the contracts? The beloved public sector that the Labour party sets out to defend as though it had a magical ability do things better.

So much for Labour's motion and Labour's case. The motion makes claims that are simply untrue. Their case is founded on false assumptions and their arguments are riddled with muddle and confusion—rather like a lump of old timber gnawed away by woodworm and covered with fungus. Until they understand what accountability really means, until they understand the real role of elected representatives and until they put people before the providers and their paymasters—the trade unions—they deserve to fester on the Opposition Benches. That is exactly where they will stay if they continue to come up with this sort of nonsense.

6.19 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): This debate is on a constitutional issue. We have no written constitution, so we rely on convention and checks and balances for our democracy. We rely on the protection of elected representatives and accountability to the public. In that context, and in the context of this debate, I shall raise four main points: public sector accountability; burgeoning political patronage by Ministers; the huge mismanagement of public money; and the resulting destruction of our democracy, especially local democracy.

First, on accountability, it is simply wrong in principle for democratically elected councillors and Members of Parliament to be increasingly replaced by ministerial appointees. Despite Margaret Thatcher's promises in 1979 to contain the power of non-elected bodies, we have seen a real increase. In 1980, she said that there would always be pressure for new bodies and the Tory Government would be robust in resisting them. What she should have said is that they would be robust in redefining them.

In real terms, spending by quangos has grown by 20 per cent. since the Conservatives won power in 1979, promising to cut them back. Government sources have said, and the Minister said today, that the number of non-governmental public bodies has fallen from 2,167 in 1979 to 1,412 in 1993—perhaps it is a little less now.

The official Cabinet definition does not include all the executive bodies that the public regard as quangos. For most people, the term "quango" refers to all government by the non-elected. For them, the term includes all appointed bodies, from national health service trusts to training and enterprise councils.

A recent report by the Cardiff business school rightly estimates that unelected appointees to quangos have one fifth of the nation's public expenditure at their disposal. More than £25 billion has passed from local authorities to quangos. The report calculates that, by 1996, there will be approximately 7,700 quangos, on any ordinary person's definition of these things, spending some £54 billion of taxpayers' money.

Each Bill that is brought to the Floor of the House—whether it concerns education, health, transport, the police or training—seems to remove still more power from democratically elected local representatives, and passes it to non-elected Government appointees. Examples of this increase in the power of quangos and the erosion of the power of local elected representatives can be seen in all aspects of society.

In education, grant-maintained schools, sixth form colleges and further education colleges have all been removed from oversight by locally elected, locally accountable councillors. Education is becoming controlled by quangos that are responsible solely to the Secretary of State. Bodies such as the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority determine much of what should be taught in schools while further and higher education funding councils dominate life in colleges and universities. The Funding Agency for Schools directs Government money to opted-out schools. In areas where more than 10 per cent. of pupils are in opted-out schools, it will increasingly have enormous education planning powers.

In the health service, local authority power has been removed in favour of Government appointees. Local representation was scrapped under legislation for the NHS internal market. At the same time, representatives from community health councils lost their right to speak at meetings. Taxpayers' money is going into the pockets of unelected officials and bureaucracy, instead of being spent on patient care.

Recently, the Minister finally admitted that, since the introduction of the internal market, the cost of NHS management and bureaucracy has almost doubled—from 6 per cent. to 11 per cent. In other words, bureaucracy shoots up, and money that should have been spent on health care is going into the pockets of non-elected bureaucrats, many of them appointed by Ministers.

Plans to change the composition of the police authorities will reduce the number of locally elected representatives. Listening to debates in the House of Lords, it is interesting to note how frequently former Ministers, who defended these things here, argue against the next step when they get to the House of Lords and have a little more freedom.

Local representatives would be marginalised by the appointment of five members of each authority by the Home Secretary. That would centralise power and remove any checks and balances on the role of the state over the police force. Unelected appointees would be able to demand money from the local authority to pay for what they deem the local police force should be doing, rather than responding to local representatives.

I must add, at least for hon. Members on this side of the House, that it is extraordinary to see the number of letters from local magistrates, who are not normally considered a body representative of radical or left-of-centre politics, making the precise point that I just made.

Mr. Streeter: On the point of double standards in public life, does the hon. Gentleman think that the public interest was served by the Liberal leader of Devon county council, Councillor Brian Greenslade, recently voting in his capacity as a county councillor to continue with the county council, and then going back to north Devon and voting in his capacity as a district councillor to abolish the county council? Is that the sort of double standard that the Liberal party espouses?

Mr. Taylor: I am sure that Mr. Greenslade is more than capable of explaining his votes. He will have to explain them, because he is an elected representative who will have to answer at the ballot box. That is more than can be said for many of the people whom I am talking about in this debate.

Those examples show the removal of power and taxpayers' money precisely from people who are accountable to the local taxpayer through the ballot box. This movement amounts to taxation without representation. The Government are centralising power and marginalising people who are given a mandate by the electorate.

It is relevant to take the situation in Wales as an example. At the last general election, 71 per cent. of the Welsh electorate voted against the Government. Only six of 38 seats are held by the Conservatives at present. The Government's response to this move of power from their auspices has been to create more than 100 quangos in Wales.

According to a survey by the department of city and regional planning at the university of Wales, in this financial year executive agencies spent 31 per cent.—almost one third—of the total Welsh Office budget. More than 1,400 people are appointed by Ministers in Wales alone. In other words, Conservatives in Wales have no need to worry that they cannot get elected; they can get appointed instead.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is supposedly responsible for freedom of information and the citizens charter, has defended this transfer of power by arguing that the injection of the private values of market testing into the public sector gives the public more power. He argues that, by making the public sector more responsive to the customer, accountability is increased. He claims that quangos are accountable to Ministers and therefore to Parliament.

However, Ministers are able to deny responsibility in practice while having an indirect say through their appointees. In the 1992-93 financial year, £40 million

[Mr. Taylor]

disappeared from training and enterprise council budgets, but there was no reprisal on Ministers here at Westminster —there were no resignations.

Contrary to the view expressed earlier by the Minister, all Members of Parliament have had experience of taking up a question with Ministers, who effectively say, "Not me, Guv," and refer them to an agency. It is time that Ministers were forced once again to admit, "It's a fair cop, Guv," just for once about some of the mistakes that are made. The Minister had no answer to the point that Ministers no longer respond to our letters. The Minister's signature is not on the bottom of the letter, except to say, "I pass it to the relevant agency."

In my own county of Cornwall, we can see the very real problems that the destruction of local accountability can cause. I refer first to the health service. Frankly, local people have watched in utter disbelief the mess that has been made of ministerial appointments to the trusts.

First, we saw a well respected chairman of the Cornwall Healthcare Trust sacked for no apparent reason and replaced by a woman with a Conservative party background but against the strong advice of local Members of Parliament, including Tory Members. The previous chairman took the matter to an industrial tribunal and had to be paid off. The non-executive directors then expressed no confidence in their new chair. She was forced to resign, and threatened legal action in turn. Who is responsible? Technically, it is the Secretary of State for Health. We are told that she took the decision on the appointment personally. Who is taking responsibility? No one.

In the case of the Royal Cornwall hospital trust, a well-respected chairman was not reappointed. He was given no reason and was understandably outraged, especially as he was the last to hear. I had to intervene before the Minister was even prepared to explain the decision to him.

Now we have the ambulance trust, where staff, doctors and just about everyone else has lost confidence in the senior management, but no one seems able to get it sorted out. That should come as no surprise. Against local opposition, successive mergers have left one trust serving four different health authorities with no one in a position to sort it out. It is demonstrably out of public control.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Is not a peculiarity of the situation with the ambulance trust the fact that a quango is answerable to another quango? Even if one gets an answer from the first quango, one cannot get through to the second because the area health authority is also appointed by the Minister. Is not that double whammy evidence of yet more complication and confusion in the system?

Mr. Taylor: I suspect that my hon. Friend has found, as I have, that that is yet another quango for which the Minister will decline to take responsibility, and he will pass the responsibility on. It helps the flow across the Minister's desk, I guess.

The NHS is not the only example, and nor is this new bureaucracy the only example, of the transfer of responsibility. In a week when it has been confirmed that South West Water prices have doubled in five years—and are set to double again—the management are reaping huge financial benefits, while we are told that Ministers have no responsibility for the mess.

The growth of government by quango has come in part at the expense of ministerial responsibility. However, it comes even more—in contrast to what the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said—at the expense of local democracy.

There may be problems with local councillors—certainly they do not always agree with Ministers—but those responsible are elected, and the public have some power to hold them accountable. Local authorities have certain requirements. For example, meetings must be held in public, documents must be available for scrutiny and the interests of councillors must be declared, and councillors are governed by strict rules of conduct. In many respects, those rules are far in advance of the procedures which cover this House.

Quangos that control large quantities of public money have few formulated regulations to control their operations. Members of quangos do not have to declare their interests, and Ministers say that they do not know the background of those members. Meetings can often be held behind closed doors, and there are few ways of holding those people accountable. Four out of five district health authorities are no longer willing to meet in public, even once a quarter.

Mr. Streeter: The hon. Gentleman seems to be hostile to quangos, if I understand his speech. Will he therefore explain why it is his party's policy to set up an office of utility regulation—itself a quango—to oversee its activities?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman ought to be aware that that would get rid of some quangos by pulling all the utility regulation together, and by giving it greater powers to try to take control of precisely the type of problems which I mentioned in relation to South West Water. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has said that he supports us on that subject.

We need to tackle that matter, and we need the strength to tackle it. Given that those industries have been privatised, and that no one will argue that we can afford to take them back into the state sector, we must have the power to control them. The hon. Gentleman, who represents people who are trying to pay their water bills, ought to be well aware of that.

If the Government were genuinely interested in democracy and accountability, they would have reformed local government further, not neutered it. Rather than transferring power to quangos, we need to ensure that there is freedom of information in all areas of government.

Electoral reform would make local authorities more representative and would ensure that the excesses of the Lambeths and Liverpools, of which we hear so much from Ministers, could not have taken place. There has never been majority support for extremism on either right or left. Democratic reform is a way forward, not the anti-democratic moves by the Government.

I move on now to patronage. Ministers have failed to divulge facts and figures for the number of appointments which have been made. Secrecy surrounds the information on how those people have been selected and paid. That being the case, we must rely on more limited research.

Nevertheless, the majority of recent appointments to bodies appear to be people who sympathise with Conservative party policy.

It is estimated by Cardiff business school that, in 1992, over 40,000 appointments were directly made by the Government and by Ministers. In the NHS alone, since 1991, openings for appointees have rapidly grown. Each of the 145 English district health authorities has five non-executives appointed. By April, it is estimated that there will be 400 trusts, which means that there is room for 2,000 non-executives to be appointed.

In the past, the people who were appointed have tended to be—I agree with the Minister that it was not always the case—appropriately qualified for the position. One might expect that those appointed to work in the public sector would look to the public interest, and not to a political view. However, people are increasingly appointed without any relevant qualifications, except perhaps that they sympathise with the Government.

Since the Government are coy about releasing details of the background of their appointees, a complete picture is hard to get. Recent research showed that 44 peers receive salaries from sitting on quangos. In that group are 31 Conservatives, 10 Labour peers, no Liberal Democrats and three Cross-Benchers.

In the "File on 4" programme which has been referred to, the Minister Baroness Denton said that the Tory party had never knowingly appointed a Labour supporter. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that she had been quoted out of context. Perhaps he could explain other things she said, and how they are out of context. She said:

> "Well, of course, you don't put people in who are in conflict with what you are trying to achieve."

That does not sound out of context to me.

Those people are paid highly for their services. When compared with the payments made to local councillors, they are paid extraordinarily well. Lady Anson, the chair of the Association of District Councils, said:

> "you can spend one day a month on a District health authority and you get £5,000 which is more than any councillor will get in a whole year."

That leads me to my third point, which is the huge amount of money which is wasted, mismanaged and improperly spent by quangos. The Public Accounts Committee has given 26 examples of how the inherent lack of accountability has led to the squandering of public moneys.

Wessex health authority was censured for wasting at least £20 million in an attempt to establish a regional information systems plan, which was abandoned in 1990. That money could have been spent on health care for the sick. The regional health authority failed to secure accountability from the regional general management.

The West Midlands health authority wasted over £10 million by mismanagement from a new and inexperienced appointee. As I have said, most appointees are inexperienced. The PAC report stated:

> "he was able to follow his own path, making a bonfire of the rules in the process."

In this instance, the director of regionally managed services was awarded redundancy after five years service, when, arguably, he should have been dismissed. He was awarded £82,000 in a lump sum and a yearly pension of £6,462.

Frankly, there is a breakdown of accountability and responsibility which is unacceptable. No Minister has come to the Floor of the House and said, "Mea culpa, it is my fault." In the old days, such incompetence would have been the fault of Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The cases which the hon. Gentleman cites do not help his case at all. They were part of the old structure of the health service which have gone back for 25 years or more. They have nothing to do with the reforms, as they are both part of the pre-reform structures of the health service.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister is aware that I am talking not merely about the reforms, but about the role of the unelected state and the lack of accountability. That is what the debate is about, and the Minister should learn from the mistakes of the past.

The reason local government was created in the first place was to turn out the type of unelected public appointments which are now being reintroduced. A study —I forget which—referred to the creation of "a new squirearchy", and that is precisely what is happening. It was abandoned not merely for democratic reasons, but because it did not work. The Minister should remember that.

The falling standards in public life are damaging the fabric of society. Democracy is based on the idea that all citizens can participate and are therefore responsible. We need to trust the people elected as local representatives, but of course we need to have proper checks on them, not least through the ballot box. Given the prevalence of quangos and Ministers' unaccountability in the use of political patronage, it is little wonder that the public are increasingly disillusioned with government.

The removal of power from elected representatives denies the public any sense of participation in the system. Incidentally, it is common knowledge that it is harder to get good people to stand for local government, because people no longer believe that they would have power to do the things that are worth doing. They would simply carry out the Government's cuts.

The Liberal Democrats emphasise the need to return power to people at a local level. The public have to be given a real say in the government of their communities. Local representatives need to be allowed to retain power over their services and be held accountable to the public.

For example, there is no reason why the role of councillors should not be extended to the strategic and supervisory role of district health authorities. DHAs are no longer responsible for delivering the service, but they are responsible for overseeing it. That is a role for local representatives.

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I am just finishing.

To Ministers who say that local democracy sometimes gets it wrong, I say, of course it does. So do quangos—look at the Public Accounts Committee reports. So do national Government—look at the poll tax and the current tax increases. The essence of local democracy and pluralism is that different people are free to make different choices, and they are accountable for the results of those choices. If Ministers do not like it, the truth is that it is because they do not believe in a pluralist democracy.

6.41 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): The Opposition motion invites the House to review the progression towards an unelected state. If the House wants to review this matter to good effect, it will have to go a good deal deeper than the allegations of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I hope that he will not object if, following the lead of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, I try to rise above the level that he adopted in introducing the debate.

To criticise the Government on this matter, the House needs to have a proper appreciation of the nature of the problems in the provision of public services which the Government seek to address. From my experience of serving as a Minister in two service-providing Departments, latterly in the Office of Public Service and Science, I would summarise the problems under two headings.

First, and perhaps most fundamental, there is the problem of funding the public services. In 1976 a distinguished former Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Roy Jenkins, speculated on whether there was a limit to the share of the gross domestic product that the Government could safely take in taxation and whether that limit had been reached at about 45 to 50 per cent. of GDP. The politics of the 1980s were dominated throughout the western world by a taxpayers' revolt which led to a new consensus in Britain. Since the 1992 general election, the Labour party has come around on the importance of avoiding tax increases. Today, all round the world, governments are struggling to keep down the proportion of GDP which is taken in tax and spent by governments in the provision of public services.

The second problem is that, although people will vote against tax increases, they value public services and they want the quality of those public services to improve. So the Government and the House must face the danger of deterioration in public services—both absolutely and relative to the quality of service in the private sector—unless we can either find new revenue resources to fund public services or improve the quality of the management of our public services, or both. It is here that the House will find the root of the phenomenon of the "progression of the unelected state".

What is happening within government is not a drive to centralisation for its own sake. It is the application of new ideas about management, which are designed to improve the quality of public services while holding down their cost. There is a new managerialism in Whitehall which derives from the experience of the private sector. Its main themes are a stronger strategic direction from the highest level of the organisation, especially in the form of setting measurable standards of performance, coupled with the devolution of executive responsibilities for delivering services and meeting standards to a level which is as close as possible to the ultimate user of the service. That is the philosophy behind the great wave of public service reforms which began in the mid-1980s and is still rolling forward.

That philosophy was given a classical form in the Education Reform Act 1988. Central standard-setting was established in the national curriculum and associated testing arrangements and this was combined with the delegation of budgets to schools and the opening up of parental choice. It has been developed in the national health service, with the shift of power from the health authorities to GP fundholders and national health trusts. In Whitehall it is embodied in the spinning off of executive functions into "next steps" agencies operated under contract with the central Departments, about which we have heard during the debate.

The logic of the new managerialism has led the Government to look closely at the whole range of inherited arrangements for the provision of public services. Central to those traditional arrangements is the elected local authority as a provider of services, jointly financed by the central state. It is no secret that central Government have viewed local government with some scepticism as to its efficiency and cost-effectiveness as a provider of services.

Three main problems have stood out. First, there has been excessive politicisation in local authority decision-making. That is something that hon. Members on both sides of the House can recognise. Secondly, there has been excessive influence of producer interests in some local authority-run public services, especially where trade unions are closely involved in local power structures with the Labour party. Thirdly, there has been an insufficiency of managerial talent and experience at the political level in local government. That point was touched on by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). Local government leadership is often not at the level appropriate to the tasks that the local authorities now face. Those are serious considerations. If we put our hands on our hearts, we will all admit that.

Nevertheless, the Government's attitude to local authorities has not been one of complete scepticism. The Government have made a serious effort to promote reforms in local government. The concept of the enabling authority, in which responsibility for service provision is separated from the direct provision of the service, has been introduced. New functions have been allocated to local government in respect of community care, following the Griffiths report. Currently, an attempt is being made to promote unitary authorities which are a precondition for greater effectiveness and transparency.

Notwithstanding those positive approaches to local authorities, there is no doubt that one of the most important features of the new managerialism in government has been the shift of responsibilities and power from local authorities to other bodies which are charged with providing public services. That is why we are debating this subject today.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West is in danger of misleading the House if he seeks to persuade it that the changes that have taken place are all in one direction—the direction of centralisation and the substitution of appointment for election. The shifts of responsibility have gone in a variety of directions. Not all the changes have been in the direction of centralisation; nor is it the case that everywhere elected people have been replaced by unelected people. Much of the shift of power from local authorities has been downwards to more local levels. For example, power has been shifted from local authority housing committees to elected, estate-based housing action trusts; from local authority education committees to elected school governors; from many NHS regional and district health authorities to GP fundholders and hospital trusts.

Moreover, much of the reorganisation has affected bodies which have never been elected. I think particularly of the NHS. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster pointed out that NHS bodies have never been elected bodies; they have always been appointed. Where shifts have taken place in this area, they have been downwards, away from the centre.

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the Government have created a wide range of new unelected bodies responsible for public services and they have expanded the powers and responsibilities of many such bodies.That is the essence of what has been said in the House. Hence the expanding world of the new magistracy to which this debate calls attention and it is a real and important phenomenon.

I have tried to describe the background to these changes and I hope that, in doing so, I may have persuaded some hon. Members that there is a genuine attempt on the part of the Government to grapple with genuine dilemmas. The picture is much more complex than can be summed up by slogans about the benefits of election as against appointment, or about the virtues of decentralisation as against the exercise of central power. I do not agree with Dr. Pangloss, however, that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and what I want to do in the rest of my speech is to say something about what I see as difficulties in the Government's approach and what might be done to address those difficulties.

I am afraid that the vehemence of the partisanship of the hon. Member for Oldham, West has largely blinded him to the real nature of those difficulties, although they surfaced in the speeches of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the hon. Member for Truro.

The first difficulty is concerned with efficiency and with what might be called systems overload. There is a real risk of each Government Department pressing its own reform agenda and promoting too many changes too quickly, with insufficient regard for the interaction of those changes across the different areas of policy which fall within the spheres of different Government Departments. For instance, that is a real problem in the current reform of the machinery of central Government. In my own experience, another difficult area has been in respect of Government initiatives overlapping, duplicating and running into one another in inner city areas, where there is now a welcome shift to more local initiatives with the city challenge concept. Meanwhile, we are all aware of the way in which the process of local government structural reform is clashing with the reform agenda in a host of other areas, from the operation of community care to the funding of magistrates courts.

A second set of difficulties concerns a problem that has been touched on in the debate, that of accountability. I have no doubt that the managerial changes that we are seeing and that we are discussing today are improving what might be called "high accountability"—that is, the accountability of local managers to the centre, to the Treasury and to Parliament in respect of general policy and of finance. We have only to look at the sheer volume of the management information now published, although all too rarely debated here. There is, however, a gap opening up at the level of what I think of as "low accountability", the accountability of service providers in matters of detail to particular individual users. That is where I have sympathy with the point made by the right hon. Member for Gorton.

The Government are making valiant attempts to address the problem through the citizens charter, and through the setting of detailed performance standards and the establishment of accessible channels of redress. But I do not think that these are as effective as the discipline imposed by a disgruntled voter tackling his elected representative. That is certainly true in relation to services at the local level. Hon. Members have also only to think about their attempts to deal, on behalf of constituents, with the Child Support Agency, to name but one, to recognise this problem at the national level.

The third problem that I see arising from the current wave of managerial changes is that of legitimacy. When the Government of Lord Salisbury created the county councils at the end of the 19th century as a vehicle for the provision of the new services that the state was then undertaking, there was a certain Tory statecraft behind the new arrangements which we forget nowadays at our peril. It held that there were advantages for the state in a wide diffusion of responsibility, so that the workings of the national government were not clogged up with detailed problems of local administration and so that a wide cross-section of people were involved and indeed implicated in the processes of local government.

The present position is that Government-sponsored reforms are putting Ministers in the front line of responsibility for a whole range of matters where the competence of Government is limited and their execution of policy is all too fallible. The best instance of this is the sorry saga of the implementation of the national curriculum. It is an important and valuable instrument which I strongly support, but it represents a real challenge to the capacities of the Government and it is one that we must recognise they may not be capable by themselves of meeting. The danger is that if the Government take too much responsibility to themselves they will be faced more and more with an erosion of consent which may spill over from one area of policy to another, perhaps until there is an overall crisis of confidence in the capacity of Government. Some may argue that this is an aspect of the currently prevailing political mood.

The fourth problem has also been touched on in the debate. It is the problem of democracy. Although it may not be how the new managerialism sees the matter, local government is not simply a provider of services, nor is it only one among a wide range of possible alternatives for providing services. Local government is also a vital element in the fabric of democracy, in the operation of a society based on the principle and practice of self-government. Even the element of party, which is sometimes thought to undermine the efficacy of local government, is critical for the working of democracy. All of us here depend upon the health of the party system and if one of the roots of that system, local government, is being damaged by our attentions, we in this House are among those who will suffer.

What should the Government be doing about all this? I would not urge them to abandon the drive for managerial reform. The issues that I outlined at the beginning of my speech are too important and too difficult for that. But I do urge them to beware of the seductiveness of what Hugo Young, I think it was, christened "the big idea". In our system of government Ministers have only a short time to make their mark on their Departments and it is all too easy to take some prevailing idea—for example, the introduction of the concept of the market into the provision of public services, which was a valuable and good idea, by the way—as a sort of leitmotif and be led by it up hill and down dale until in the end the idea and its integrity seem to matter more than the complex reality to which it is being applied. So my first advice is to beware the big idea.

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

My second piece of advice would be to pay attention to the question whether particular ideas really work and whether they will work in the way that is intended. Too often pilot projects are not really pilots but vanguards. Too often ideas are taken over from the private sector without much attention either to their proven value in the world of business or to their applicability in public sector conditions, which are often very different. I have in mind the way in which performance pay is being introduced into public service management without sufficiently serious evaluation of its effectiveness in motivating public servants.

I conclude with two suggestions about institutions. The first is local government. I believe that the Government are sincere in their desire to turn over a new leaf with local government, but what we need is a clear, consistent and well-explained policy for strengthening the institutions of local government. The philosophy of unitary local government is a welcome step in this direction, however disruptive its introduction will be. The Government should think again about the way in which the business rate is raised. More will have to be done to build the confidence and strengthen the morale of local government and to attract better people to seek election to it. We should look again at payment for councillors. The Government must recognise that the more they create alternative vehicles for service provision, the less incentive they offer to good people to seek election to local government. In that sense, there is a self-fulfilling element in the analysis which criticises local government as being short of talent.

Finally, and very close to home, there is Parliament, the one institution that has so far remained almost untouched by the wave of managerial change. That is not just because of the difficulty of making any changes here without all-party consent. It is also because it suits Ministers to have a House of Commons that was designed for a system of government quite different from the system now emerging.

A time-hallowed phrase has it that our role in the House is to hold the Government to account. In reality, we are hardly equipped to secure the kind of accountability required by modern government. Our historical role, which was expressed cogently by the right hon. Member for Gorton, has been to represent constituents, voice grievances, vote supply and sustain the Government of the day. The trouble is that, today, that role is not enough. Perhaps this debate is an effective illustration of that proposition.

If Parliament is to hold modern government to account, it will require a much more professional structure in which power will inevitably be more widely diffused than it is today. For example, we shall need to think in terms of the constitution of powerful Committees, embracing the functions of present Select and Standing Committees and enabling their members to be real partners in government with the Executive.

The Opposition have done a service to the House by raising this important issue. I just wish that they had presented the case at the level which the issue deserves.

7.2 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on a thoughtful speech. It was a helpful contribution to the debate.

Before the Minister leaves, may I quickly take up the point that he made? I shall not go down the spoils system route. He referred to the "dismissal" of the noble Baroness Macleod. His information is only partially correct. When I was Minister responsible for consumer affairs in 1974-76, I reappointed the noble Baroness as chairperson, to use modern parlance, of a consumer organisation because she had done a good job and I felt that, at that stage, consumerism needed a consensus approach. I also reappointed the now noble Lord Orr-Ewing as chairman of the Metrication Board. I am not sure whether he regarded that as a kindness, but when we meet he is, at least, still friendly and we still hold conversations.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, one makes appointments from one's own side; but also, if one respects the rights of the Opposition, one also makes appointments from the other side.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with that and I am happy to pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman for having partly righted the wrong done to the noble Baroness in the first instance when she was rather abruptly fired from her first consumer position.

Mr. Williams: I reappointed her because she had done well the first time. So she had a second tour of duty. I do not wish to make a major issue of this matter, but someone has given the Minister inaccurate information.

On the points raised by the hon. Member for Wantage —I am sorry that my referring to them ties him to the Bench for a little longer when he could be enjoying a meal outside—it is salutary to reflect that, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), I am in my thirtieth year in the House of Commons. It dawned on me only earlier today that I have spent half that time under this Administration, since they came to office in 1979. Many changes have taken place over the 30 years and many have taken place over the past 15.

This is a good opportunity for us to pause and review the changes, both structural and, more importantly, in the attitudes of those exercising power in the past 15 years, and to consider whether, ultimately, the citizen is worse or better governed. Even more important, we should consider whether citizens' rights under the rule of law have been enhanced or diminished.

May I begin with the simpler of the two issues: the structural changes already mentioned by several hon. Members. We have seen the emergence of "satellite" government. A series of organisations are now in orbit at different distances from Whitehall. First, we have the "next steps" agencies, which I call the "first step" agencies as they have been set up for hiving off at the appropriate time. Those agencies are the nearest to earth in an accountability sense. Secondly, we have the quangos. Thirdly, we have the services that have been contractorised or even privatised.

It is worrying to reflect that in Wales, for example, once the reforms now going through another place are implemented, more appointed members on boards of quangos will administer £2·1 billion than elected councillors who will administer £2·5 billion. It is important to recognise the intimate range of services involved in those hived-off organisations. The health service has a pyramid structure of quangos, with the national health service execituve, the national health service supplies executive, regional executives, district authorities and trusts. It is increasingly remote, in terms of accountability, from the people it is supposed to serve.

The same applies to housing. No one can pretend that housing associations are accountable. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, the emergence of agencies has made the job of Members of Parliament more difficult and constituents' cases harder to press.

When we discuss the question of diminished accountability and the diminished powers of this House, as others have rightly said, it means a diminution not in hon. Members' egos—much as that may matter to some hon. Members—but in our ability to represent and press the cases of those whom we, in turn, represent via the ballot box.

Mr. Hall: Is not the other side of that coin the fact that the Government are then less accountable, and can be held less accountable by Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents?

Mr. Williams: Yes, that is so. Ministers have created an armour-plating between them and the House. It is significant that three of my hon. Friends hoping to participate in the debate and the hon. Member for Wantage were all on the Public Accounts Committee because the important point about the proliferation of those satellites is that the power to audit and control taxpayers' money is being diminished. It is not only Members of Parliament who say that but the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office. They are worried about the problems presented to them and the proliferation of accounting and auditing problems. Between a quarter and a fifth of total public expenditure is being exercised and controlled by unelected individuals.

I have made a point that attitudes matter even more. Something that we rarely think about is worth bearing in mind: what is the effect of these changes on people who —whether hon. Members think they should or should not have done so—have committed their lives and their careers to the public service? The civil service, which many hon. Members resent, used to be a lifetime service. Its security for the individual was also security for the public, in that people did not have to worry about political pressures.

What is the cumulative effect on a full-time civil servant —in the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, for example—who sees get-rich-quick business men poised to take over the contracts for the work that he and his colleagues have been doing over the years? What is the effect on such a person of the sell-off of public assets at knock-down prices? What is the effect of his seeing his colleagues in the "next steps" agencies—one third of a million civil servants—fearful for their future employment and driven to considering buy-out, sometimes in circumstances that have given rise to considerable concern among those of us who are members of the Public Accounts Committee, as in the case of the ex-chief executive of Forward Catering, who, without notifying the Treasury that he had set up a private company, was busy organising the purchase of the operation of which he was chief executive?

What is the effect on public servants when they hear the public ethic derided, diminished and regarded as second-rate by comparison with the market ethic and the make-a-quick-buck philosophy? What is the effect on the person who entered the public service many years ago, regarding it as his career, of the news that the Government are now thinking in terms of short-term contracts?

The public servant is bound to question the basic—if I may use the word "basic" without being accused of being snobbish—public ethical standards in which he was trained and by which his activity has been guided over the years. It is therefore not surprising that the Public Accounts Committee, for the first time ever—this is the additional importance of the Committee's devastating unanimous report—recognised that the new situation has created the circumstances for sleaze or corruption or simply for the diminution of standards that we should be, and in the past have been, able to take for granted.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster mentioned the health service quangos. I should like, in passing, to make the point that they are a long way from being the virtuous organisations that he thinks they are. We have pointed out that Sir Duncan Nicholl, a retiring chief executive, is the Sylvester Stallone of Whitehall in that he has appeared before the Public Accounts Committee in so many repetitions of the same story. At the end of it all we were told that a letter of reprimand had been sent. One can imagine members of quangos shivering in their shoes when the postman arrives lest he be carrying a letter from Sir Duncan saying, "You have been a naughty boy; do not do it again."

It is a rather sad joke to find that Sir Robin Buchanan, ex-chairman of the Wessex health authority, who gave to the Secretary of State who appointed him an assurance that he would introduce penalty clauses into a contract that went wrong, told the authority's solicitor that penalty clauses were not to be included. Far from getting one of Sir Duncan's little buff envelopes, Robin Buchanan received a knighthood and was promoted and put in charge of the multi-billion-pound national health service supplies executive.

As has been said, there are institutional ways of addressing this problem. We may well have to think in terms of new sanctions, such as those that exist in the field of local government—surcharging or debarring from public office—as an extra weapon in the armoury of those who monitor these organisations.

However, I do not want to go into too much technical detail at this stage. I want, instead, to move to an aspect of the unelected state that has not been considered so far today. To my mind, this is in some ways the most serious development of the 30 years during which I have been a Member of Parliament. I refer to the unconscious, unintended politicisation of the civil service that has inevitably taken place through the erosive persistence, for 15 years, of the unchallenged "one of us" philosophy. Inevitably, as I hope to demonstrate, that has led to politicisation.

A couple of weeks ago the Public Accounts Committee heard from Sir Tim Lankester on the question of Pergau. Sir Tim's evidence was a breath of fresh air. It was almost like the last charge of the old brigade of the civil service. Here was a civil servant imbued with the old attitudes of the public service, willing to put his career on the line and to say to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary that he, as a civil servant, was not willing to make payments out

[Mr. Williams]

of the aid budget unless they gave him a written direction as he considered that that would be an abuse. I wish that more civil servants had that sort of courage.

Alas, more are like the one from whom we heard at the very next sitting, when we were dealing with the Insolvency Service. We were told that 50 per cent. of directors of private companies whom the service thinks should be disqualified in the public interest are not disqualified as there is a shortage of manpower for the purpose of processing disqualifications. The official was asked whether he had requested more manpower, and he replied that only a small number had been asked for. When he was asked why only a small number had been requested, he said that he knew that he would not get more. I asked him if he did not see that, in a way, he was making the decision for the Minister, by whom decisions about the level of manpower needed to carry out the statutory duties laid by the House of Commons on his organisation should be made. I put it to him that it was not for him to presume that the Minister would turn down his request, saying that if manpower were not provided the Minister would clearly be responsible.

The final and shattering answer was received when I asked him what calculation he had made if he did not ask for the manpower that he needed. He again said that he had not even made a calculation: it was pointless because he knew what the Minister would say. This is what I mean by politicisation: civil servants begin to think as Ministers think.

I am sorry to become anecdotal, but when I was at the Department of Industry I saw an under-secretary in the outer office to my office and I asked my private secretary what he was doing there and whether he wanted to see me. He replied that he did not want to see me, but wanted a steer on my thinking on a subject. I told my private secretary to tell him that he would not get a steer and that I did not want him to ask that question again because he was paid to give me his best advice while I, as a Minister, was paid to decide whether to accept it. Many of the problems caused by the ill-thought-out legislation that we are having to deal with in the House may have arisen because, after 15 years, civil servants are thinking as they think that their Ministers will think.

I do not claim that my approach involved great virtue —it was motivated by self-interest. As Ministers are finding out, it is far better to find out that they have got it wrong in the privacy of their office than when they are standing at the Dispatch Box or dealing with rebellions in the other place. People who understand the system and who have not been consulted are exercising their power to take action.

I am not being disparaging, but some hon. Members, especially those who have formed the new intake and have never been in opposition, may ask whether it really matters to the public if civil servants identify too closely with the policies and philosophy of their political masters—I hope that hon. Members will excuse the phrase. Of course it matters if citizens' rights suffer to any degree as a result.

We are learning the most profound lessons from the Scott inquiry. It is shattering that three of the most senior civil servants in the land could have met to conspire to withhold from the defence counsel evidence that could have proved the innocence of those on trial.

I was disgusted to read a report in *The Guardian* on 18 December. I shall not name the official featured in that report as it would be unfair to single him out—not that I have that much regard for what he did. The article states:

> "A senior Whitehall official yesterday admitted he misled the jury in the Matrix Churchill arms-for-Iraq trial on three issues crucial to the defence."

I shall not go into those names—I want to deal with why he took such action. The report continues:

> "The inquiry heard that before the committal proceedings in November 1991"—

Mr. X—

> "told his colleagues that he would 'do my very best to avoid embarrassment' to ministers and civil servants."

What about the people in the dock? Is not it appalling that officials are so committed to defending Ministers that they are willing to see innocent people go to prison?

When hon. Members talk about corruption, they tend to talk about financial corruption, but there are worse forms. Corruption of parliamentary accountability means corruption of the democratic process, and corruption of the rule of law means corruption of the rights and freedoms of citizens of this country. The work of the Public Accounts Committee and of the Scott inquiry has shown that a rot has set in throughout the system in the past 15 years, along the stepping stones of events surrounding the Cementation, Westland, Spycatcher and Iraq affairs and arms-for-aid deals. Ministers have so eroded standards that even civil servants decide not what is right and what is wrong, but what is politically convenient and what might be politically embarrassing.

7.25 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): We should all be grateful to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for letting us debate the unelected state because there is much to discuss on that subject. I hope that the debate will encourage the Government to review some of their exciting, wonderful and stimulating policies and to consider whether they have created dilemmas of democracy. As time is short, I shall mention one example of that that has arisen in Southend-on-Sea.

One of the reasons that I moved to Southend-on-Sea was that it had a splendid education system. All my children have gone to the excellent council schools there. Due to all sorts of problems in Essex, some Liberal Democrats and some Labour party members were elected to the council. Although their views are not nearly as extreme as those of the European People's party, we were worried that their election might threaten our great grammar schools.

The region that I represent is the only part of the United Kingdom where 25 per cent. of the senior schools are grammar schools; four schools take a quarter of the pupils in the region.

As you probably know, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of the election of the Liberal Democrats, we thought that something had to be done. I notice that the Whips are interested—as always—in what we have to say. For that reason, we were presented with the grant-maintained schools option, which seemed wonderful. It was explained to parents that if they went for the grant-maintained option, they would be in charge, the people would have power, and those nasty bureaucrats in Chelmsford would not be able to do anything nasty.

Although my wife and I sensibly voted no to the grant-maintained option because our daughter attended one of the schools involved, the majority voted yes and thought it was wonderful. The option won huge majorities.

Within six months, the boards of the four schools proposed an exciting plan, which they thought was wonderful, to do away with the 25 per cent. of grammar schools. They proposed to make them the schools for Castlepoint and Rochford instead of for Southend. Instead of being broadly based schools, they would become elitist schools, presumably with better results, which would be massively damaging to the able, working-class children in Southend-on-Sea.

Parents went to meetings a week last Monday. My wife attended one of them and she said that the vote appeared to be 99·6 per cent. against. Everyone was against except one poor lady from Rochford who said that she wanted her daughter to go to the school. After the meeting and comparable meetings at other schools, it was explained that parents were entitled only to consultation. Even though the parents voted 99·6 per cent. against, it did not mean that the proposal would not go ahead.

The boards are going ahead with their proposal and are presenting their plan to the Secretary of State for Education, who will decide. Although the decision has not yet been reached, that is one simple example of why we should be careful before surrendering democratic control. I am sure that hon. Members will know of many other cases where people have been misled and conned into thinking that they are in control when they are not at all; all they have is the right to be consulted. Consultation, in many cases, gives them no real power.

Due to my age, I rarely feel angry enough to want to punch people, but having heard some of the arguments today, I have come near to it. I want to describe my experience in Southend during the past week.

Some people have been talking about fighting for democracy and fighting to save people's powers. However, they are the same twits who voted to pass over most of the power which was controlled by Parliament when I was first elected 30 years ago, at the same time as the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). I shall give the House some examples of how that affects people. I hope that my hon. Friends will listen as it is a great advertisement for Maastricht.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure of visiting a Southend firm called PMS which imports toys from a place called China, which is a big country besides Japan. It has done that for 21 years. It employs 200 people in Southend-on-Sea. Many of them are my friends. They send their kids to the same schools and do their shopping at the same place as I do. Last year, the firm made a huge profit of well over £1 million. It helped the Government by exporting £10 million worth of goods. Things were going splendidly and last year it made a big expansion. It was one of the few firms in Southend doing well and providing good jobs. So what happened?

Last Friday, when I went to see the firm, the directors, the staff and the workers were shellshocked. They had received news from London that they had to reduce their business by 50 per cent. because the EC, with the help of all the Employment Ministers who work for democracy and freedom, had passed a resolution that all firms importing Chinese toys would have to reduce their imports to 79 per cent. of the 1992 figures.

The motion refers to the unelected state. As the firm expanded last year, it has to cut its business to 50 per cent. Basically, the firm now has no future. I phoned up our friends in the Foreign Office and said, "What has happened?" They said, "We are terribly sorry. We voted against it, but it still went through. You cannot count on 50 per cent. because of the GATT rule."

The decision will be taken not by the Government but by the Commission that was elected by nobody. It is part of the unelected state. What do I say to them? I can do nothing at all. What can Parliament do? Even if the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Liberal Democrats, the Welsh nationalists and everybody else votes against it, it still continues.

The firm was dealt with wholly unjustly, but there is nothing it can do. The unelected state has taken over and the people's rights have disappeared.

If something is wrong, foolish, lunatic, negative or does no good to anyone at all, we in Parliament should be able to do something about it. However, because of the treaties we have passed we can do nothing. That firm and those workers, who have worked hard to build up a super organisation, have to wait for what the Commissioner tells them. The unelected state has taken over.

The day before, I had the pleasure of visiting a firm called MK Electric in Souhtend-on-Sea, another group that employs many people and is doing well. The staff there told me that they were paralysed with fear about the Euro plug. Ministers had said that the idea was bogus and concerned only an industrial organisation that had nothing to do with the EC. I found out that that was a load of codswallop. Basically, CENELEC—the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standarisation—produced a report of which I have a copy. It says that a move towards a Euro plug would be dangerous, costly nonsense. It passed that decision to the Commission, but the Commission said, "We are going to have it. If you do not do it, and we shall give you funds for it, we shall do it ourselves."

As that is true, MK Electric will have to change all its equipment when the French have it already and every householder in Britain will have to spend an extra £1,000 on plugs, sockets and wiring systems. It will also be dangerous, because the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents has told us that, unfortunately, because the Euro plug does not have a fuse, more houses will be set on fire.

What can we do about it? A nice Minister for Industry wrote to me last week saying that the measure will go through under article 103A, which means a majority vote. The Brits and the Germans are against and it seems that the balance is held by the Belgians.

What can we do about it? What about the firm in my constituency? It is a great employer; they are great people doing great work. What can I say? What can the Minister of Employment do? Nothing at all. We have to wait and see. Democracy is largely dead.

Southend-on-Sea has 14·5 per cent. unemployment. All kinds of reasons have been given for that—perhaps it is their rotten Member of Parliament. The Government kindly said that they wanted to make Southend an assisted area. I am not quite sure what that is and I am sure that it is a bad thing in principle, but they said that they would give us money. I said, "Isn't that nice?" I do not like subsidies, but if they are going round, we should try to get some. They then said, "We are sorry, it is just a formality,

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

but we have to send the application through to Brussels, to a Mr. van Miert." I do not know who he is. I sent him a Christmas card, but I did not get a reply.

Unfortunately, before he looked at the list of 24 per cent. of the working population of Britain he decided to cut off 2 per cent., so instead of 24 per cent. it was 22 per cent. and, sadly, Southend-on-Sea was in the other 2 per cent.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): And Gravesham.

Sir Teddy Taylor: He did not say, "Which are the nice places?" He simply decided to cut off 2 per cent. and when I contested the decision, I was told that I should not complain because they cut the Germans by 3 per cent.

Mr. Arnold: It was not Mr. van Miert; it was Bruce Millan who used to sit on the Opposition Benches. He jolly well should have known better.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is absolutely wrong. I was talking about assisted area status. Mr. Millan dealt with the second problem. My hon. Friend is so anxious to fight for his constituency that he forgets that Mr. van Miert dealt with the assisted area application. The next application was for European funding and that went to Mr. Millan who refused Southend because he wanted to give more to Greater London.

What has happened to our elected democracy? There is no Commitee to go to, no Parliament and no Ministers. I cannot write or appeal to anyone because basically, one bloke decides. It is terrible. When blokes decide we get the same things—the fiddles, the frauds and the rest.

I went through my mail this morning. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, probably have done more than anyone to fight for the rights of animals. We all know that Madam Deputy Speaker is a great lady—she has a heart. I received five letters this morning from people saying, "I saw the television programme. What are you going to do about this horrible export of animals?" I have to say that we can do nothing. It is a horrible thing; the most filthy cruel thing in the world. Animals are treated disgracefully, but there is nothing we can do. Even if the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and all Members of Parliament want to do something, we cannot unless we go to the Commission and ask for a Euro law to enable member states to ban live exports. We are kidding ourselves.

At Question Time we say that we want inquiries and reviews, but we are kidding ourselves. Democracy has largely died. I would not mind if the decisions had gone somewhere else democratic, but they have gone to people, councils and boards totally outside our control.

Having been in the House for 30 years, I know that there is nothing worse than a person with power who is not answerable to the people. The strength of democracy is the right to get people out, to get rid of rotten Governments, rotten Oppositions and rotten Members of Parliament and to say that we are fed up to the teeth, but in the next election people will have great difficulty in deciding on what to vote for.

I am glad Labour has raised the issue. I hope that people will think about it and stop kidding themselves. If they have any doubts at all, those who voted for the treaties should go to PMS on Arterial road, Southend and tell the firm what to do now because I do not know what to say. It is a great tragedy. The firm has worked wonderfully; the staff have produced jobs and profits. Now they are being kicked in the teeth by a stupid nonsense and tragically there is nothing we can do.

7.38 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I shall echo some of what the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said. We all agree with the principle that when Government go wrong, the electorate can turn them out of office. That is one of the fundamental reasons why we are debating the unelected state this evening. It is an important debate as it goes to the heart of how we govern the country.

The existence of the unelected state challenges Britain's claim that it is a parliamentary democracy. I hope that, if nothing else, the debate will allow the Government to reflect on that issue and that it will bring the Government back to a more accountable position; the Labour party will then have achieved something. I am not optimistic that that will happen, because the 15 years of Conservative Government are characterised by three things. First, the Tory party philosophy and the Government's policy is the feverish accumulation of wealth in private hands. Secondly, there is the accumulation of power at the centre. The Government do not like anyone else to have the power; they want it all for themselves. I will develop that point later on. Thirdly, they impose their way of thinking on every walk of life in this country. We now see the arrogant use of power. The main purpose of the Tory Government is to govern, to bring about a situation where they stay in government. They want to preserve their hegemony and use every instrument of Government to achieve it.

The overwhelming theme of Tory rule has been power without accountability. That brings me to a point made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who is not in his place at the moment. He said that one could not divide power and accountability. That is what the Government have tried to do in a whole range of things. The hon. Member for Southend, East talked about the democratic principle, where power is exercised. If the communities that local authorities serve do not like what is being done in their name, they have the power at elections to change that. That is a fundamental criticism of power without accountability. It is a corrupting influence on the processes and institutions of Government and that is why the Government have gone about trying to demolish some of our democratic institutions. With the money that they have spent on quangos and the unelected state, they have created a monster. That is the hallmark of the Government.

Where the Government meet resistance to their way of thinking, they attempt to impose their way of life on the country by doing one of two things. They either abolish it or circumvent it. That is positive proof that there is an undemocratic element in Government. We have only to look at the abolition of the Greater London council. It had the nerve to oppose the Government on a number of issues. The Government could not beat it at the ballot box, so they abolished it. They ran into the same argument with the metropolitan counties, which voted Labour after they were initially controlled by the Tory party. It was obvious to the Government that they would not win them back, so they abolished them.

In other areas the Government will circumvent the provisions of local democracy through the creation of quangos and a range of agencies. We have seen the incorporation of governing bodies, sixth form colleges and colleges of higher education. The Government have taken them out of accountability to their local education authorities. That is one way in which they circumvent the resistance that they meet in the nation. As a result, much of our public service is funded by public money, but is provided by unaccountable agencies, quangos and, in some cases, privatised companies. The debate is about accountability. To whom are those organisations accountable? That is an interesting question and I hope that the Minister will respond.

We can look at all areas of public service. On education, the Funding Agency for Schools takes away democratic responsibilities from locally elected education authorities. I have already mentioned incorporated colleges. What about the role of the Centre for Grant-maintained Schools? According to a confidential report to the Public Accounts Committee—it has not been published—the centre was on the verge of using public money to fund an organisation that is involved in political activity. The report makes great criticisms of what happened. The PAC was able to say publicly that, part way through the accounting year 1992, it could not say that the money given to the Centre for Grant-maintained Schools was being used for the purposes for which it was voted.

The Minister mentioned how much money was being spent on the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation is accountable to Government. It funds housing associations, which are accountable to the Housing Corporation. Those housing associations are not accountable to the communities where they provide houses. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster then said that the Government have put much more money into that organisation. That may have been true, because in 1992-93, £3·4 billion was made available for the Housing Corporation to dispose on public housing. In the next three years, only £5·4 billion will be provided to the Housing Corporation. That is £1·8 billion per annum, which represents a cut of £1·6 billion. He held that up as a good example of why such an approach for the agencies is a good thing.

We can also talk about social services, care in the community and the Benefits Agency. No hon. Member in the House this evening was not horrified at the incompetence of the Benefits Agency in dealing with the complaints of people who applied for the disability living allowance.

There are environmental problems with the National Rivers Authority. It is another organisation that is not accountable to the communities that it serves, but is partially accountable to the Minister who provides it with money. Given the high level of unemployment, the huge level of youth unemployment and the need for proper skills in our community, training is an important issue. It is now provided by training and enterprise councils. I shall deal with their make-up in detail.

The Minister told the House that there has been some improvement in the management of the health service. We shall have to wait and see, but the report that was produced by the King's Fund puts a question mark over the so-called Government reforms. I shall make a constituency point, because it relates to appointments to public bodies. When the Secretary of State for Health announced that the Government were to merge the Merseyside regional health authority and the North West regional health authority, I wrote to her in December and asked how the appointment to the chair of that authority would be made, because I would have liked to have made some of my views known.

I received a letter in the middle of January saying that the Secretary of State was about to make the appointment and would be interested to receive my views. Three days later, it was announced that Sir Donald Wilson, chair of the Mersey regional health authority, had been appointed to the post of chair of the newly created North West regional health authority. I was given three days to let the Secretary of State know, but it was quite obvious that she had made up her mind before then. It is no coincidence that Sir Donald Wilson is a well-known Tory in the city of Chester. He may do a good job, but we were not given the opportunity to suggest any other names.

That brings me to the point about public service. It is no longer accountable to the communities. It is characterised by membership. Membership of most of those bodies is largely determined by the Government. As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and other hon. Members, statistically that can be shown to be down to political patronage. Tory placemen and women are staffing quangos, agencies and other organisations that deliver public services. That is bad, but there is another layer on top that makes it even worse. In some organisations, such as the training and enterprise councils, and other independent organisations, the governors are not appointed by Government; they are self-perpetuating. They appoint their own members to their own boards. There is not even the accountability of the Government being able to tell the Warrington Collegiate Institute, "We think that you are doing a pretty bad job. We should replace some of your governing bodies." They do not have that power. Nor do they have the power to do that in relation to the TECs.

The Warrington Collegiate Institute is the new name for what used to be called the North Cheshire college. On incorporation, the North Cheshire college governors kicked its staff and student representatives off the governing body, on which they had been represented since it was Padgate college of education and then Padgate college of higher education. That was a retrograde step.

The institute has run into great problems. Not only has it had to sack one principal—to be absolutely accurate, one principal left under a cloud—but that principal's replacement left under a cloud shortly afterwards. There was uproar in the town about the way in which the college was being managed; the community of Warrington demanded action from the institute's governing body. A staff representative and a student representative have now been appointed to that body again—but only because the community of Warrington did not accept the way in which the Government had removed accountability and demanded at least some community involvement in the governing body.

The real problem with self-perpetuating governing bodies is that they can create a climate of nepotism. There is great fear about that climate of corruption. The Public Accounts Committee report published on 17 January raises a question mark over glaring examples of fraud, corruption, incompetence and sleaze. The report—with which the Government have dealt only in part, in a very offhand way—catalogues a catastrophic number of examples of waste and improper spending.

The opening paragraph of the report—entitled "The Proper Conduct of Public Business"—states:

[Mr. Mike Hall]

"In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years."

That is powerful criticism. It is not surprising that the PAC is able to make such criticism, given what is said about the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on page viii of the report:

"The Department's accounting arrangements were open to strong criticism, and inadequate controls created a climate which was conducive to fraud and theft, and may have heightened the risk of irregularities remaining undetected."

That is what the Public Accounts Committee said, passing judgment on the spending of public money. The Government must look at the matter again: it is not sufficient for the Prime Minister to respond in the way that he has.

According to written answers in *Hansard*, in the current year the training and enterprise councils will receive £1·8 billion of taxpayers' money from the Government. The PAC reported that, between 1989 and 1991, the Government had incorrectly paid the TECs £79·5 million. The Department of Transport, however, was not happy merely to provide them with £79·5 million to which they were not entitled; between 1990 and 1993, it also provided them with £48 million worth of computers, which did not work at all, for the information technology field system.

Mr. Riddick: I assume that the hon. Gentleman means the Department of Employment, rather than the Department of Transport.

Mr. Hall: I was expecting a much more interesting intervention from the hon. Gentleman, in view of his earlier performance. However, he is absolutely right. It was the Department of Employment.

Mr. Fabricant: Say thank you, then.

Mr. Hall: If the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) wants to intervene as well, I shall willingly give way to him, given the quality of his earlier intervention. I note that he remains seated. If he wants to interrupt from a sedentary position, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you will deal with him in your usual manner. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Gentleman was trying to be helpful.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I allow a few seated interventions—with reluctance —but I certainly will not allow general conversation across the Chamber.

Mr. Hall: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yesterday, the PAC heard evidence from the Welsh Office about the way in which it was dealing with TECs in Wales. There are only seven, but they have received over £130 million. In 1992-93, they were overpaid by £5·96 million for services—that is, the Welsh Office said to the TECs, "You provide training, and we will pay you the money."

Only about £200,000 has been recovered. The Welsh Office had to write to the TECs, demanding that they improve the organisation of their finances, for which they called on the public purse. The senior accounting officer in the Welsh Office wrote three strong letters, all of which were ignored. He then contacted the TECs, saying, "If you do not fall into line, I will fine you." In the end, a wonderful fine of between £600 and £1,000 was meted out.

Even that did not work, however. The Welsh Office then had to say that, unless the three main culprits got their act together, they would be breached—in other words, those seeking training in Wales would have to go to a different organisation. That is just one example of the way in which TECs—which are not even a non-departmental public body—resist accountability to the Welsh Office, which is said to be the route of accountability to Parliament.

Mr. Hanson: While my hon. Friend is on the subject of TECs in Wales, he may be interested to know that 34 of the people who sit on their boards also sit on other Welsh quangos. It is part of the general multiplicity of quango appointments. What is true of TECs is also true of other non-departmental public bodies in Wales.

Mr. Hall: My hon. Friend has made a valid point about the membership of the TECs. They have become self-fulfilling bodies—accountable to whom? They resist accountability to Government and they do not seem to be very accountable to those on the training schemes. Where is the accountability, in a large area of public provision? They have also resisted the appointment of elected representatives to their boards—and by "elected representatives" I mean local councillors. That is a good example of why the unelected state is failing to meet public needs.

The PAC report makes a number of further points. I shall not go into the details, as most have already been referred to. The report gives 26 examples of failure to meet proper standards of probity in Government. Wessex regional health authority wasted £20 million on introducing the regional information system, which has already been mentioned. What has not been mentioned is the National Rivers Authority—a body which, along with its chairman, is appointed by the Government. The NRA mismanaged its headquarters relocation project, which, according to the PAC, was characterised by inadequate and poorly controlled tendering and contract arrangements, with the attendant risks of fraud, corruption and failure to gain value for money. A total of £1 million of public money was wasted.

In 1992-93, the NRA received £113·6 million from the Government; from the people whom it serves, it has collected £348 million in receipts. The Property Services Agency has cost the taxpayer £65·6 million and could not collect the money that it was owed from its customers. We have already heard about the Welsh Development Agency, which has received a Government grant of some £171 million. Its international director spent nine weeks in work and received £228,000 in payment. That is clearly not the right way in which to do business, or to inspire hope that there is some accountability in the system.

The director of regionally managed services of West Midlands regional health authority was made redundant. As has been said, he should have been sacked, and not paid a £81,837 lump sum and £6,462 in redundancy money. The health authority wasted £10 million that should have been spent on health care. Wessex regional health authority, working with Wessex Integrated Systems Ltd., cost the taxpayer between £500,000 and £1 million by introducing an over-priced computer system.

The PAC also refers to the Telford and Warrington development corporations. They made their staff redundant and paid them £6·6 million; the staff were then taken on as private companies in the same offices, doing the same jobs for the development corporations. There is a catalogue of abuse of public funds.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition raised that question with the Prime Minister at Question Time on 27 January, the Prime Minister said that he welcomed

"the report issued by the PAC today"—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 414.]

because it provided a useful checklist. He went on to say that it supported the Government's "drive for efficiency." If that is how the Prime Minister receives that highly critical report, which demonstrates 26 ways in which the use of public funds and the proper conduct of public business have sunk to a low point after 140 years, it begs the question, will the Government take the Public Accounts Committee report seriously?

This is an important debate because we need to reverse the trends away from quangos and agencies to accountable government. We must return to local government the powers and finances that they need to deliver the services for which they have been responsible before and for which they should be made responsible again.

Most importantly, there should be a balance in the appointments to public organisations. When I first became involved in local politics in Warrington, Jim Mason was the chairman of Warrington development corporation. Jim Mason was clearly a Labour party activist; there is no doubt about that. His connections with the Labour party are renowned. The deputy chairman was Councillor John Walsh, the leader of Warrington borough council, which was a Conservative-controlled council at that time. Peter Shore insisted on having political balance in Warrington development corporation and that is a lesson that the Government should learn.

Perhaps one way to deal with the problem would be to ensure that all public appointments made by Government are scrutinised by a Select Committee which makes the decisions or recommendations to Government. That would ensure that decisions were transparent and above board and that we restored accountability.

In 1944, Reinhold Neibuhr wrote a book called "The Children of Light and Children of Darkness." At the time it was obvious that the war was coming to an end and that we were going to defeat the fascist Nazis in Germany. He tried to write a thesis on preparing the new western world for democracy. He said:

"Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

That is true today.

8.1 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am grateful to the Opposition for allowing us the opportunity to have this important debate. The motion is interesting. It

"condemns . . . the use of contractors to provide public services; notes that these organisations are not publicly accountable to elected representatives; is concerned that their proliferation has been accompanied by a loss in the quality of public services, by increased fraud and waste, and by falling standards in public life".

Those are serious accusations and we had many insinuations of corruption from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who opened the debate for the Opposition, but where is the evidence? We should consider that accusation in the context of some cases, and those cases should be brought forward and analysed against each accusation made in the motion.

My attention was brought to one such case by the 13 January 1994 edition of the Radio 4 programme "Face the Facts". That programme referred to a contract that the Labour-controled Tameside borough council near Manchester made with Tameside Enterprises Limited to privatise its old people's homes. The Labour motion before us condemns the use of contractors to provide public services, but that is a Labour-controlled council which has done exactly that.

What is Tameside Enterprises Limited, or TEL for short? Let us look at its shareholders. First, the Labour-controlled Tameside metropolitan borough council; secondly, Ashton-upon-Lyne constituency Labour party—very interesting, that one—thirdly, the Thameside community care trust, the majority shareholder. That sounds better, but who are the trustees of that trust? They include two Labour Members of Parliament and a Labour Member of the European Parliament. I should like to know who are the other trustees. Do they also have political views in common?

The set-up was best described by a member of staff speaking on the radio programme:

"Well, to be quite honest, I . . . I thought I was working for the Labour Party, basically. The directors always seemed to be somebody from the Labour Party. There seemed to be jobs created for . . . it was always somebody's wife or somebody's daughter or an ex councillor who lost his seat. And it just seemed that anybody you met was either involved in the Labour Party or a relation of somebody."

Who did run TEL? The answer was given by the programme presenter, John Waite. He said:

"At the top of the heap, as the fifty five thousand pounds a year company secretary and sole executive director, was Mr. Paul Stonier, a former Labour Parliamentary candidate whose wife was chair of the"

Labour-controlled

"borough's Social Services committee. His number two was local Labour councillor, Simon Walker. Neither man had any significant business experience. Both had a wealth of party connections. Too many, according to"

a Labour

"Councillor Craig Brodie."

Then, on the programme, Councillor Brodie was quoted as follows:

"Paul Stonier was a former director of Policy Services at Tameside Council and had no financial qualifications at all."

Let us remember that we are speaking about the chief executive of quite a major company. He continued:

"Councillor Simon Walker was appointed from a short list of one. There was the chairman of the company and he was also the chairman of the Strategy committee of Tameside Council. One councillor's wife . . . and daughter received jobs in TEL. Basically, it was a family affair."

Let us remember that those are the words of Labour Councillor Brodie.

Mr. Waite went on to state:

"Links between the council and the company were further strengthened by the appointment of council leader, Roy Oldham, as the director of a subsidiary of TEL set up to oversee property projects."

Let us return to another accusation in the Opposition motion, about

"increased fraud and waste, and . . . falling standards in public life".

Let us judge that case on those criteria. The House will remember that the executive director was appointed on a

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

salary of £55,000. Within two years he was on £80,000 a year and a flash sports car, but that was not enough. John Waite, in the programme, told listeners:

> "Mr. Stonier and his number two, Councillor Walker, had awarded themselves unauthorised pay rises of a thousand pounds a month, twelve thousand pounds a year each, after TEL had won a contract to manage homes for"

—wait for it—Labour-controlled

> "Stockport Council. Both men had also used the company credit card to finance personal spending, for which they later repaid the company. In particular, Mr. Walker put the plastic to work buying a holiday abroad just a week after the cuts package"

—which I shall mention later—

> "was introduced in the borough's old people's homes. Mr. Stonier had also arranged an unauthorised loan from the company of sixteen thousand pounds, a loan made jointly to himself and his wife, Shirley, then chair of Tameside's Labour-controlled social services committee."

What about a waste of money? Let us consider some of the orders contracted. John Waite said:

> "In fact, in just two years, almost half a million pounds went on carpet contracts alone, contracts awarded without tender to a former bankrupt who'd fitted carpets in executive director Paul Stonier's home. The tendering process was also ignored in awarding the contract to run TEL's payroll, with the job going to a firm run by one of Mr. Stonier's Labour party colleagues."

How could all that arise? Company law defines the responsibilities of company directors. Where were they, the directors appointed by and representing the shareholders—let us remember, Ashton-under-Lyne Labour party, the Labour-controlled council, or the Labour trustees of the so-called Community care trust? They either did not demand information or exercise control or they failed to assess it.

It seems that that scandal was not confined to the instances that I have outlined; it extended to the overall finances. Bills were not paid, debts were run up to the tune of £2 million, control was non-existent and—worst of all—the welfare of elderly residents was put in jeopardy. When the finances were in a shambles of a scale that even the Labour party could not fail to see, the Labour leaders of the council met.

The meeting consisted of Councillor Oldham—the leader of the council—the deputy leader, the director of finance and Councillor Middleton, chair of the council's debt recovery committee. Councillor Middleton said on the programme:

> "All the three *faces* were ashen. As though they were waiting for an execution, that sort of thing. And it was the leader himself who said, 'Things are definitely not right with . . . with Tameside Enterprises, Jim, but the last thing we want is any panic, you know, and eventually it'll work itself out and TEL will . . . will ride out the storm' sort of thing".

Presumably, that is the way in which the Labour party operates, but rumours abounded, and, finally, in May last year, seven Labour councillors from the party's Ashton branch broke ranks to call for a public inquiry and the immediate dismissal of TEL's top management. The response from leader Roy Oldham and the controlling group of Labour-controlled Tameside council was swift and firm—the seven councillors were suspended. That is presumably the way in which the Labour party deals with the accountability to elected representatives for which its motion calls. Perhaps today's debate should be called "The Elected Sacked State".

How did the Labour group in Tameside ride out the storm? First, the board tore up the guaranteed pay and conditions package for the staff which had been negotiated with the National Union of Public Employees. Then, the executive director was sent around the old people's homes in his sleek sports car, sorting out the severe cuts that had been called for. "In a flash sports car around the homes" —does not that have echoes of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) describing Labour-controlled Liverpool city council?

The key Labour party grandees began to resign from all the boards and committees of the company. Labour Councillor Rolland said:

> "All the key players seemed to be jumping ship because the first determined inquiry was now underway into that company. We really started to wonder whether things weren't far, far worse than we ever feared."

Mr. Hall: The hon. Gentleman referred to a public inquiry. Who instigated it?

Mr. Arnold: A public inquiry is now under way and many other inquiries jolly well should be under way. If a public inquiry was instigated, it was thanks to the BBC, which is, incidentally, a quango, not to the Labour party.

How did the matter end? I call on the Opposition's spokesman who winds up the debate to tell the House what the Labour party headquarters in Walworth road is doing about it. We should like to hear what inquiry the Labour party has established. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether the district auditor is on to this, what steps are being taken to bring the directors of TEL to book, what the charity commissioners are doing about the trustees—two of whom are Members of Parliament—and whether the fraud squad is looking into the shambles.

Reading the motion leads one to think that people in glasshouses should not throw stones. Instead of tabling what can best be described as a sanctimonious boomerang of a motion, Labour should put its own house in order and clean out its Augean stable.

8.14 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) should understand at least one thing—the series of incidents that he described bore no resemblance to those that I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) went through in Liverpool. I urge the hon. Gentleman to examine the historical record, which shows that the Labour party put its house in order. Such smears go nowhere.

Mr. Arnold *rose*—

Mr. Kilfoyle: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has made his speech.

I was beguiled by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster as he meandered in an entranced, Wee Willy Winkle fashion through the motion and the amendment without dealing with the basic difference between the two parties, which is whether or not we believe that there has been a regression to the non-elected state, whether public standards have been eroded or whether, as the Government contend, they have been upheld. I argue that it is certainly not the latter.

I was also quite taken by the comments by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) who left us spellbound, if nothing else, by his failure to explain exactly what he meant by accountability. He did not speak very succinctly and he certainly did not convince me. More important, he said several times that we were making all sorts of strange assumptions. He also said that he had not had any difficulty in obtaining information. It is a shame that he is not here to hear about my odyssey about trying to obtain information which he apparently obtained with great ease and facility. I believe that the availability of information is vital for accountability but it has not materialised, or certainly not without a great deal of effort.

Every year the Cabinet Office produces a publication called "Public Bodies" which, allegedly, tells us all that we need to know about quangos. The 1993 edition summarises the number of staff employed by each body, its total expenditure, the number of people serving on it and what they receive per meeting or per annum. It even tells us how many men and women there are on each quango. Sadly, it does not answer the crucial questions. It does not tell us who the people are or why they are there.

Incidentally, the publication deals with the recognised bodies that we know as quangos. I digress a little to mention a body that I thought was a quango, the Charity Commission. A number of charity commissioners are listed at the beginning of the publication, but I wondered why the body did not appear in "Public Bodies". I rang the Home Office under whose aegis it apparently operates only to be told that it was not considered a quango because when the people were appointed they became public servants, ergo, it was no longer a quango. I wonder where there is a list of those to whom the people who receive up to £44,000 a year as charity commissioners are accountable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) tabled a series of questions in 1993 asking various Departments to list the names, occupations and current employers of people who held positions in each public body. In most cases he was referred back to "Public Bodies" or told that the biographical information on appointees was not held centrally in the form requested. My view of that is simply—if not, why not? If something is published purporting to give public information, it is surely not too much to expect these bodies, most of which have full-time staff, to provide a list of their members' names.

I may now fall out with some of my Welsh colleagues because, oddly enough, there is one notable exception, although it is far from sufficient. There is a list of appointments made to public bodies by the Secretary of State for Wales. It details all public bodies in Wales and lists their appointees by name, residence and occupation, when the appointment commenced, when it will expire and the appointees' remuneration and time commitment. It does not, of course, tell us the criteria according to which people were appointed. Nevertheless, some effort has been made to provide information. I have a simple question: if the Welsh Office can do it, why cannot all the others?

Since the beginning of the year I have tabled more than 700 parliamentary questions to try to find out who sits on every one of the quangos. As we know, the first difficulty is getting the questions in bulk through the Table Office. It has its job to do but, nevertheless, if one wants up-to-date information, one needs to get the questions through as quickly as possible. I pay tribute to the patience of the Clerks in the Table Office who assisted me in tabling up to 80 questions a day. Nevertheless, I tabled more than 700 questions to find out who was on the quangos. Some Departments had already published lists of their members but as these are not held centrally it was almost impossible to know whether that was the case. It was difficult enough for a Member of Parliament, with access to the parliamentary on-line information service in the House of Commons Library, to find that information. It would be virtually impossible for a member of the public to gain access to it.

It is not only confusing to the public or to mere Members of Parliament, but many civil servants have not got a clue what is going on either. After I tabled the questions on quangos to the Home Office, I received a telephone call from an official and I was asked what I meant by the advisory committee on service candidates. Being the honest Member of Parliament that I am, I said that, frankly, I did not know, that it was something listed in the review of public bodies and that his guess was as good as mine. I also told him that it was an advisory body that did not publish an annual report, that it consisted of a male chairman, one male deputy chairman and five male and five female members. Other than that, I was up a cul-de-sac, so I suggested that he rang the Home Office. I was told that I was speaking to someone from the Home Office and that he did not know of the body. At least, I gave him credit for trying to answer the questions.

In dealing with some Departments, I have not only gone into a cul-de-sac, but run into a brick wall. For example, the Lord Chancellor's Department answered all 27 questions by saying:

> "The information requested is not readily available; I will reply as soon as possible."

To my knowledge, in some cases, that information is not only readily available, but if one can search it out it can be found in the bowels of the Library. It certainly should be there.

To take one positive example, I shall cite the Law Commission, which, there is no doubt, is a quango. I was told that the information on that quango was not readily available, yet its chairman's annual salary is £90,148 a year—easily lost in the Department—and there are three male members and one female member who receive £64,307 each a year. I was told that the Lord Chancellor's Department did not have the names of those five people who are receiving substantial sums of money. First, the Department should have such names readily available and, secondly, that information is available if someone could be bothered to look for it. If the Department looked in "Public Bodies", it would see, as I could, that the Law Commission publishes an annual report, which is placed before the House of Commons, and on page 2 it names the law commissioners. According to that Department, that information is not readily available.

To give another example, I tabled questions to the Ministry of Defence on 21 January and, to date, I have had no answers whatever to 23 questions on quangos. I have a list of those questions. Over a month later, the Secretary of State for Defence has been unable to tell me who are the members currently appointed to the review board for Government contracts. I would have thought that that was a powerful body which dealt with all the contracts going through the Ministry of Defence.

I could not be told the identity of the members who are currently appointed to the nuclear weapons safety committee. I would have thought that that was a key job and that the names would be readily available to any Secretary of State.

On the subject of our economic situation, I asked the Secretary of State for Defence who are the members currently appointed to the oil and pipelines agency. He said that he would answer shortly that and every other question. Four weeks later, I am no closer to getting the right answer.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I was tempted to reprimand my hon. Friend in my intervention for being naive, but I am sure that, knowing him, he would never be accused of that particular vice. Is not it the fact that none of us should be surprised about what he is saying because secrecy goes hand in hand with corruption? As soon as one starts making public appointments, which are made not on the basis of merit, but on whether that person is a member, a supporter or a financial donor to a political party, corruption and secrecy stalk the land.

Mr. Kilfoyle: It certainly gives rise to the suspicion that people have something to hide when the information is not readily available, it is not detailed and it is not accessible to the general public. For example, I was not suprised, on considering the overseas project board and the members of that quango, when I saw the interested parties in the Malaysian dam scheme and that that board had a part to play in advising the Government on that type of project. I am somewhat naive and I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me. I did not stop to think that many of those board members would have provided huge amounts of money to the Conservative party.

Having said that, I commend the few Departments which are ready to provide the information. With difficulty, I have been able to amass a huge file, which contains a massive number of sheets of paper on which there are lists of names. Some of the Departments realise that if they are not careful and if they give too much information, one may be able to trace a little more about the membership of some of the quangos.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Gentleman praised the Welsh Office earlier for publishing the names of people on quangos in Wales. Does he concede that if there were a general publication policy, it would answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)? I note from the publication that the Welsh Office council has a person named Councillor Jane Davidson as a member, who is also recorded in the index of the House of Commons as research officer for the Labour Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Mr. Kilfoyle: The hon. Gentleman put two questions. I shall answer the first one simply. Yes, I gave credit where it was due, although I included the caveat that it would be nice to know the basis on which members are appointed. I do not have any problem with open government or try to divest the secrecy which surrounds many of those bodies. We are at one on that. May I continue to give an example where obfuscation rather than illumination is the order of day in the quangos?

We came across a series of quango committees, some of which I have great difficulty in pronouncing. There are committees on toxicity, on mutagenicity, and on carcinogenicity. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear Hear."] They are important committees because they deal with additives, chemicals in foods, consumer products and the environment. The preamble to their report, which was not given to me, of course, listed the professors involved. I thought that they would be eminent people involved in those three quangos and that it was good to know that one was in safe hands. The preamble said:

> "Committee members are appointed as independent scientific and medical experts on the basis of their special skills and knowledge."

I felt more comforted by that, until I was most surprised to find that there were registered interests for each of the committee members. It was not something of which I was readily apprised. Quite by accident, I found the register which listed all those eminent professors and noted the kinds of consultancies which they held. Bear in mind that they are considering toxicity, mutagenicity and carcinogenicity, about chemicals in food, in consumer products and the environment.

Some of their members have no commercial interests whatever to declare. However, on the toxicity committee, nine of its members declared a consultancy interest in some 30 companies. Two of the members were shareholders, two were employees and one received an occasional fee from companies in which he or she had a commercial interest. On top of that, they honestly declared that they had all sorts of research contracts with the companies. If we consider them, it is a roll call of honour. It is all about conflict of interest, about having open government and about ensuring that the people who make the decisions are seen for what they are and for what their interests may or may not be. That not is to suggest any impropriety on their part, far be it from me to do that. However, I want to highlight where there is a potential conflict of interest with those companies.

The companies include the Wellcome Foundation, ML Laboratories, Ortho Ltd., Pfizer Ltd., SmithKline Beecham, Sterling Winthrop Ltd., Syntex Ltd., Wyeth Ltd., Zeneca, Roche Holdings, Ciba-Geigy, Nestlé, Sandoz, Rhone-Poulenc Rorer, TAP Pharmaceuticals; and the list goes on. Every chemical and drug company in Europe and North America has an interest in those people in the form of a consultancy or in some other form. Those very people are advising on the kind of pollution over which those companies are often found wanting. I believe that that information should be readily available in the public domain.

Mr. Hanson: I am pleased to hear from my hon. Friend that there is a register of interests. The Secretary of State for Wales, whom he rightly praised for producing a report on the membership of quangos, has just refused, in answer to a parliamentary question from me, to establish registers of interests for all quangos in Wales. So we do not know the interests of the people on those bodies, and we still do not have the accountability that we should seek.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am not surprised by anything that emerges in connection with quangos. Just now I heard some sedentary comments from Conservative Members to the effect that I am a stupid man. I am perfectly happy to accept that if they mean that I, like most of the public out there, was in blissful ignorance, because the information is not readily available or accessible. I cannot go to any central collation of that information and seen who is making the decisions and what those people's interests are. If that is stupidity, I, like the bulk of the population, must plead 110 per cent. guilty.

Something positive had to come out of the process, but not much. I examined the details about other quangos. Hon. Members should bear in mind that the information is not available on a database, so it is a manual exercise to go through the papers about the quangos and find out who belongs where. One of the professors—it may be unfair to name him, because he is one of many—is on the committee on pesticides, the committee on toxicity, the committee on carcinogenicity and the medicines commission. All those are fee-paying posts, from which he gets up to £160 per meeting. He also has his professorship, and his consultancies with ML Laboratories, Ortho Ltd., Pfizer Ltd., SmithKline Beecham, Sterling-Winthrop, Syntex and Wyeth, his research fellowship with another company, and a pension from yet another chemical company. I have to say that whoever pays the piper calls the tune when that man gives his professional opinion on such matters.

When we look further into the quangos we come across other names that are repeated time and time again. The dread Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, has already been mentioned. The one thing on which I can agree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is probably our mutual loathing for the gentleman in question. *[Interruption.]* I should not like to be thought to mince my words in any shape or form.

The gentleman in question forced through the trusts in the Mersey region as a vanguard of the NHS reforms. He used no local people, and there was no sense of accountability. He imported people en masse from the Tory shires; they moved across and made the decisions. They stopped hon. Members from having access to any information about their decisions, or to most of the information about their accounts. We were misled and there were misrepresentations at every stage. Now we see that the reward for Sir Donald is another promotion.

I wonder whether Sir Donald's deputy, Professor Alasdair Breckenridge—I nearly made a Freudian slip and said Myra—will get a further promotion. He is a professor of clinical pharmacology at the university of Liverpool and the deputy chairman of the regional health authority. It seems to go with the job that he has to spend so much time on quangos all round the country. Between teaching clinical pharmacology and running the regional health authority with the redoubtable Sir Donald, Professor Breckenridge is on the advisory committee on NHS drugs, the committee on the safety of medicines, the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, and the medical research council. I am not even halfway through the list yet.

There are ways in which the problems can be tackled, but they require a will on the part of the Government to do certain things. First, we should produce an annual report listing the members appointed to all public bodies and giving the following information. First, the name—that is self-evident—and the occupation is an important sign of what knowledge and expertise someone can bring to the post. Then we should know the date on which the person was appointed and the date on which the appointment expires, the remuneration, the time commitment, any political offices held, past or present, and, obviously, a declaration of commercial interests.

I realise that that may be somewhat difficult, but a party that has done the best job since Maundy Gregory in making sure that it gets its way in appointing people to offices and jobs galore all over the land should be able to find a way to make that information accessible to the general public, not merely to Members of Parliament.

I shall touch briefly on the trusts, because they give an insight into the mentality and hypocrisy of Conservative Members. It is no accident that former Conservative Members of Parliament are heavily involved in the NHS hospital trusts. The Tories Lord Heyhoe, Sir Timothy Raison, Sir Robert McCrindle and Tony Favell are all heavily involved on a paid basis, earning anything up to £19,285 per annum for running health trusts. If that is not looking after your own, I do not know what is.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. There are 45 minutes available before the wind-up and many hon. Members want to catch my eye. I hope that the hon. Members whom I call will bear that fact in mind.

8.45 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): The Opposition motion suggesting that quangos and the use of contractors will result in

> "a loss in the quality of public services, by increased fraud and waste, and by falling standards in public life"

is patent nonsense. Those appalling words describe the situation in Labour-run councils far more accurately than they do quangos or contractors.

Labour-run councils such as Monklands, Lambeth and Tameside lead the field—but, sadly, they lead it in nepotism and corruption. Monklands is extremely significant for the debate, because that is the constituency of the man who wants to be the Prime Minister of this country—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] I gave him an invitation at 3 o'clock this afternoon to come and listen to the debate.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that the debate is about the unelected state? The hon. Member for Dover is referring to people who are part of the elected state.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Shaw: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am ready for many points of order, because Labour Members are so sensitive about what I say about Monklands that they are always trying to interrupt my speeches.

Monklands is the constituency of John Smith, the man who wants to be Prime Minister of the nation. John Smith —[HON. MEMBERS: "Order."] John Smith closely supports——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Surely the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends do not think that Monklands council is a quango. We are discussing quangos and unelected bodies. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stick to talking about unelected bodies.

Mr. Shaw: I made it clear in my opening remarks that I was talking about the allegations of falling standards in public life. In my view, that allegation applies, as I hope to demonstrate, far more to Labour councils such as Monklands than it does to quangos.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate is about unelected state bodies, not elected bodies. The hon. Gentleman must stick to the subject, or I shall rule him out of order.

Mr. Shaw: If I may say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have read from the motion and I shall explain how there is an unelected state in Monklands. If you listen, you will find out that what I am saying fits in accurately with the motion. The motion mentions increased fraud——

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Member for Dover continues to make allegations of corruption involving Members of the House, he should be called to order, or we shall call his speech to order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair will decide that.

Mr. Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the Opposition allow me to continue I shall explain how contractors, often connected with the leader of Monklands council, are taking money out of the council and the public sector, and how the leader of the council, a friend and close associate of the Leader of the Opposition, is involved in actions that fit the terms of the motion to a tee.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman continues to make allegations about people who are unable to defend themselves in the House, is he prepared to repeat them outside the House to give ordinary citizens the right——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can be assured that the Chair will decide whether the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is out of order.

Mr. Shaw: Among the people in Monklands who are known as the controlling Mafia, who were not elected for many of the actions that they carry out, is John Smith's election agent, a personal friend——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already drawn the hon. Gentleman's attention to this. I must tell him that he is going outside my interpretation—it is the Chair who decides. If he sticks to the motion, he will be all right. If he does not, I shall have to rule him out of order.

Mr. Sheerman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is not the same point of order.

Mr. Sheerman: It is not the same point of order. The hon. Member for Dover has constantly referred to a Member of the House by name. He has been in the House long enough to know the convention. If he does not, he should go outside the Chamber and learn it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is the same point of order that I have dealt with already, and I shall continue to deal with it in the same way.

Mr. Richards: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance because I understand that what my hon. Friend is saying relates to the motion. The motion says that Labour are concerned that the proliferation of quangos

> "has been accompanied by a loss in the quality of public services, by increased fraud and waste".

I believe that my hon. Friend is talking about fraud and waste in public services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair will decide—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not challenging the Chair. I have already made my ruling. I ask the hon. Member for Dover to stick to the motion before the House. If he does not, he will have to resume his seat.

Mr. Shaw: I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have listened to almost all the speeches of Labour Members. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) went extremely wide in his opening remarks and referred to fraud and corruption. I only hope that you will allow me to answer some of his points about fraud and corruption and his allegations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will allow the hon. Gentleman to continue his speech if it is based on the motion before the House. This is the last time that I shall make that point.

Mr. Shaw: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter).

Mr. Streeter: Does my hon. Friend agree that the whole argument of Labour Members is that locally elected councils are better at delivering services than quangos and that local authorities with elected members crack down on fraud and waste? If he does not agree, could he give some examples of local authorities which, although they have elected members, still have fraud and waste rampant in their organisations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must tell the hon. Member for Dover not to go down that road. I draw his attention to the motion before the House, which refers to quangos in the first line and which says in the second line:

> "these organisations are not publicly accountable".

The hon. Gentleman must base his speech on that.

Mr. Shaw: I have not yet started my speech—I am still making my opening remarks. I hope that you will bear with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I develop my opening remarks to cover the unelected situation that exists and many of the points for which no one was elected in Monklands. The fact is—*[Interruption.]* May I continue and quote from Labour party members in the Monklands area about the unelected state in Monklands?

Mr. Richards: Does my hon. Friend agree with the motion, which says that there have been falling standards in public life because of quangos, as opposed to the continuation with elected bodies such as Monklands district council?

Mr. Shaw: I note my hon. Friend's point about falling standards in public life. I cannot accept that quangos are causing falling standards in public life. The whole argument that I am trying to put forward is that even Labour party members in Monklands believe that quangos would be better than the state of affairs that they have in the district council in Monklands.

In 1992, Catherine Miller, who is the secretary of the Holehills and Raywards branch of the Labour party in Monklands, East, said:

> "This branch unreservedly condemns the nature of Cllr. Brooke's highly personalised and"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is it—I will not tell the hon. Gentleman again. As I interpret the motion in front of me, he is out of order. He must come back to order. If he does not, he must take his seat.

Mr. Shaw: It is getting very difficult for me to continue. I would not want to delay the House if——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making it very difficult for the Chair as well.

Mr. Shaw: I ask you to accept, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am speaking on the Labour motion, which has the words "loss in the quality of public services", "increased fraud and waste" and "falling standards in public life". I am addressing the words "falling standards in public life", "increased fraud and waste", and "loss in the quality of public services." All those things exist in Monklands. I believe that Monklands would be better run by a quango and that is the argument that I am trying to put forward. I hope that it will be accepted that Monklands would be better run by a quango than by the corrupt council that exists.

Catherine Miller, the secretary of the Holehills and Raywards branch of the Labour party, is complaining. The Plains and Caldercruix branch of John Smith's Labour party issued a statement in 1992 which said:

> "Such entrenchment of power in so few hands is bad for local democracy . . . present dictatorial set-up of council committees and sub-committees"

is in such a bad state that they

> "call upon the National Executive to fully investigate".

In Monklands, they require

> "a democratization process . . . so the council *fully represents the entire electorate.*"

In other words, the council is not representing the entire——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. My patience is now exhausted. The hon. Gentleman must take his seat.

8.52 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): It is my usual practice to respond specifically to the contribution of the previous speaker. However, for reasons which I am sure the House will understand, I shall not refer to the speech of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw). Instead, I shall refer to the speech of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was right on one point—there have always been quangos and non-departmental public bodies. However, he missed the whole point of Labour's motion. First, he failed to understand the issue of appointments to quangos and non-departmental public bodies. Of course, I accept that there has always been a tendency for different Governments to appoint people of their own political persuasion to all sorts of bodies. The issue today is that the Government have lost all sense of balance. Almost all of their appointments are of their political supporters; they do not appoint members of any other party or, indeed, people with no political affiliation if they can avoid it.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman was not here a few minutes ago when I pointed out that a member of the Welsh Arts Council is the research officer of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Mr. Davis: I was present in the Chamber and I heard the hon. Gentleman's point, which I shall deal with in a moment. He should contain himself. Tonight, we are witnessing some rather intemperate behaviour from Tory Members. We would all get on better if we debated the motion instead of trying to score points. I shall deal with the petty hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

As I said, the Government, whenever possible, appoint their political supporters, and they avoid appointing people who are not their political supporters. That charge has been made by many Opposition Members today—not just the Labour party. There is common ground among the Opposition parties that that is what happens. I think that most objective people would agree.

That does not mean that the Government never appoint members of other political parties. I was careful with my choice of words, because there may well be a researcher to one of my hon. Friends who has been appointed to a body in Wales. Frankly, the Government must be running out of Conservatives in Wales to appoint to public bodies, so I would not be surprised if they had to appoint the occasional socialist. They even do that in places such as the west midlands—as I will describe later, because I intend to make a balanced speech.

The charge is that, whenever possible, the Government avoid appointing to a public body anyone who is not a supporter. We saw that in the speech of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The right hon. Gentleman said that what was wrong in the past was that Labour Governments had appointed some trade unionists to public bodies. He did not just say that—of course, it is true—but added that they were Labour cronies. That is the way the Government think.

It is also true, of course, that Labour Governments appointed business men to non-departmental bodies, because previous Labour Governments attempted to achieve some sense of balance.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Davis: If Government Members will sit down and let me proceed with my speech, I will tell them that that was also true of previous Conservative Governments. The charge is that this Government have politicised all appointments. In the past, both Labour and Conservative Governments would make sure that there was some representation from other parties on non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Richards: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), when he was Secretary of State for Wales, invited the Labour party to submit to him a list of people it considered suitable for quangos? Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that the Labour party has not submitted a single name to the Welsh Office?

Mr. Davis: I am sure that many bodies within the Labour movement have submitted lists of potential appointees. It is accepted by all dispassionate observers that there are very few people appointed by the Government—I do not say that there are no people—who are not members or supporters of their party. That is my point.

Other Governments, both Labour and Conservative, tried to achieve some balance. Of course they tended to appoint their supporters, but they made sure that some people were appointed from other parties.

The Government also seem obsessed with the idea that the only people who should be appointed to non-departmental public bodies and quangos are business men. I find that strange. It is clear that some business men should be appointed, but to suggest that only business men should be appointed neglects the obvious fact that this country is in an economic mess, and to appoint to run the NHS the people who have produced that mess seems wilful in the extreme.

The second point which the Chancellor failed to address was the balance between elected and non-elected bodies. He avoided that matter completely. He said rightly that the number of non-departmental public bodies had been

[Mr. Davis]

reduced. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) fairly and rightly pointed out that that ignored the fact that most of the bodies which were abolished were advisory bodies.

The bodies which have increased in number, and above all whose powers have been increased, are executive bodies, and the balance has been tipped in favour of appointed, rather than elected, bodies. There has been an increase in the number of executive bodies and in the power of those executive bodies.

The Chancellor said that more money had been given to the Housing Corporation to deal with social housing, and that is right. However, that has been at the expense of money which has been allocated—not given—to local authorities to provide social housing. My hon. Friends and I have made that point consistently throughout the debate.

The switch of power from elected to unelected bodies is true not only in the case of local authorities. The Government have also divested themselves of responsibility and passed it to unelected bodies. There are not only the famous and long-standing quangos, but the new-fangled agencies which have been set up precisely for that purpose.

My hon.Friends—most notably, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—have said that Ministers will not answer questions, and will not deal with inquiries from hon. Members from any party. That is a way of shirking, avoiding and evading responsibility. Ministers pass it to agencies, such as the Benefits Agency, but they do not have the same responsibility to this House.

The Chancellor was right on one detailed point: we did not have elected health authorities before. Some of us would like to see that. We believe that we should democratise the NHS. However, the right hon. Gentleman is right to say that that was not the case under the previous Labour Government. It is true that the present Government have perpetuated it, but they have done more.

There has been not only an increase in the power of the non-elected bodies within the NHS, but a reduction in accountability. Hon. Members all know examples in which they have not been able to get answers. The Chancellor was quite wrong: it is impossible to get the accounts of trust hospitals, and we are refused access to the business plans of trust applications. That information is not made available, and financial information is the most important part of accountability.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) gave a long discourse about the meaning of accountability and democracy. He was right to a small degree, because there is a difference between democracy and accountability. On the other hand, democracy involves accountability, and one also can have accountability in other ways. Appointees can be accountable to the body which appointed them.

The hon. Gentleman talked about head teachers, but did not mention the body to which they are responsible. He said that they are accountable to teachers, parents and students, but they are not. Head teachers have duties to those people, but they are not accountable to their colleagues, to parents and to students.

They are accountable to the one body which the hon. Gentleman did not mention—the governors. They are accountable to the governors because it was the governors who appointed them. It is the governors who have the power to hire and fire. That is what accountability means in the last resort. That is where head teachers are accountable.

We have seen from the report published by the Public Accounts Committee about the proper conduct of public business that those public bodies are less and less accountable. The report listed a number of examples, and referred specifically to the health service. The situation has become worse, and the Committee unanimously agreed on that. There was no difference of opinion between the Labour and Conservative Committee Members.

We agreed unanimously that there had been

> "inadequate oversight by those in authority".

The Committee specifically defined that as a

> "failure to obtain information, infrequent meetings, decisions not properly reached and recorded."

The Committee also found that there had been a

> "failure to ensure that delegation of responsibility accompanied by clear lines of control and accountability, leading to the waste of large sums of public money."

Finally, the Committee found that there was a

> "failure to hold individuals personally accountable for their actions."

I repeat that those were the unanimous conclusions of the members of the Public Accounts Committee.

I shall give examples, of which some have already been mentioned by my hon. Friends. Two examples are drawn from the health service. We found that in Wessex regional health authority there had been

> "a serious failure on the part of the Regional Health Authorities to secure accountability from the then Regional General Manager".

The manager was able to run riot through the health service in the Wessex region without being held accountable by the people appointed by the Secretary of State to make him accountable.

The same thing happened in the West Midlands regional health authority, my own region. We found:

> "there was a serious failure by Members of the Regional Health Authority . . . in their duty to secure the accountability of regional management."

The position has got worse. Whatever my disagreements might be about the reorganisation of the health service, I believe that, 10, 15 or 20 years ago, the management of the health service was more accountable to the people appointed to the regional health authorities than it is today.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that he could not do anything about Sir Robin Buchanan, the former chairman of Wessex regional health authority, who was found to be personally responsible for the failures there, because he was waiting for the investigation by the Public Accounts Committee. There are two answers to that. First, I seriously believe that the Chancellor was misinformed. My understanding is that he received reports long before the Comptroller and Auditor General reported to the Public Accounts Committee.

Even if we put that on one side, the Chancellor has had the report from the Public Accounts Committee for a long time now. What has he done? Sir Robin Buchanan is still there. He has been promoted to a higher-paid job, to which he was appointed by the Secretary of State. What has been done to make him accountable and responsible for failures that occurred in Wessex regional health authority?

Mr. Kilfoyle: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davis: I must press on.

The same thing has happened in the west midlands, where we found that members had failed to discharge their responsibility. What has happened? The very people who failed to control the management in the west midlands have been appointed to other jobs elsewhere in the health service.

That report was about the regionally managed services organisation in the west midlands. A year later almost to the day, we took evidence on another scandal in the west midlands—the problem of South Birmingham health authority. Once again, assurances had been made 18 months before, and nothing had happened.

The health authority was supposed to implement an action plan to restore the financial position of that health authority and had failed to do so. We were told that the action plan would not cause any damage to the service to the local community. We found that nothing had been done. What is worse, nothing had happened to the people who failed.

The question needs to be asked: to whom are members of the regional health authorities accountable? They are certainly not accountable to the Management Executive or to its so-called chief executive, Sir Duncan Nichol. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) referred to the politicisation of civil servants. I find Sir Duncan Nichol the most political of civil servants, but even I have some sympathy with him when he is faced with health service managers who do not do what they are supposed to do.

Sir Duncan Nichol has appeared before the Public Accounts Committee several times and said, "I have no power. I cannot do anything about it. They ignore my letters. Sometimes they do not even reply." He cannot give instructions to managers. The chief executive cannot execute. He cannot do anything.

There is an old saying with which all hon. Members will be familiar, that newspaper proprietors are harlots because they have power without responsibility. Sir Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive, is the opposite. He has responsibility without power. He is powerless. He is impotent. Managerially speaking, he is a eunuch. He cannot do anything about the problems. He is called chief executive, but he has no power.

However, there is one way to deal with the problem. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) said that some socialists had been appointed to bodies even by this Government. In extremis, the Goverrment have had to turn to the Labour party to find a new chairman of the South Birmingham health authority. They have appointed a well-known member of the Labour party to sort out the mess in South Birmingham.

That is the way in which we will sort out the mess at national level. The electorate will turn to the Labour party to do it.

9.2 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The debate today provides an opportunity for the House to debate the fundamentally different approach taken by the Conservative party compared with that of the socialists on the Opposition Benches. Conservatives believe in providing opportunities wherever possible for individuals to make their own decisions on a regular basis, using the market mechanism. The Labour party believes in allowing people to have a democratic choice once every four years or so.

Socialist Governments of old claimed that the British people owned the industries that they had nationalised. In reality, people had no control or influence whatever over those industries. The politicians and civil servants were in charge. The privatisation of those state-owned companies has led not only to massive improvements in efficiency but to greater responsiveness to individual consumers. That has been achieved by the introduction of competition wherever possible, the creation of powerful regulators where competition was not immediately possible, and the commercial reality that such companies can no longer rely on the state to prop them up.

I well remember some 16 years or so ago, when I used to drive many thousands of miles a year, that it was impossible to find a telephone kiosk that worked. It took six months to have a telephone installed in one's home. Now, because British Telecom knows that the only way to operate profitably is to provide customers with what they want, we have many more public telephone kiosks, and they work. One has only to ring British Telecom to have a telephone installed in a matter of days. So everybody wins. The consumer receives a decent service, shareholders see the value of their company increase and the Government receive enormous sums in corporation tax.

No elected politician has brought this situation about, except that a Conservative Secretary of State took the decision to privatise the company in the first place.

In British Gas, for example, domestic and industrial prices have fallen by 21 per cent. and 25 per cent. respectively in real terms since privatisation. Disconnections are at their lowest level ever. The same can be said of all the companies that we have privatised: the customers have benefited, be they of British Airways, Yorkshire Electricity or Cable and Wireless. The forces of competition and of the market can be used to improve many of our public services, but it means that there is less of a role for elected politicians.

Let us take education as an example. The Government have given more power to parents to decide which school to send their children to and, at the same time, through local management of schools we have given schools more autonomy and greater independence. So the more pupils those schools attract, the more money they receive. How does one attract pupils? By improving the quality of education offered to them, by tightening discipline and dress, and by offering a well-balanced curriculum—in short, by offering to parents what they as parents want rather than what the politicians on the local education authority think they want and should have.

Grant-maintained schools take this to its ultimate conclusion because they are like independent schools within the state sector: they flourish or die depending on whether they can attract enough pupils. The result is that such schools have improved their standards significantly. Surveys of grant-maintained schools have revealed more teachers being taken on, more staff being trained, more subjects being taught, more books and equipment being bought, smaller classes and better school food. Yet, ludicrously, one or two Opposition Members have labelled grant-maintained schools quangos.

One of the great advantages of some of the changes that I have mentioned, not just in schools but also in health authorities, in further education colleges and in universities, is that the process is leading to less politicisation of the services. In the old days councillors served on health authorities. They were not elected to the

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

health authorities, although Opposition Members suggested that they were. Frequently they failed to turn up. When they did, they were often more interested in scoring party political points than in doing what was right for patients.

There has been a complete change. I know from my experience in Huddersfield that the West Yorkshire health authority, along with the Royal Huddersfield Infirmary trust, is single-minded in trying to improve patient care. They know what they must achieve and are doing their best to achieve it. When it comes to political appointments, I know one individual, out of all those who serve on the boards of the two authorities that I have mentioned, along with the local family health services authority, who is a card-carrying Conservative; I have no idea whatever of the politics of any of the others.

What a contrast that is to what used to happen when the Labour Government were last in power. I have done a little research over the past couple of days, and it is interesting to look at the composition of the Equal Opportunties Commission. The Labour Government used to put a token Tory on such bodies and, in the case of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the token Tory was Lady Howe. There are some who may claim that she was not altogether an archetypal Tory, but I am sure that she is, or at least was, a Tory.

The chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission was Miss Bettly Lockwood, chief woman officer and assistant national agent of the Labour party. Other members of the commission included Lord Allen of Fallowfield, CBE, no less, general secretary of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers; and Professor Gordon Barrie, a twice failed Labour parliamentary candidate. He later became Director of Fair Trading, and it is worth pointing out that the Conservative Government reappointed him on two, if not three, occasions. I was not altogether happy at his last appointment, but that is another matter.

Other members of the commission were Miss Ethel Chipchase, MBE, no less, secretary of the TUC's Women's Advisory Committee; Marie Patterson, vice-chairman of the TUC; and Mr. Eric Robinson, vice-president of the Socialist Education Association. That shows how the Labour Government put their own party people and trade union friends into the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The same applies to the Commission for Racial Equality. Interestingly, the CRE took over from the Race Relations Board which, before its abolition in 1977, contained two Conservatives: Mrs. Christie and Miss Roberts. It also contained a trade unionist in the shape of Mr. Cyril Plant. The token Tory on the Commission for Racial Equality was Mr. David Lane, a former Tory MP. But other members included councillor Bashir Maan, a Labour councillor; Mr. Tom Jackson, general secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers; Mr. Courtney A. Laws, former TGWU shop steward; and Mr. William Morris, who, as we all know, is now general secretary of the TGWU.

What is interesting about those appointments is that, in December 1977, the CRE also contained two Liberals, I now know what the Liberals achieved from the Lib-Lab pact—they got two of their people on to the CRE.

It is a little unwise of the Labour party to throw stones, because the information that I have just provided proves that the last Labour Government were in the business of packing those bodies and quangos with their own people.

Mr. Streeter: Is my hon. Friend aware that, just after Christmas, a member of my Conservative association in Plymouth buttonholed me at a reception, complaining bitterly that we were not appointing enough Conservatives to the local trusts and quangos. We were appointing people on merit rather than for their party political affiliation and they wanted to know what I was going to do about it. Is not that an accurate picture of what is going on?

Mr. Riddick: Yes, I have heard such complaints. Sometimes they are true. I make no complaint about that because a variety of individuals should serve on those public bodies. Contrary to what Opposition Members say, we are not packing those bodies with Conservatives. We are, however, putting a significant number of business men on them, but that is because we want them to be run in a businesslike way. The last Labour Government put trade unionists on their public bodies because they wanted them to be run in a trade unionist-like way.

Let us look at what else the last Labour Government got up to. At one stage, Jack Jones, the then general secretary of the TGWU, held 13 public appointments. His deputy general secretary, Harry Urwin, had nine such appointments. In May 1978, past and present officials of the TGWU were estimated to hold at least 27 paid or unpaid appointments.

Len Edmundson and Hugh Scanlon of the engineers' union held 11 between them; Reg Bottini—a name from the past—the retired leader of the agricultural workers, had nine appointments; and Sir George Smith, the general secretary of the Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians, had eight.

George Woodcock, who, it will be remembered, was general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, gave the game away when he made quite clear what qualifications were appropriate to securing appointment to public bodies. He said:

> "Seniority, the muscle power of your union and competence —these are what you need to get a public job, and in that order of priority."

At the same time, the then Secretary of State who was responsible for the social services—David Ennals—removed 32 of the 90 health authority chairmen and replaced them with Labour party hacks and supporters.

Mr. Fabricant: Does not my hon. Friend think it rather strange that, while we are seeking Labour party volunteers for trusts, that party seems unwilling to put people forward? We have heard about this situation in Wales. Is it not even more outrageous that the Labour party should complain that the people serving on trusts are mainly Conservatives?

Mr. Riddick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has made his very important point in his own way.

It is clear that, if there is no other way in which some public services and functions can be made accountable to individuals and communities, accountability must come through the democratic process. But no one should imagine that elected politicians are paragons of virtue. Indeed, the behaviour of many Labour local authorities has brought local government into disrepute.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) was not able to tell us about the Monklands council. Of course I respect your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I look forward to the day when my hon. Friend will be able to tell the House exactly what the Monklands council has been getting up to. We know that it has operated a system whereby a relative of a councillor who wants a job——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not trying to test my patience.

Mr. Riddick: I am not trying to test your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I am drawing attention to the role played by quangos. These bodies, which comprise unelected people, sometimes act in a more appropriate way than do elected politicians. That is the important point. The fact that, in the case of the Monklands council, green forms were given to job applicants related to councillors while pink forms were given to people who were unemployed is worth getting on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman again, but I hope that he will not force me into taking action that I have taken previously. I have already ruled on this matter, as he knows. He must stick to the motion.

Mr. Riddick: I should like to refer now to the Labour authority in my area, which has set up a non-elected quango—a joint venture with a private company, Henry Boot. This undertaking is taking work away from private developers. The problem is that there is a conflict of interests. The council is operating both as planning authority and as developer. That should not be encouraged in any shape or form.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is outrageous of the Labour party to oppose quangos when its manifesto contains a huge list of quangos that it would like to introduce? Is he aware that it mentions a Scottish parliament, a Welsh assembly, English regional government, a Greater London authority and a regional development agency? It talks about 460 local authorities in England, but it wants local consumer councils, local quality commissions and local centres for innovation. The list is endless. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the ultimate in hypocrisy?

Mr. Riddick: When I talked about allowing other hon. Members to make short speeches, I was thinking of Opposition Members. My hon. Friend has just made his speech and I congratulate him on it. It was extremely good and concise.

The debate has again shown the Labour party's belief in the primacy of the politician over the individual. [HON. MEMBERS: "It does not believe that."] I believe that it does. Conservative Members believe in the primacy of individuals as users of services, be they gas, electricity, telecommunications, education or health care. We have had a whiff of hypocrisy from the Labour party today. It packed quangos with trade unionists and Labour hacks when it was in power and Labour councils have undermined its claim to be the party of integrity, let alone its claim to be a party of government. I shall, therefore, be delighted to support the Government in the Lobby.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not possible to ensure that hon. Members from all parties who have attended this debate have an opportunity to speak? Quangos are the most important issue on the political agenda in Wales. The people of Wales will find it incredible if the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson), who has published a standard work on the issue, and other Welsh Members do not have the opportunity to speak on the subject in the only Parliament that we have. They will also find incredible the sort of abuse that we have heard in the Chamber tonight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The occupant of the Chair has no control over the length of speeches. I appealed earlier for shorter speeches so that I could call more hon. Members, but unfortunately my request fell on deaf ears.

Mr. Fabricant: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a new and inexperienced hon. Member, I ask whether it is normal and courteous for hon. Members who want to make speeches to be present throughout the debate? Is it not the case that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has not been here most of the time?

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are common courtesies in the House, which I have noticed many hon. Members have not respected recently. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has been in the Chamber all the time that I have been in the Chair.

9.22 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): This has been an excellent debate. It has reached into the heart of some important constitutional issues. Not long ago, during a sitting of the Sub-Committee of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, Sir Robin Butler was asked whether the Government, which consisted of 30 main Departments, was being transformed into a civil service that consisted of 30 ministerial head offices, about 150 executive agencies and units, hundreds of quangos—such as training enterprise councils, trusts and corporate organisations—and thousands of contractors, all of whom were trying to make a profit. Sir Robin said, honestly:

"yes, I do not think that is an inaccurate description".

That admission of the dismemberment of Government has a number of important implications for the ability of a Government to manage and control the activities of the constellation of providers and far-reaching implications for public and parliamentary accountability. That argument was advanced in a thoughtful speech by the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson).

The dismemberment of Government considerably affects parliamentary control. For example, how will a Select Committee that is set up to examine the policy, spending and administration of a Department cope with having to scrutinise the policy and legislative activities of a Department's headquarters, a dozen agencies, scores of quangos and hundreds of contracts covering work for which a Minister is nominally responsible?

The first question concerns whether the Government are willing to contemplate the additional resources that would be required by Select Committees to carry out their work in the new political environment. Ministers have been captivated by the idea of entrepreneurial government. They

[Mr. John Garrett]

are entranced by peformance pay, agency formation, privatisation, quangos and contracting out without ever thinking through the total effect. The effect we are particularly concerned with tonight is the loss of public accountability arising from the transfer of public services to bodies headed by unelected Government appointees and contractors. There is no doubt that that represents a severe loss of democratic control which diminishes our system of governance.

The unelected state is characterised by powerful, big-spending quangos and a policy of handing out Government services to private contractors—a dangerous development. Most quangos used to be advisory bodies. Today's new quangos are executive bodies. The Government of 1979 declared war on the first kind. The Government are bestowing more and more power on the new quangos to spend public money. It has been calculated that, by 1996, more than 7,700 public bodies controlled wholly or partly by Government appointees will be responsible for spending £54 billion of taxpayers' money. Today, more than £24 billion in spending has passed from local authorities alone to unelected quangos. An appointed elite has acquired huge responsibilities for local government services and some 40,000 quango appointments are now made by Ministers.

Thanks to a number of parliamentary questions put by my hon. Friends, which were referred to earlier in the debate, we have discovered that Wales is now the land of the rising quango. Thanks to the National Audit Office, we know what a number of them have been up to. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) underestimated the rule of those baronies in Wales. A study by the university of Wales shows that £2·1 billion of Welsh Office spending, or 34 per cent. of the total, was dispensed by quangos employing 60,000 people. The boards of those quangos were filled by 1,260 appointees, of whom 80 per cent. were male.

The Government will not wish me to remind them, as others have today, about the scandals of the Development Board for Rural Wales or the Welsh Development Agency. The Secretary of State for Wales has been reported as being "very upset" by those events and has demanded a "sharper focus" by the Welsh quangos. He might focus more sharply on the Tory placemen who occupy so many prominent places on those boards.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: No. I am in the mere foothills of my argument, so the hon. Gentleman must wait.

A frequent characteristic of quango chairmen is that they have run unsuccessful insurance or property companies or have been involved in Tory politics. In my own county of Norfolk, the chairman of the East Norfolk health commission—a new quango—will be none other than the hapless John Alston, a local Tory politician who last year managed to lose Tory control of Norfolk county council for the first time in 104 years.

Last week I went to a seminar by the Norfolk and Waverley training and enterprise council for "non-private sector stakeholders" in the TEC. They appear to be local government and voluntary organisations. The obvious question was, "Where is the stake?" I might have asked, "Where is the beef?" It soon became apparent that those public-sector bodies had no stake in the local TEC. The local TEC is unelected, unaccountable, undemocratic and packed with unknown business men. It has a poor training record and has been particularly criticised for its attitude towards trainees with special needs. Why? Because trainees with special needs are unremunerative.

How can the policies of a TEC be influenced? How can we remove the incompetent from the boards of TECs? They spend £1·8 billion a year. What logic governs the appointments and remuneration of chairmen of quangos when the chair of the Horserace Totalisator Board is paid £92,000 a year and chair of the Parole Board gets £45,000 a year?

Do job descriptions exist for all those posts? Will they be made public? Will the Government allow Select Committees to examine appointees to chairmanships? That issue is supported on both sides of the House. We have dealt fully today with the lack of accountability of quangos. The hon. Member for Wantage referred to the overload on Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a powerful and expert speech. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) struck a note. I am a European Unionist, but what he said is absolutely true. The democractic deficit in the insitutions of Europe at the moment means that unelected people make decisions that affect the lives of all our constituents. I must concede that. He is quite right. We must introduce new methods of democratic accountability in that system, too.

My hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) spoke of the abuse of power, but, as I said at the outset, there are much more dangerous developments than quangos, for example, market testing or piecemeal contractorisation—a key characteristic of the unelected state. It has been copied here from practice over the past 12 years in the United States. Its bible is "Reinventing government—How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector" by Osborne and Gaebler. I have heard it recommended by Ministers. It is a work so vacuous as to attract notice even among American management texts. Essentially, the message of its authors is that Government

> "should steer and not row".

That means that Government—local or central—should make policy, but, in general, contractors should deliver public services. That is what many Conservative Members think.

Ministers and, even more unfortunately, civil servants, are happy to admire the huge American market-testing effort, where contractors provide a high proportion of federal and state services. In the environmental protection agency in the United States, contractors not only virtually run the show, but also endorse and approve their own invoices. Conservative Members do not seem to be aware of the enormous backlash in America against contractors now that their nefarious practices are coming to light.

I recommend to the House—it can be obtained from the Library—the recent hearings on Government contract mismanagement conducted by an investigatory sub-committee of the congressional committee on energy and commerce. It tells us of the waste of billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. It tells of the outrageous billing and performance practices of contractors, including the huge corporate contractor who charged for boarding an executive's dog, the contractor who charged tens of millions of dollars for what American legislators called "outlandish entertainment" and the construction firms that hire equipment from their executive's spouses.

Of course, it will be argued that those practices could not happen here, which brings us to an important question that I hope the Minister will answer. Who will audit the charges and the performance of contractors who benefit from the market-testing procedures that are run by British Government? Will it be done by Departments, by private auditors or by the National Audit Office? The Comptroller and Auditor General recently told the PAC that the NAO would have no right of audit of contractors, which means that substantial spending programmes currently audited by an Officer of Parliament are put over to private contractors who are not auditable.

It sticks in my throat to read in the Government's amendment about

"the increased powers and independence given to the Comptroller and Auditor General".

For 17 years, I campaigned for a more powerful state audit body. For 10 years, I was the only campaigner. I was joined later by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and one or two Conservatives. That development was resisted tooth and nail by the Government. We sponsors of the Bill that became the National Audit Act 1983 were called into No. 11 Downing street and told that the Queen would be annoyed. We were told by a noble Lord, who at the time was Leader of the House of Commons, that the Queen would be annoyed if greater control of the NAO were given to this Parliament. We were told that the public would be greatly offended if the 700 accountants employed by the NAO were made House of Commons staff.

What is more, we were eventually told by the Tory Chief Secretary to the Treasury—who is now a Commissioner in Brussels, and had fought us throughout the process—that in no circumstances would he allow the National Audit Office to be allowed, as a constitutional principle, to pursue state funds wherever they went. That is still the case. If the Chancellor of the Duchy is so keen on the state audit system, why does he not allow a change in the system so that the Comptroller and Auditor General can pursue state funds wherever they go?

It is not uncommon for contractors to discover and claim new charges after they have won a contract and cannot easily be dislodged. That is what is happening in this country right now. For example, the General Motors subsidiary EDS appears to have won the market test for providing information technology services for the Inland Revenue, without an in-house bid being allowed. EDS—which I believe was founded by Ross Perot—will take over some 2,000 Inland Revenue staff.

However, EDS has already said that it may want up to £50 million for redundancy payments to Inland Revenue workers who refuse alternative work, or refuse to relocate from Telford to the EDS office near London airport. Will the Minister tell us where the liability lies for those redundancy payments? Will any worker in the Inland Revenue——

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: I am asking the Minister the questions.

Mr. Arnold: I am asking you a question.

Mr. Garrett: Does the hon. Gentleman mean that he is asking you a question, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Will any worker in the Inland Revenue who refuses to relocate be deemed to have resigned and therefore not qualify for a redundancy payment on civil service terms? That is a plain question. When the contract is officially awarded, one monopoly public provider—an accountable civil service unit—will be replaced by a monopoly private provider, accountable to the board of General Motors. Once the contract is awarded, how can it be cancelled?

The Inland Revenue provided no costings of the present arrangements, so how do we know whether EDS is cheaper? Will the Minister place the costings in the Library, so that we can find out? We know what EDS bid and we would like to know whether this represents a saving. If any savings are achieved, they must be at the expense of the jobs, or the terms and conditions, of civil service staff. For example, civil service equal opportunities will not apply to EDS; it will be obliged to obey equal opportunities law, but not equal opportunities in the civil service.

EDS will control all computerised tax records for individuals and companies in the United Kingdom. What arrangements will be made to ensure that the confidentiality to which we have been accustomed will be maintained by the private contractor? The same question must be answered in regard to the proposed privatisation of the Insolvency Service of the Department of Trade and Industry, which has a great deal of sensitive information.

In general, market testing has not been a great triumph for the Government. In 18 months, tendering has been completed for £700 million worth of work—less than half the target amount. Savings of £100 million are claimed, compared with a target of £375 million; but the savings exclude the costs of abandoned market tests, which have already cost the Department of the Environment £500,000. They also exclude the huge costs of consultants—£37 million—in the setting up of market testing. They exclude efficiency losses from the transfer of work in the course of what amounts to a hostile takeover—which always leads to loss of efficiency. In all, the true savings are probably less than £40 million.

Even when an in-house bid wins a market test—44 per cent. of in-house bids have won—the market test must be repeated every three years. When people's jobs are up for auction every three years, what happens to long-term planning, staff development and morale, recruitment and commitment to public service?

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: I am sorry, but I have no time. I must allow the Minister 20 minutes.

Mr. Arnold: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not it in order for the hon. Gentleman to reply to the debate and to my specific questions about Tameside council?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. Garrett: A report by Peat Marwick at the end of January—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The Government are frightened of it.

Mr. Garrett: I do not mind.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): The Government are corrupt.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): What about Castle Point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House must settle down.

Mr. Garrett: A report by Peat Marwick at the end of January—this is not the Labour party research department, this is Peat Marwick—said:

> "The contracting-out of public services to private firms is likely to trigger an explosion in fraud and corruption."

They should know. It continued:

> "Backhanders and slush money will flood public agencies as firms try to cut themselves into lucrative government contracts."

Government contracting out of services puts at risk a public service tradition that has stood the country in good stead for more than 100 years. That all adds up to falling standards in public life. We have a head of the home civil service who tells the Scott inquiry that Ministers are accountable but not responsible—a meaningless concept. When I observed recently to a permanent secretary that the Department of Social Security Benefits Agency did nothing to increase the take-up of benefits, which one would think that it would do if it was helping public service, and that some benefits had take-up of only 60 per cent., he said to me:

> "Sixty per cent. is a good market share."

I must admit that I have been quite friendly with every Minister for the Civil Service since they were invented as a result of the Fulton committee, which I served, in 1968—a long time ago, 26 years—but I have never come across a Minister such as the one that we have. We have a Chancellor of the Duchy who has been publicly humiliated by the Scott inquiry and will soon be left twisting in the breeze by the Prime Minister, and quite right too. We have a Government service, once the envy of the world, which is becoming riddled with jobbery and croneyism. Ministers should be ashamed.

I ask the House to vote for the motion before us.

9.41 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): I start, a minute or two late, by paying a tribute to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, for the work that he has done. Conservative Members at least take it seriously. We do not treat it simply as a party political bullet to fire across the House whenever it suits us.

I must first put right some of the revisionist history of the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who has just spoken. He sought to rewrite history on the subject of the National Audit Office. I am perfectly willing to believe that he campaigned in the 1970s for many years against the Labour Government to get that instituted. There was indeed a PAC reprt calling for that.

I remind the hon. Gentleman, however, that in 1980 a Green Paper on that subject was issued by the Conservative Government. In 1981, a White Paper on that subject was issued by the Conservative Government. As the hon. Gentleman said, it went through. I think that Norman St. John-Stevas, that well-known Labour party member, carried it through, and an extremely well-drafted measure it was too when it was passed.

In addition, we also set up the Audit Commission, in the teeth of Labour opposition because it attacked their own little private ponds that they do not like to speak about. That is something else that the Labour party never did in office. The Labour party, while in Opposition, is good at speaking about freedom of information, for example, and doing nothing about it, all the time that it is in office, or about many other measures. It is very good at that type of thing.

We also introduced the public bodies document that has been referred to today, which, contrary to what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, lists the appointments and what the appointees are paid. It is time that he started to read his brief more carefully.

More seriously, the hon. Member for Oldham, West talked about introducing quangos—as he called them—with more powers than ever before. He clearly has a short memory, or perhaps he was overloaded during his time as a Minister, but it was, of course, Labour that introduced the National Enterprise Board. What were the parliamentary limits on the National Enterprise Board? Its parliamentary limits were solely its borrowing limits. Unlike all our non-departmental public bodies—I use their proper name—which are open to the Public Accounts Committee and accountable to Parliament through ministerial responsibility, the NEB was not quite so open.

The NEB was established under the Industry Act 1975. The draft operating guidelines were published in March 1976 as the board began work but Parliament was given no opportunity to debate the draft. The first debate took place in January 1977. The NEB's books were not open to the Comptroller and Auditor General. Where was the audit in that? Only two three-hour periods of PAC examination were allowed into its financial activities in March 1977.

The hon. Gentleman also tried to say that market testing was a Tory plot to divert money to companies that fund Conservative central office; that was virtually what he said. That is odd because 60 per cent. of the market tests went to in-house teams. Perhaps the First Division Association is a Tory front organisation. I shall bandy the facts with the hon. Gentleman any time he likes. There was a proper bidding process.

Mr. Garrett: What about the cases where no in-house bid was allowed and where the contract went to a single contractor, such as the bid for the Inland Revenue information technology?

Mr. Davis: I recommend that the hon. Gentleman reads our White Paper which outlines the hierarchy that the contractors had to go through. There were £100 million worth of savings from that programme. The hon. Member for Oldham, West asserted that nine times that amount of money—£900 million—was spent on carrying out the consultation. I am sorry to say——

Mr. Meacher: The figure to which I was referring, and which appears in *Hansard*, was the total figure for all consultancy contracts. The figure was between £100 million and £900 million. While I am on my feet, I ask the hon. Gentleman to explain why, in the case of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster refused to accept the in-house bid even though it was £1 million cheaper than that of the private contractor?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman does not understand the difference between a benchmarking enterprise and an in-house bid. His colleague asked about redundancy costs. The £100 million was net of the attributable costs of the market testing exercise and the redundancy costs.

Mr. Garrett: How many redundancies will there be?

Mr. Davis: Redundancy costs, where they occur, will be in the charter White Paper, which will be published very soon. He can look forward to it. I am happy to give it a free advertisement.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the audit of contractors. It just goes to show how little he understands what the process is about. What we are after with market testing is the best quality and the least cost. That is clear and transparent. One almost does not need an audit to better the quality and measure the cost.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned EDS Scicon, which is being negotiated with the Inland Revenue, and asked why an in-house bid was not allowed. That is a fair and reasonable point, which deserves a fair answer. The reason is simple. One of the strategic considerations was allowing the best possible career opportunities for the people who work in that operation. The only way in which that would be allowed and achieved is if they go into the private sector—*[Interruption.]*—and give their business the chance to grow with the best possible technology, which is certainly not available in the in-house arrangements.

The Labour party is the low tax party. It throws away the idea of £100 million in the current year and another million——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Davis: I am short of time.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. All of us are bemused by the tautologous phrase "strategic considerations". Is he claiming that the only way in which dedicated civil servants who had been working for the Inland Revenue for years and years could have improved their career prospects was by being compulsorily transferred into a private sector company, which was not competed against by the public sector?

Mr. Davis: I shall be quick to answer. In the information technology area, in which there is a great deal of external market to be won, there will be enormous gains for the staff.

I wish to try to respond to a few of the points which were raised in the debate. The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) corrected my right hon. Friend about the dismissal of Baroness Macleod. I shall briefly read a report from *The Daily Telegraph* of 27 June 1978. In talking of the National Gas Consumer's council under the past Labour Government, it said:

> "The removal late last year of Lady Macleod, widow of the Conservative Minister Mr. Iain Macleod, as chairman of the council is only the most notable of Conservative casualties.
>
> She was replaced by Mrs. Naomi McIntosh, pro-Vice Chancellor of the Open University and a former Labour member of Haringey borough council.
>
> The change upset a Labour-Conservative balance at the top of the organisation established as deliberate policy when it was set up by the Conservatives in 1972."

That makes that point clearly—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Opposition Front Bench Members were listened to in a reasonable way and it is only right and proper that they should listen to the Minister in a reasonable way.

Mr. Alan Williams: To remind the Minister of what I said earlier, far from arbitrarily dismissing Lady Macleod, in fact, she had a second term of office. I reappointed her when I was the Minister dealing with consumer affairs. She had two terms of office, one under the Conservative Administration and one under the Labour Administration. It was only after the second term that she was replaced.

Mr. Davis: I rest on the point that a balance established under a Conservative Government was destroyed by a Labour Government.

I also want to take serious issue with a number of Opposition Members who misquoted Baroness Denton. I shall quote what she has said because the misquotation has been used to imply some level of political selection which simply does not exist. Her letter said:

> "Your article . . . quoted me out of context and gave a very misleading impression.
>
> It would be helpful if your report had explained that my lack of having 'knowingly appointed a Labour supporter' to a public appointment was due to the fact that my discussions with candidates concentrate on the needs of the post and what skills they can bring to it. I do not question them on their political persuasion."

As a reaffirmation of that, many Opposition Members made the point that they have tabled many parliamentary questions on that subject. One answer to one of those questions was never mentioned—the answer to a question of what was known about the political affiliations of the people who are listed on the public appointments central unit. The answer was that the political affiliation was known of 13 per cent. of the members. The reason why such a small number of political affiliations were listed was that we do not ask. We do not know and we do not need to know.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davis: I am afraid not.

Many funny statistics have been cited today—some by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West—mostly by changing the basis of the numbers being used. I have heard next steps agencies being cited as quangos. Yet next steps agencies consist solely of civil servants and are responsible to Ministers. So they are not within the remit.

Even if all the public bodies listed were included, the assertion that there are more members of those than members of local elected bodies would still be untrue if we took out the tribunals and advisory bodies. More than half of the people concerned are on tribunals, which are apolitical and clearly directed towards the purpose of making judgments outside the political arena. It is clear that many hon. Members today got the argument wrong.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Davis: Not now; I have given up enough time.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave the House a sobering reminder of Labour's appalling record on public appointments in the 1970s. He talked about the 39 members of the TUC council who held 180 appointments—not just a few, but 180. Twenty-seven

[Mr. Davis]

appointments went to the Transport and General Workers Union alone; we heard the list of Jack Jones's 13 public appointments.

I would not object to that if those old union warhorses had been people of enormous merit, or political polymaths selected for their superb skills, but that was clearly not the case. We heared what George Woodcock said—that the criteria were

> "seniority, the muscle power of your union and competence"—

in that order or priority. Competence came third after seniority and union power. That tells us something about what the Labour party has asserted today.

That was all too much even for one Labour Member of Parliament, who talked about the gravy train and said that the union boys

> "seemed to run smoothly from job to job as if they were on a conveyor belt."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Who?"] Gwilym Roberts.

When we say such things we are always told that that was all 15 years ago and it does not matter now. I wonder about that. We heard about David Ennals and all the things that he did, and that may have been 15 years ago, but let me remind the House of something rather more recent—the immortal and embarrassingly honest words of Mr. Tom Sawyer, the deputy general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees. In June 1992 he said:

> "while we continue to fund the Party we'll have a say—it's crude as that . . . no say, no pay."

From Woodcock to Sawyer the unions have been clear. They pay the bills; they want the jobs. If Labour got back into power we would see more of the same. More union placemen clogging up lists of public appointments. The unions sponsor every member of the shadow Cabinet and 165 Opposition Members, and they will continue to play a decisive role in the election of the Labour party's leader and deputy leader. The unelected state is sitting on the Opposition Benches—long may it remain unelected.

Labour not only gives jobs to union placemen; it has a sinister style and a set of tactics that it adopts whenever it gets a chance to run everything. The hon. Member for Oldham, West said that the Government had taken greater control of the state and were playing a bigger underhand role. But I shall read the House an extract from *The Guardian:*

> "Mr. Eric Moonman, former Labour MP and chairman of the Islington health authority, north London, said yesterday that he was resigning from the Labour Party over a questionnaire from Mr. Meacher. Mr. Moonman said, 'I am being asked to spy on colleagues to find out their views and voting records. I cannot see the point of doing this, and I think the investigation would be prejudiced. Some of the people I would be asked to report on are not even members of any political party.'"

Who sent the questionnaires? Who asked Mr. Moonman to spy on his colleagues? Who behaved in what was described in *The Guardian* as a Stalinist manner? It was none other than the Labour spokesman on public service and citizens rights.

Not content with infiltrating health authorities, Labour has intimidated national health service managers seeking to apply for trust status. Before the last election, the party even threatened to sack hospital managers who failed to toe the line if Labour won the election and refused to go on trusts, so all of their comments about not having a balance are nonsense.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 308.

Division No. 146] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*

Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David

McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*

Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Derek Conway.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 306, Noes 245.

Division No. 147] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*

Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*

Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward

Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*

O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Jim Dowd.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the reduction by 36 per cent. in the numbers of Non-Departmental Public Bodies over the last fourteen years as well as on the gains in value for money that have been achieved through the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering in local government and the Competing for Quality initiative in Whitehall; rejects the proposition that contracting for services implies loss of accountability; welcomes the continuous improvement in the quality, value for money and responsiveness of public services not least through the implementation of the principles of the Citizen's Charter; notes that this Government's establishment of the Audit Commission and the increased powers and independence given to the Comptroller and Auditor General have led to more effective control of fraud and waste; and applauds the Government's continuing commitment to high standards in public life.

Malaysia

10.24 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It has been reported on tonight's BBC news that the Foreign Office has confirmed that it is concerned about apparent statements by the Malaysian Government concerning the freezing of trade between Malaysia and Britain. There are other unconfirmed statements about diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Britain in the context of inquiries in Britain into the financing of the Pergau dam project and the abuse of British aid. If that news is accurate, it is very serious for British trade and for the jobs of the people of this country. As British interests are at stake to such an extent, should not we have a statement from the Foreign Secretary—if not this evening, certainly tomorrow—to clarify the situation?

Before Ministers or any other members of the Conservative party point the finger at the media or at the Labour party, let them think about this further example of the abuse of power by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The Chair has received no information whatsoever about whether there is to be a statement. No doubt Ministers will have noted the right hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support the request for a statement tomorrow. However, I give notice that, irrespective of whether it is granted, the motion of which my party has already given notice for next Tuesday will take these latest developments into account.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House of Commons has an annunciator system, but recently there seems to have been inadequate notice of statements. The statement that has been requested for tomorrow is extremely important —in fact, vital. I am sure that our relations with Malaysia involve textiles—something that would affect my constituency. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can ensure that, if a statement is to be made tomorrow, sufficient notice will be given on the annunciators. I very much hope that you will use whatever influence you have to encourage the Government to make a statement. Hon. Members should have sufficient notice to enable them to be present, bearing in mind the fact that Friday tends to be a rather specialised day on which attendance is somewhat thin.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If a statement is to be made, due notice will be given.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Leader of the House is in his place, does not courtesy demand that he indicate that the Government take this matter extremely seriously and that he will ensure that a statement is made in the House tomorrow? It is very discourteous to fail to provide this information now and to leave hon. Members to obtain it, possibly on the annunciator system, at some point tomorrow. Surely in respect of a matter as serious as this, the Leader of the House should come to the Dispatch Box now and tell us what is happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This cannot be continued. Enough has been said.

Gravel Extraction (Hertford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): First, I declare the fact that my house lies within 300 m of the workings of the gravel extraction that I am about to discuss. May I also, by way of introduction, say how grateful I am to Madam Speaker for selecting this subject, which is of vital and immediate concern to people in my constituency.

On 2 February my hon. Friend the Minister sent to the lawyers representing Redland Aggregates Ltd. a letter indicating that he was "minded to approve" the inspector's recommendation to refuse planning permission to about one third of the application to extract gravel on a huge site of approximately 800 acres north of Hertford. However, he has shown his willingness to grant permission to extract gravel on the remaining two thirds of the site.

The implications of the planning application are that the ancient town of Hertford, which has been represented in this House since 1215, and the villages around it will be surrounded with active working gravel pits—all located in the green belt. I propose to hand to the Minister this plan showing how the proposed gravel pits—marked in blue —will surround Hertford.

The planning application has major implications for my constituents' quality of life and economic prosperity, such as loss of amenities and the devaluation of properties, and the people of Hertford are profoundly disturbed by the application. If it is surrounded with active gravel workings, the town is likely to atrophy and even decline for the foreseeable future—probably within your lifetime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the Clerk who is speaking to you. You will be dead, I will be dead and many people in Hertford will be dead before the so-called temporary application is resolved.

Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Minister did not adhere to the protection that the inspector who advised him suggested should be built into the planning approval. He has succumbed to the bullying of the applicants—the gravel extractors—by removing one of the crucial protections provided by the inspector.

My hon. Friend the Minister is continually advised by his officials that gravel extraction and opencast mining are a temporary phenomenon. In this case, the inspector was impressed by the fact that the objectors pointed out that the so-called restoration-led extraction period could be 30 years or longer. She therefore suggested a minimum rate of extraction and a timetable for restoration, which would have reduced the extraction period to about 17 years. In a letter, my hon. Friend declared that timetable to be "impractical".

I suggest that it is impractical because of the bullying of the gravel extractors and the pressure that they have put on him. My hon. Friend also said in the letter that the Secretary of State would expect the extractors to use their "best endeavours" to achieve that objective. You know about the best endeavours of gravel extractors, mineral workers and miners better than I, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Minister is therefore intending to leave to the tender mercies of the gravel companies the length of time that they will take to extract and restore the gravel workings.

Will my hon. Friend reflect on the social disruption that the extraction will cause? During the undetermined extraction period the town of Hertford and its surrounding villages will have to live under the blight caused by the permission. Many of them will have to live for the rest of their lives in the middle of a gravel pit, in homes with a much-reduced value, and they will be unable to sell them. New family formations will be inhibited. My hon. Friend is a family man with children. He will know how important it is for a family to live in an area where children can enjoy their normal activities. My hon. Friend who represents the Whips' Office, the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), will not understand such problems, but I know that he will none the less be sympathetic to them.

People will have to bring up families with the twin dangers of heavy, dirty lorry traffic on the roads and the dust, noise and dangers inevitably associated with opencast mining, for that is what it is. My hon. Friend will know that children wandering into gravel pits are in grave danger of a variety of deaths and injuries in those circumstances. The whole area will be affected.

Let us examine the environmental pollution. The environmental protection provided for in the application while the extraction takes place—which will be for more than 30 years—is only the same as that associated with smaller applications, which can legitimately claim to be of a temporary nature, although in our area temporary can mean in excess of 45 years.

There is no provision of cycle tracks to replace the roads used by children at present. There is no imaginative footpath system to replace that lost during the mining period. The lost visual beauty and outdoor amenities cannot be replaced, but a more considerate mining company might assist with the provision of fishing ponds in the river, as there used to be before mining extraction, or playing fields and pavilions in the villages. Without those amenities, the villages will decline and descend into slums. There is no provision for planting screening trees or hedges to help to mitigate the loss of amenity. Nothing has been changed to take account of the long time foreseen in the planning application.

There is not even a cast-iron guarantee, which has always been assumed, that there would be no dumping or filling with material imported into the area by the mining companies which might not be non-putrescible waste. But who will check it and make certain it is non-putrescible waste? There should be no waste at all, but I do not believe that that will happen.

Let us look at the enforcement of the planning application and the rules that are supposed to be agreed. My hon. Friend said that he would examine them in great detail and find out how they will be enforced, but there is no effective enforcement.

As this is a so-called restoration-led application, that restoration has to be enforced. A detailed section 106 agreement is proposed, to cover a long period, to ensure that restoration takes place and that some aspects of the mining are mitigated. However, there is no requirement on the gravel company to post a bond so that money will be available to undertake any work that the company fails to carry out, or to put right anything that goes wrong such as landslip or illegal dumping in the pits.

Those safeguards are being considered by my hon. Friend's review of the mining planning guidance. He is awaiting the opportunity to introduce an order, if he can find parliamentary time, given the Opposition's refusal to

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

co-operate with the Government. That would reduce the need to keep a 10-year gravel planning bank and enhance the environmental protection and, indeed, his enforcement capacity.

As an illustration of what happens, may I bring to the attention of the House the disgraceful situation on the Water Hall estate on the Essendon road leading out of Hertford. The two heaps of overburden are higher than the Victoria Tower of the Palace of Westminster. They consist of overburden and other material illegally dumped by the extraction company and are proposed to be left in place after the completion of the extraction. That is blatant interference with the original planning permission given by the county council, in which it was agreed that the gravel company would restore the land to its original contours.

The county council, however, without consultation and as a result of an admitted mistake by a junior officer, accepted an additional application from the gravel company to vary the original planning permission, thus giving the gravel company authority to leave the twin mountains there in perpetuity.

The county council has not only experienced constant difficulty in enforcing section 106 agreements, but it has entertained damaging variations to the original planning permission, which included the provision of housing on the worked-out gravel pits, concrete block manufacture, and small businesses being established to take advantage of the natural progression from gravel extraction to ready-mixed concrete activity.

What should we conclude from that? I urge on my hon. Friend the Minister the obvious conclusions that he should arrive at in the light of the arguments that I have advanced. He should refuse this truncated and inadequately protective planning application, which is incapable of enforcement. He should then allow time for his new regulatory framework and guidelines for mineral extraction to be introduced and confirmed by the House. That would permit smaller planning applications to be presented over a truly temporary period of, say, five years, with proper environmental and social protection built in and restoration on an agreed plan.

Further planning applications would be likely to arise because the gravel is there and there is a constant temptation to extract it, but they should be agreed only if restoration and section 106 agreements had been complied with in the previous planning application and subsequent mining. Such a procedure would give the county council effective control over the mining company, provide better protection to the resident community and minimise the blight on the whole area of Hertford. The concept of huge restoration-led land applications is fatally flawed in practice, because they are impossible to control. The Minister's proposal to release the company from an agreed timetable torpedoes the intention of the inspector to protect residents from some of the effects of long-term planning blight, and compounds the effect of the huge planning application in a beautiful area which, none the less, is close to residential areas and is an important amenity for north London.

My hon. Friend must understand the disruptive effects of opencast mining on the highly populated south-east. He should give time for the further development of C1 and material mined in more remote but less highly populated areas. It cannot be sensible to permit the south-east to be dug up, with all the disruption that that entails, to build roads winding their way through a disused landscape or moonscape of gravel pits. I beg my hon. Friend to reconsider and to refuse this application.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) is a doughty champion of the best interests of his constituents. I know that the issues that he has raised this evening reflect his long-standing concerns, and he put his case clearly and effectively. There is no need for him to give me a plan. I am aware of the full detail of the application that is causing him concern; he has raised those concerns with me on a number of occasions.

My hon. Friend's constituency is one of a number in England that have some attractive countryside and also considerable mineral wealth. It is a truism—but one worth remembering—that minerals can be worked only where they occur. His constituents have for a long time been faced with the conflict of mineral extraction for the benefit of the nation as a whole and the preservation of the local environment. Perhaps it would be helpful if I set out the Government's policy on the provision of aggregate, of which sand and gravel form an important element.

Of course, our society needs sand and gravel for a variety of purposes. The consumption of aggregates by the construction industry reflects the economic well-being of society in general, and for our economy to function properly we need a steady and adequate supply of minerals. We wish to ensure that the construction industry continues to receive that supply of aggregates at the best balance of environmental and economic cost.

We seek to ensure the implementation of that policy mainly through the issuing of minerals planning guidance notes to the relevant planning authorities—in this case, the county council. The MPG notes set out the Government's policies on minerals for the benefit of local authorities preparing development plans and considering planning applications. We issued a draft revised MPG note on aggregates provision for consultation early last year.

Since the end of the consultation period last March, we have been considering the many responses made to us—including responses from my hon. Friend and some of his constituents—holding discussions with key interest groups, including local authorities and producers, and determining how we should proceed in the final guidance. It is important for us to strike the right balance, and our discussions and consultation have taken some time; but the final MPG6 will be issued as soon as possible.

Clearly, mineral deposits are not distributed evenly throughout the country, and—as I have said—minerals can be worked only where they can be found. It is a fact that good mineral deposits are frequently found in areas of attractive landscape, or in areas which, for other reasons, are environmentally sensitive.

It is the job of the planning system to strike the appropriate balance between the need for minerals on the one hand and environmental considerations on the other. In the majority of cases, it is for the minerals planning authority—the local county council, for example—to decide how to strike the best balance between supply and environmental cost. In the determination of planning applications, appropriate weight must be given to any relevant national policy, development plan policy and other planning guidance. In particular, section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Environmental considerations and concerns are increasing in response to both new planning applications for mineral working and existing activity that may have been authorised some time ago. I think that we all greatly welcome today's greater awareness of environmental considerations. It is, of course, right that environmental concerns should be properly assessed before any decisions are made; so we recently published our sustainable development strategy report.

In that publication, we set out a framework for sustainable development of mineral resources. The strategy has the following aims, which clearly demonstrate our intention to ensure that—in working and winning minerals, as in all other regards—our policies accord with the best practices of sustainable development.

We want to conserve minerals as far as possible, while ensuring an adequate supply to meet the needs of society; we want to minimise production of waste, and to encourage efficient use of materials, including appropriate use of high-quality materials and recycling of wastes; we want to encourage sensitive working practices during mineral extraction, and to preserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased; and we want to protect designated areas of critical landscape or nature quality from development, other than in exceptional circumstances in which it has been demonstrated that development is in the best public interest. I think that my hon. Friend's constituents will share and support all those objectives.

That framework has been established against a backdrop of increasing demand for minerals. People sometimes ask why minerals are being extracted when there is no demand for them; in fact, all the forecasts indicate that there is certainly a demand for minerals, and almost certainly an increasing demand. But, against a backdrop of increasing demand and need for minerals, there is also increasing concern about the need for higher environmental standards during mineral working and in restoration.

For that reason, we also have an extensive programme of research into sources of materials, environmental effects, reclamation and the environmental costs and benefits of using different sources of minerals. In particular, there is on-going research into how to increase recycling of aggregates. If builders' waste, rubble or work that has been mined elsewhere can be recycled, it will reduce the need for fresh working of sand and gravel. Obviously we want to encourage that.

That is the background to tonight's debate. I shall now turn to the subject of gravel extraction in Hertford and the specific proposals for minerals development on the land north of the Hertford site. I cannot make any specific comments on the merits of the specific application by Redland Aggregates Ltd. as that application is at present before the Secretary of State and is thus sub judice.

As I have said earlier, planning applications in Hertfordshire, as elsewhere, must be determined in acccordance with relevant national policy and in accordance with the provisions of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

My hon. Friend referred to the status of the consultation draft of the mineral planning policy guidance. It is perhaps appropriate to have regard to the draft revision of MPG6, which was published for consultation early last year, but at present it is only a draft and thus can be accorded little weight in view of its status as a draft and subject to amendments. The existing MPG6, therefore, remains the policy as and until the new MPG6 is published.

The development plan for Hertfordshire comprises the county structure plan of 1988 and the East Hertfordshire district plan. A minerals local plan is currently being prepared. I understand that the inspector's report was received last year. It is hoped to place the plan on deposit in late April and that it will be adopted in January next year.

Turning to the specific application, which my hon. Friend has mentioned on several occasions, I set out the factual position. Redland Aggregates Ltd. appealed under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against the refusal of the Hertfordshire county council to grant permission for the working of a 375 hectare site, located 2 km north of Hertford, some of which falls in the metropolitan green belt. The proposal is for the extraction of 20 million tonnes of sand and gravel in 20 phases over 17 years, with progressive restoration.

The Secretary of State recovered the appeal for his own decision in September 1991 because the appeal relates to major proposals involving the winning and working of minerals. A public local inquiry was held between 5 November 1991 and 24 February 1992. The inspector's report was received by the Secretary of State in July 1992. The inspector recommended that permission should be granted for the areas covered by phases 1 to 12 and 18 to 20, the phases generally known as the southern section, subject to conditions and a section 106 agreement, but refused for the area covered by phases 13 to 17, usually known as the northern section.

My hon. Friend was concerned that the section 106 agreement was not enforceable. I disagree. The enforcement of any section 106 agreement—of course a section 106 agreement has to be entered into by the contractor before permission can be given, if that is one of the terms upon which permission is granted—is for the local planning authority. The proper method of enforcement, if the contractor should at any time fail to meet the terms of the agreement, is by injunction in the courts.

My hon. Friend asked about bonds as a condition. I consider that if a section 106 agreement is properly worded and appropriate planning conditions are complied with and, where necessary, enforced, there should be enough to secure restoration and proper after-care, and that performance bonds should not be necessary.

In January 1993, a letter on behalf of the Secretary of State was issued to all parties who appeared at the inquiry, requesting further information on the impact of a split decision as recommended by the inspector. Earlier this month, a further letter was issued on behalf of the Secretary of State, which informed the parties that

> "following careful consideration of the Inspector's report and of the further representations received, the Secretary of State takes the view that there are compelling planning reasons why permission should not be granted for the area of land covered by

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

> Phases 13 to 17. He is therefore minded to accept the Inspector's recommendation that planning permission should not be granted for the area of land covered by phases 13 to 17. However, the Secretary of State does agree with the Inspector, for the reasons set out in her report, that planning permission should be granted for Phases 1 to 12 and 18 to 20, subject to conditions and agreement."

I hope that the fact that the Secretary of State has carefully considered the inspector's report—the inspector had also carefully considered all the issues—makes it clear that it is a matter to which considerable time and attention have been given.

My hon. Friend said that the Secretary of State had succumbed to bullying by the contractors. I assure him that that is most certainly not the case. Indeed, the only representation received from the developers since the inquiry was in response to our request on 20 January 1993 to all the parties that appeared at the inquiry for further representations on the impact of a split decision. I assure him that the decision on the application has been reached after due process and with due consideration of relevant national policy and development planning policy after full consideration of the issues.

The "minded to approve" letter states that before the Secretary of State finally determines the appeal he will wish to see signed copies of all agreements between Hertfordshire county council and the companies. The letter also highlights the Secretary of State's support for the establishment of a site liaison committee and for the preparation by the appellant of an annual report to be made publicly available.

My hon. Friend also suggested that the Secretary of State in some way removed the protections suggested by the inspector. Again, that is not so. The principal means of safeguarding the residents' interests by the inspector were by limiting the duration of the workings, by way of a section 106 agreement, or by an obligation to run with the land requiring the appellants and their co-developers to start the scheme as soon as the existing Rickneys' workings are completed and to complete the restoration, including the existing Rickneys' workings, by an early and agreed date. We accept the inspector's view that, in order to prevent the amenities of local people being disturbed for a significant period, the duration of the workings should be limited. We believe that these aims can be achieved by conditions that run with the land. That is why there will be a section 106 agreement.

There was also a suggestion that the workings should continue without interruption at a minimum level of extraction, so much a year, each and every year. The reason we have written to tell my hon. Friend that that would be inappropriate for inclusion in a planning obligation is straightforward and fully in accord with precedent. Such obligations should be not only reasonable but sufficiently precise to be enforceable, and the suggested condition is neither. It is not appropriate for the requirement to be the subject of a condition.

Once the Secretary of State receives the requested agreements, he will issue a final decision letter which will set out the detailed reasoning that led to his decision. The letter will also include a detailed schedule of conditions which will——

The motion have been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 25 February 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Antarctic Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I have been a Member of the House for almost 30 years and this is the third time that I have been lucky in the ballot and been able to introduce a private Member's Bill in the Chamber. The last time I did so was only a few years ago with a Bill relating to children's seat belts which got on the statute book. Previously, in the 1960s, I was able to introduce a Bill that also got on the statute book. The title of that Bill has always somewhat embarrassed me—the Parish Councils and Burial Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970—but it was much appreciated by parish councillors. I hope that on this third occasion the Antarctic Bill will allow me to have three in a row. I shall take great pride in that, especially with this Bill, which is of such great interest and, I hope, without controversy.

It is not often that the House has been faced with a proposal for legislation dealing with Antarctica. In fact, only twice before has Parliament legislated on Antarctica —back in 1967 with the Antarctic Treaty Act, which provided mainly for the conservation of Antarctic wildlife, and more recently in 1989 with the Antarctic Minerals Act. Therefore, I feel very privileged to be able to bring before the House today a Bill that is fundamental to the long-term protection of Antarctica. The Bill will strengthen considerably environmental protection over that most remote and pristine part of our planet. Antarctica is the seventh continent and it is by far the most unknown.

I am confident that this important issue is one that all hon. Members will feel able to approve. I am grateful for the support that has already been shown by eminent Members of the House who have been kind enough to lend their signatures to the Bill. I hope that the Bill will prove to be uncontentious and I have noted the cross-party support that is already evident.

The primary purpose of my Bill is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the protocol on environmental protection to the Antarctic treaty and to do so in a timely fashion, thereby demonstrating to the wider Antarctic community our serious commitment in Britain not only to the conservation of the Antarctic environment but to the Antarctic treaty.

I used the word remote a few moments ago. Yet ever since my fellow north Yorkshireman Captain Cook ventured south to the Antarctic seas in the 1770s, Antarctica has held a special importance and fascination to the United Kingdom. The continent may be remote geographically from the House, but, as a nation, we have always taken particular and significant interest in its well-being and we continue to do so.

Britain was prominent in the early exploitation of Antarctica. Sadly, that was in a somewhat unenlightened environmental era when major inroads were made into the substantial whale and seal stocks of the sub-Antarctic islands and the southern oceans. From those depredations decades ago, a number of species have yet to recover. Britain was also to the fore in what has since been termed the heroic age of exploration, when the early surveyors were confronted with virtually a blank sheet of paper.

Until well into this century, Antarctica lived up its to old name of "Terra australis incognita". British involvement in the exploration has stretched from the journeys of Sir James Clark Ross between 1840 and 1843, through Scott and Shackleton earlier this century to the famous trans-Antarctic expedition of Sir Vivian Fuchs in the 1950s.

The process continues, and only last year those extraordinary men Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Doctor Mike Stroud completed their epic journey on foot between the Weddell and Ross seas. If any of my colleagues in the House have not read the book of their journey, I could not commend it more highly.

To dispel further the notion of remoteness, there are two other important Antarctic elements in which the UK has always been, and remains, heavily involved. Those are Antarctic science and Antarctic politics. Antarctica plays a crucial scientific role in today's world. It acts as a principal template for monitoring the health of the global environment and, suffice it to say, some environmental protection in Antarctica as provided by the environmental protocol is vital to safeguarding that science base.

It would be helpful to the debate if I were to rehearse the part that has been played by the Antarctic treaty and the important position within the treaty system of the new protocol. The Antarctic treaty has often been held up as the model of international co-operation. It has enabled international governance of Antarctica to continue for more than 30 years in a peaceful, non-militarised and co-operative fashion. I remind the House that we are dealing with an area of approximately one tenth of the globe's surface.

The negotiators of the treaty, in which Britain's influence was significant, realised that long-term stability in Antarctica would be possible only if states with an interest in Antarctica were to set aside their differences. If the prospects for peaceful co-operation were to be assured, two fundamental issues needed to be addressed.

The first was a formula to defuse the sovereignty issues in Antarctica and the second was to cocoon Antarctica from whatever issues were engaging the rest of the world —in effect, to draw a political cordon sanitaire around the earth at 60 deg. south latitude. The pie-slice territorial claims in Antarctica, including our own British Antarctic Territory, have accordingly been put in abeyance. If you will forgive my pun, Madam Speaker, they have been put on ice for the duration of the treaty by the simple but ingenious mechanism of article IV. That article preserves existing claims and also existing denials of those claims, while at the same time making it clear that nothing which is done during the life of the treaty can be used to assert, support or deny any existing or new claims.

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The treaty parties have studiously isolated Antarctica from the political problems that confront states elsewhere. This has ensured that harmony has prevailed in Antarctica south of 60 deg. south, even when disharmony might reign elsewhere. Certainly for British interests, the continuing success of the Antarctic treaty is crucial.

British Antarctic policy during the past 30 years has been predicated on the view that the most appropriate way for us to manage our affairs in Antarctica with states which dispute our territorial claim and with those which deny all claims is through a strong Antarctic treaty. Anything that might weaken the treaty system would bring with it the danger of reintroducing tensions in that area. That view remains as relevant today as it did in the late 1950s when the treaty was negotiated.

Our strength and commitment to the treaty is, I hope, well known in the House and around the world and it is appreciated by all those other parties. As one of the seven claimant states in Antarctica, Britain was influential in the protracted negotiations that led to the adoption of the treaty and was among the original 12 signatories. Indeed, the UK was the first to deposit its instrument of ratification in May 1960.

Our influence in treaty matters has continued unabated through 17 consultative meetings of the treaty parties, the adoption of over 200 regulatory measures and recommendations and the negotiation of three self-standing international instruments to deal with resource issues on seals, marine living resources and, most recently in 1988, on mineral resources. I shall return to that later. The last instrument was followed by an abrupt change of course early in the following year which precipitated the Antarctic treaty parties into a flurry of negotiations which, fortunately, culminated in the successful emergence of the protocol.

Fundamental to the see-sawing nature of Antarctic politics in recent years has been the question of resources, both renewable and non-renewable. Questions regarding resources strike to the very heart of the Antarctic treaty and they, more than anything else on the Antarctic agenda, have the capacity to increase the tensions that have been held in abeyance by the sovereignty article of the treaty. They carry by implication a political and economic spin-off.

From time to time, Antarctica has been portrayed as some sort of El Dorado, whether one is talking about fisheries resources and the existence of the small crustaceans called krill, off which whales and fish live, or about mineral wealth. Early predictions that the commercial krill harvest from Antarctica would run into many millions of tonnes and would ease the world's protein shortage have not been realised and they seem unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. Many of the statements on hard rock minerals and hydrocarbons in Antarctica were little more than speculation. They were emotively portrayed at times to fuel the environmental debate. Even before the ink was dry on the Antarctic treaty, the signatories were well aware of the resources dilemma. But resolving that issue back in 1959 was more than they could accomplish. The priorities of the day were geopolitical stability, the reduction of cold war friction, non-militarisation and the prohibition of testing or dumping of nuclear material. All other matters but those were secondary.

Subsequently, we have seen how important a role resource questions were to play on the Antarctic agenda, as the treaty parties negotiated conventions on the conservation of seals and marine living resources and the regulation of mineral resources. The latter alone took six years of tough, painstaking negotiation to achieve what was to prove an ephemeral consensus.

If there is a common thread that runs through the issues of Antarctic resources, it is foresight. The treaty parties always realised that it was better to regulate for resource activity ahead of any real demand rather than wait until the demand had become a reality, by which time consensus —the hallmark of the treaty decisions—would at best take an inordinately long time to reach, or at worst become beyond the grasp of the negotiators.

A stark reality that persistently focused the minds of the treaty states towards agreement was always the realisation that lack of consensus meant lack of regulation and that lack of regulation meant a tension-raising free-for-all. That could be in the interests of no one, least of all in the interests of the Antarctic environment.

The protocol to whose ratification the Bill aims to lead the way was born of the effective demise of the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities. If the House will allow me, I should like to refer to it as CRAMRA, which is the universal acronym understood by many people for that convention. Although considered innovative and tough by international environmental law standards, CRAMRA was presentationally flawed. It was portrayed, wrongly we believe, as a miners' charter which would be used for the despoliation and even the rape of Antarctic. In practice, CRAMRA erected so many tiers of regulatory hurdles that any would-be minerals developer would have been hard pressed to have gained the necessary consensus from the treaty parties to open up any sector of Antarctica to mining or hydrocarbon exploration. But the threat was there, no matter how latent. It apparently carried unacceptable risks, at least politically, for some of the parties to the treaty.

CRAMRA was adopted in June 1988, but the consensus created for it was rudely shattered the following spring when France and Australia announced that they would not sign the convention. By 1990 New Zealand, which had already signed, announced that it would not ratify. Such public statements from three claimant states, all of which had to ratify for CRAMRA to come into force, sounded the death knell of the convention. The shattering of consensus brought with it a new potential danger. Rather as in a game of snakes and ladders, lack of consensus promptly returned the treaty parties to square one. No consensus equalled no regulation of the exploration or mining of areas in Antarctica. The minerals free-for-all that CRAMRA was designed to regulate against could once again become at least a political possibility, if not a practical reality.

So late 1989 and 1990 was a difficult period for the treaty parties, which were deprived of their usual consolidation behind consensus. However, again demonstrating a degree of corporate doggedness or ingenuity, the treaty parties began to explore ways to return the system to its customary consensus. It was felt that if agreement did not lie with CRAMRA, it must lie elsewhere.

Diplomatic exploration of a means to solve the minerals debate led the treaty parties to look more widely at environmental protection. In many respects, despite the hostility and antipathy that it generated, CRAMRA had sown many of the environmental seeds from which the protocol was to germinate. Strangely, the Antarctic treaty says almost nothing about environmental protection or conservation. That is not surprising as those were hardly buzz words in the late 1950s. In contrast, much of the subsequent work of the treaty parties has devoted itself to the environment. More than 50 per cent. of the recommendations that have been adopted since 1961 have been directly relevant to environmental protection.

So with the great emphasis on the environment, which we all welcome and have encouraged in the House, one might reasonably question the need for yet another environmental instrument. One could ask what it would do that was not already catered for. One fundamental criticism, and a valid one, which is directed persistently against the treaty system is that too many of its regulations tend to be aimed at encouragement rather than enforcement and that what is clearly needed is a block of tough new mandatory provisions to project the treaty forward into the 21st century.

The United Kingdom and Chile took up the issue by proposing in late 1989 that a special consultative meeting be convened. Its theme was to be comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems. The first such meeting was held in Chile in late 1990. It was followed by three further meetings in Madrid the following year. At the last meeting, the environmental protocol containing the mandatory provisions which the parties had desired was adopted. The treaty parties had returned to consensus and the treaty was again on its customary even keel. Just as 30 years earlier the United Kingdom was the first to ratify the treaty, so the United Kingdom, in the form of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), then Secretary of State for the Environment, was the first to sign the protocol.

The protocol is expressly stated to be supplementary to the treaty. It stems very much from a British initiative and from British drafting. We were not in favour of the free-standing conservation convention then being designed and promoted by a group of the treaty parties. Such a convention would have been overly complex and expensive to operate and would have presented the danger that money would be diverted from the Antarctic science programmes.

Given the dominant role played by the environment in Antarctic affairs, a convention could have ended up competing with the treaty rather than supporting it. The pivotal position of the Antarctic treaty consultative meeting could have been eroded. A free-standing convention, like all conventions, would, as likely as not, have been insufficiently flexible to meet the ever-changing demands that would inevitably be placed upon it.

International legislation needed to be as adaptable as the ever-changing environment that it was attempting to protect. It was believed that a protocol—as framework legislation, with annexes that could be added to or modified—would provide the flexibility required to deal with Antarctic concerns.

The British concept for a protocol was supported by Argentina, Uruguay, Norway and the United States. It was launched at the meeting in Chile and rapidly gained acceptance. Subsequent input—I must single out that from the Norwegian delegation—added considerably to the text.

What does the protocol set out to achieve? It designates Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science. It sets out strict environmental principles for the protection of Antarctica to ensure that any activities there will have minimum impact. In particular, it requires that most activities in Antarctica shall be subject to environmental assessment before they are even allowed to proceed. The procedures for environmental impact assessment are spelt out in some detail in annex I to the protocol, while three other annexes deal with the conservation of wildlife, waste disposal and management, and the prevention of marine pollution.

As an illustration of the flexibility of the annex approach, a fifth annex on protected areas has since been added to the protocol and the treaty parties have considered, but so far rejected, a proposed annex dealing with tourism. Further work has begun on yet another annex, which deals with liability for damage to the environment, but I guess that that will take some time to negotiate.

Tourism is a fast-growing industry in Antarctica. Last season, about 6,500 tourists visited the region, mostly by cruise ship to the Antarctic peninsula area, which has the easiest access from south America. All the signs are that that trend will continue. There is no disagreement about the fact that tourist activities in Antarctica must be carefully regulated. The formation of a co-ordinating organisation by the tourist industry—the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators—is a welcome development. The regulation of tourism is already catered for.

The protocol explicitly refers to tourism as one of the key activities in Antarctica to which its provisions apply. Having said that, I believe that there may be merit in introducing some additional regulation for tourism, although not by means of a new annex as that is not held to be a sensible way to proceed. Tourism will be debated further in April at the next meeting of parties to the treaty in Japan, when it is hoped that some progress will be made.

On minerals, the protocol is very clear. A single sentence in article VII spells it out and simply prohibits all mineral resource activities in Antarctica other than for scientific research. Such research would include the sort of geological and geophysical studies that are being carried out by the British Antarctic Survey. The protocol includes mechanisms for the review of the mineral ban after 50 years, or before that time if all parties to the treaty agree. The ban will continue unless, or until, a binding legal regime is in place under which a decision can be taken on whether mining is environmentally acceptable.

Ironically, although they approach the minerals issue from opposite corners, the ill-fated minerals convention and the environmental protocol have one important element in common. For the next 50 years, both require a consensus of treaty parties before mineral activities in Antarctica could even be contemplated. That puts the minerals issue on the shelf well into the foreseeable future —one could even say that it does so indefinitely.

The environmental protocol establishes a new institution, the committee for environment protection, which will be a technical and scientific organisation providing advice to parties to the treaty. That additional tier within the treaty system is vital as environmental and scientific issues in Antarctica take on increasingly important roles. The new committee will supplement, but not supplant, the highly valued advice that has been provided to treaty parties by the Scientific Committee for

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Antarctic Research—incidentally, its secretariat is based in Cambridge—which will continue to advise treaty parties as part of its primary function to co-ordinate and direct the thrust of Antarctic science.

The protocol reinforces the treaty's inspection provisions for facilities in Antarctica to ensure political transparency and compliance. It identifies the need for emergency contingency plans to deal with incidents, such as oil spillages and accidents to vessels. During the past few days there was such an accident, but mercifully no one was hurt. Finally, the protocol sets up mechanisms to settle disputes if they cannot be resolved by other means.

The adoption of the protocol in late 1991 was the most radical and far-reaching strengthening of the Antarctic system since the inception of the treaty 30 years before. Without stating as much, parties to the treaty have carried out the very 30-year review that was envisaged in it. They wisely left the carefully crafted formula of the treaty's language intact and bolted on to it, in the form of the protocol, the tough environmental regulations that the treaty had left out. With those new additions and the built-in flexibility inherent in the protocol and its annexes, one hopes that the Antarctic treaty is in sound shape to carry on for at least the next 30 years and longer. It should remain the flagship of international co-operation.

I am afraid that it has taken me a long time to reach this point, but I shall now turn to the Bill and how it deals with the protocol. I mentioned earlier that the primary purpose of the Bill is to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the protocol. First, I must mention those elements of the protocol that are not dealt with in the Bill and the reasons why that is the case. Annexes III and IV of the protocol set out mandatory provisions to deal with waste disposal and management and the prevention of marine pollution. Waste disposal and management is not dealt with because it was thought more practical for them to be set out as conditions on any permit issued by the Secretary of State for a British expedition going to Antarctica or a research station that might be established there. Contravention of those conditions would, therefore, constitute an offence. That is a more satisfactory way to deal with the somewhat technical issues of waste disposal and management.

The second issue that is not covered by the Bill is marine pollution. The text of annex IV of the protocol tracks very closely the provisions of the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships, to which the United Kingdom is a party. Its provisions are already implemented by the Merchant Shipping Acts and the supplementary regulations under those Acts. We see no need for further primary legislation to deal with marine pollution in Antarctica.

The other three annexes in the protocol are, however, dealt with in the Bill and I shall refer to them later.

I draw attention to the definition of Antarctica in clause 1. The Bill's area of application is that of the Antarctic treaty area—the area of land, sea, ice shelves, air space and continental shelf south of the 60 deg. south latitude. That definition alone is wider than that found in previous United Kingdom legislation on Antarctica because the protocol has a wider ambit than either the treaty or the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activity.

The Bill goes further than the protocol requires in regard to the protection of seals and whales in the Antarctic ocean.

The key principle of the protocol is that activities in Antarctica, governmental and non-governmental, including science and tourism activities, but excluding commercial fishing, should be subject to environmental assessment before they are allowed to take place. The procedures for carrying out those assessments are set out in the protocol. The degree of assessment will depend on the predicted severity of an activity's impact.

It is felt that the most appropriate way to ensure compliance with those obligations is to require that all British expeditions or research stations in Antarctica have an environmental permit from the Secretary of State. Regulations will set out the criteria under which permits will be issued. One such criterion would be that any applicant for a permit must demonstrate that the activities that the expedition will undertake will not have an unacceptable environmental impact and that an appropriate impact assessment has been undertaken. Conditions will be attached to any permit, including, for example, conditions to ensure compliance with the waste disposal provisions of annex III of the protocol, to which I referred earlier.

Perhaps I should point out that the more traditional view of an expedition, conjuring up ships sailing south to frozen wastes, has nowadays been somewhat eclipsed. Today's expeditions include a growing number of tourist cruise liners. Elements of the Bill—for example, the legislation governing wildlife and protected areas—will, however, extend to all United Kingdom nationals, whether they be scientists in the British Antarctic Survey or tourists, wherever they may be in Antarctica. Vessels or planes that are simply in transit in the Antarctic treaty area or commercial fishing vessels are not to be regarded as expeditions. They will not, therefore, require a permit.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Clause 21 applies British law to British citizens active in any way in the Antarctic. Hon. Members will be aware of the great conflicts concerning the so-called claims on Antarctica—the British claim is overlaid by the Argentinian claim, the Chilean claim and so on. In the case of a prosecution against an individual under what, for the purposes of the debate, I will call the British claim, what would happen if that person sought refuge in Argentinean or Chilean law? Should they not ratify all the convention in exactly the same way as the Bill is trying to do, their laws will be different from British law.

Mr. Jopling: The terms of the protocol bind all the nations that are signatories. Once all the 26 nations have ratified, the terms of the protocol will become binding on them. There are some problems, to which the hon. Member has alluded, and they go further than he suggested. If nationals from a country that was not a signatory to the protocol attempted to carry out activities in some of the unclaimed portions of the continent, it would cause problems of the type that the hon. Gentleman described. If that were to happen, the signatories to the protocol would come together again to see how they could deal collectively with the problem. We have had cases in the past where states that do not approve of this system of collective international co-operation have set up bases in Antarctica. It may be indelicate for me to name them, but their behaviour causes a problem.

One of the more emotive issues raised during the negotiations on the protocol—the issue that set in train those negotiations—was the question of mineral resources in Antarctica. Article VII of the protocol prohibits mineral resource activity, other than scientific research. Article XXV sets out the procedures for any amendments to the protocol, including amendments to the minerals ban. Clause 6 of my Bill deals with the minerals issue. It prohibits all mineral resource activities—in effect, it bans prospecting, exploration and the exploitation of minerals.

The Secretary of State has the power to grant permits, but only in respect of bona fide scientific research, for example, the important studies into geology and geophysics carried out by the British Antarctic Survey, or for obtaining building materials for the construction of a research station or ancillary infrastructure. Even then, the activities in question must have been the subject of an appropriate environmental assessment and a permit must be issued for that activity to be carried out. The permitting procedure for scientific research is, legally, the most appropriate way to deal with this sensitive matter. It leaves the decision as to what is, or is not, scientific research firmly in the hands of the Secretary of State.

The issue of minerals is particularly difficult, because I understand that it can be very difficult to distinguish between an activity carried out for academic science and one carried out for commercial purposes. The physical activity, such as a drilling operation, may be identical in each case. The critical difference between the two lies solely in the purpose, the intent, for which the activity is being carried out.

The determination of whether a particular activity is undertaken for scientific reasons is best done by the Secretary of State, in the light of all available information. I am confident that, under the formula in the Bill, the integrity of Antarctica will be ably safeguarded from potential mineral exploitation by United Kingdom nationals without prejudicing the ability to carry out important scientific research there.

Thirty years ago, the Antarctic treaty parties introduced, under the treaty, agreed measures for the protection of Antarctic flora and fauna. In their time, those measures were the toughest international wildlife regulations and they have stood the test of time. The protocol has done no more than refine those earlier regulations.

The Bill will ensure strict protection for Antarctic wildlife—far stricter than corresponding wildlife law in the United Kingdom. Anyone who saw the recent BBC wildlife series, presented by Sir David Attenborough, called "Life in the Freezer" will have been captivated by the sheer spectacle of Antarctic penguins, seals and whales. It was a most memorable series and the proper conservation of those internationally important wildlife resources is clearly important.

The Bill will make it an offence for any United Kingdom national to disturb, take or kill any mammal or bird in Antarctica. It will prevent them from undertaking commercial sealing or whaling operations in the Antarctic treaty area, although I hasten to add that none is foreseen.

Provision will be made, however, for a permit to allow wildlife to be taken for scientific purposes on the understanding that the guidelines set out in annex II of the protocol will be adhered to. Those stipulate that no more animals or plants should be taken than are strictly necessary. Clause 16 sets out a reporting procedure on the permit which, together with the exchange of information under the Antarctic treaty, should ensure more than adequate transparency to the permit scheme.

Mr. Corbyn: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the appalling abuse of the international whaling convention by Japan, which consistently takes thousands of whales on the pretext of scientific research. They end up on diners' plates in restaurants in Tokyo and elsewhere. I understand the intentions behind the Bill, but is the right hon. Gentleman certain that the same appalling abuse will not be perpetrated in Antarctica under the guise of scientific research, which is a thin disguise for commercial activities?

Mr. Jopling: Again, the hon. Gentleman has put his finger on a danger. I share his anxiety about the cover of so-called science which has protected so many whaling activities around the world in recent years. The hon. Gentleman may recall that, in a former incarnation as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I was responsible for those matters. The British initiatives over the years to control whaling have played a major part in trying to stop pseudo-scientific whaling. I hope that the Minister will say a little about it when he responds. It is a real danger because it is a matter of interpretation of the protocol. I hope that, through the International Whaling Commission, we shall continue to work hard to stop that pseudo-scientific activity.

Clause 8 prohibits the introduction of non-indigenous animals and plants into Antarctica, except under permit. So the dispensation under which sledge dogs could be used in Antarctica is now almost impossible to justify. They are no longer a vital form of transport in Antarctica. The last three countries to use huskies in Antarctica have all arranged for their dogs to be removed by April. I understand that the 14 sledge dogs that we left at the British Antarctic Survey's Rothera station were airfreighted out of Antarctica this week and will be repatriated in the Hudson bay area of Canada. The House will be pleased to know that they will be kept and used there as a team.

Annex V of the protocol has rationalised the existing plethora of protected areas in Antarctica into two types of sites. The Bill will make entry into Antarctic specially protected areas, referred to as "restricted areas", illegal except with a permit issued by the Secretary of State. Under clause 11, similar provisions will extend to scientific sites set up under the convention on the conservation of antarctic marine living resources to monitor seals, sea birds and penguins.

At first glance, part III may appear to be a strange insertion in a largely environmental Bill, but it is intended to deal with the jurisdictional lacunae. Some five sixths of Antarctica is claimed by some state or other, but one pie slice lying between 150 deg. west and 90 deg. west longitude has never been claimed by any country. While the treaty is in force, no country can claim it. In contrast to the British Antarctic Territory, there is no territorial jurisdiction whatever in that sector of the continent. To ensure that UK nationals who may work in or visit that area are properly subject to law—not just the environmental law under the Bill—the whole of United Kingdom criminal law should apply to UK nationals in that sector. The Bill similarly extends UK jurisdiction to observers and exchange scientists and their accompanying staff

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designated under the convention on the conservation of antarctic marine living resources. Those two provisions are required by both the treaty and the convention.

A miscellany of clauses deals with offences, proceedings, regulations, entry into force, and repeal of existing legislation. We intend that the two existing pieces of Antarctic legislation—the Antarctic Treaty Act 1967 and the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989—should be repealed. The former would be totally repealed and the latter repealed leaving only one section dealing with jurisdiction with respect to proceedings under the law of the British Antarctic Territory.

I hope that the House agrees that the aim and content of the Bill are laudable. Antarctica may be a far-away land of which we know little, but it is an enormous land mass and we are becoming increasingly aware of its importance. To ensure its long-term protection, we must give it our urgent attention now. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

10.27 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am delighted that we are having this debate and that the Bill has been introduced. I fully support it because it represents the culmination of a lot of effort by many people for many years to change the regime and attitudes towards Antarctica. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on the content and drafting of the Bill and the fact that we are now debating it. I confess to having a long-term love affair with Antarctica, which has always greatly inspired and interested me, and I was due to visit Antarctica when the Gulf war broke out. I had to return to the House and oppose the Gulf war, which pleased neither Front Bench, but that is life.

The history of Antarctica and the current feelings towards it are interesting. It has been a place of inspiration to many. We cannot say that Captain Cook discovered it because we do not know who may have gone there previously, but he certainly made people in this country aware of it. His writings show that he was concerned about preserving its wondrous flora and fauna. Much later, Charles Darwin did exactly the same. They recognised that it was a place of wonderment, amazement and research from which we can all gain a great deal of knowledge. That is the main thrust of much of the Bill.

Antarctica has also inspired many other people and it would be wrong to debate it without referring to its impact on British life and literature. The wonderful epic poem by Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", is partly based on the voyages of Captain Cook and his knowledge of what went on at that time.

I shall briefly quote the part of the poem in which, after the ancient mariner has left his port in the northern hemisphere and has been driven south by the strong winds, there is this wonderful description:

"And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyranous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.
With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head...
And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast high, came floating by
As green as emerald."

The poem goes on to decribe the horrors of the cold and the later part of the voyage.

There has also been a sordid side to the history of Antarctica—the rapacious attitude of, initially, northern nations and, more latterly, southern nations towards the whale and seal populations there. There has been the appalling destruction of the whale population and the brutality of the whalers, shown in the methods used to kill whales. There has been the near extinction of the blue whale, a 160-tonne mammal which is so big that an elephant could stand on its tongue. The blue whale was destroyed wantonly and totally unnecessarily, often for wasteful purposes.

I honestly believe that if people could understand the intelligence of whales and the communication that they have among themselves, they would not allow whaling to continue for one moment longer. I am pleased that the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale referred to the role of the International Whaling Commission and to the need for the protection of whales in the Southern ocean. It will take centuries, long after we are all gone and forgotten, for the blue whale population to get back to even a fraction of what it was in its heyday, and the same applies to the other whales. I strongly believe that we must end whaling once and for all, in all parts of the world. Many nations, such as Norway, Japan and the former Soviet Union, have told lies about the number of whales they have taken. Those lies are utterly to be deplored and we must once again reaffirm our commitment to a total ban on whaling. Whales are extremely intelligent creatures; they can communicate, they have a sense of family and they have a sense of responsibility. We should recognise that.

There has been an uneasy relationship between commercial interests and scientific interests in Antarctica. Many have recognised the potential for genuine scientific and environmental research in Antarctica for many years. The early expeditions by Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton and others recognised the value of Antarctica as a place of research and a place of interest for all of us. The Fuchs expedition in 1957, international geophysical year, paved the way for the Antarctic treaty of 1959, which was a very important document. I was only 10 years old in 1959, but my mother told me about the treaty. We were at the height of the cold war and it would have been logical for the militarisation of the Antarctic to develop then. Indeed, bases were placed in the Antarctic during the second world war because some people realised that it had military potential. In that sense, the 1959 treaty was a remarkable document in declaring the Antarctic a non-military zone of peace. I am not saying that no base has ever had a miliary impact—most of them have such an impact in some sense or another—but the fact that the zone of peace principle is on the face of the treaty has at least meant that there cannot be any military activity there, although I am sure that some of the "scientific" uses have really been for military purposes. Once again, we need to reaffirm that the Antarctic should never be used for any military purpose. Such use could lead to serious threats to the area's ecology, ecosystem and environment.

All those issues came together when many of us strongly opposed the Antarctic Minerals Bill. I shall not repeat the arguments, save to say that it must be understood that the Antarctic ecosystem is very fragile. Antarctica is a dry continent; there is little precipitation. The snow that falls is wind blown and wind drawn for the most part. Antarctica is a place where, if rubbish is left, it remains. If dog faeces are left, they remain. If oil pollution occurs in the ocean, it remains; it does not biodegrade as quickly as it would in a warmer, more northerly climate. Those factors must be borne in mind in the tight definition of who can act and what they can do within the Antarctic.

We must pay an enormous tribute and give great credit to Greenpeace and others around the world who have done so much to expose the nature of the Antarctic bases, the way in which rubbish has been strewn around the place, and the fact that many nations have refused to remove their rubbish and have done quite unnecessary building work around their research stations. I remember the great dispute with the French over the building of their base and the arguments about the development of one of the British bases. The work of Greenpeace and the visits to Antarctica by the replacement Rainbow Warrior—after the French blew up the first one—have succeeded in drawing attention to the way in which some of the bases are run and have forced countries to clean up their act and take their rubbish home. That is an important aspect of the matter.

I did not support the Antarctic Minerals Bill and I was very pleased when, eventually, the Foreign Secretary confirmed in an answer to me last November that he would ensure that legislation was introduced to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989. Although I congratulate the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale on introducing the present Bill, I believe that it should have been a Government Bill. However, at least the Bill is here and we are getting it through; that is the important point.

I congratulate those who have drafted the Bill: it is forward looking and unambiguous in its content and the spirit of the Bill will have widespread support. It is especially commendable and important that jurisdiction under the Bill covers the whole Antarctic treaty area south of the 60th parallel—not only the continental shelf, but all land, water and ice below that parallel. The Bill's commitment to prohibiting oil and mineral exploitation, except for the purposes of genuine scientific research, is also important.

I understand the wording of the Bill and the intention behind it, but I believe that we must be extremely careful here. Those of us who opposed the Antarctic Minerals Bill did so because we recognised that once one allows exploration to take place for any minerals, whether oil, zinc, manganese, gold or coal, of which there are probably large reserves under the Antarctic, a commercial value is put on the continent and on the potential for exploitation. As surely as night follows day, exploitation would happen at some point.

It is interesting that world public opinion—and I mean genuine public opinion—came together to oppose the idea of mineral exploitation of the Antarctic. It forced the Australian and New Zealand Governments to change their view. Commendable work was done in Santiago in Chile around that time to achieve the intention of stopping exploitation and to look towards the idea of a world scientific park in the Antarctic. The public opinion to which I refer was world wide. Ordinary people all around the globe could understand the importance of preserving this amazing continent in perpetuity, which would help the rest of us to understand things a bit more deeply.

The Bill is also to be commended for including the permit system and controls on entry to and exit from the Antarctic. It should not be difficult to police those provisions, but some resources will be required. A will to do it and, above all, the co-operation of other countries is required.

The open commitment to prevent any commercial whaling or sealing in the treaty area is also welcome and important. The seal population has grown quite a lot and has recovered quite well and in some areas has overtaken the whale population as the consumer of krill. It is important that people do not look on the fish reserves of the Southern ocean as something that can be plundered in the way that the fish stocks of so much of the north have been plundered, causing us to try to conserve them. The krill are there to maintain the ecosystem. If the krill are taken or if large stocks of fish are taken, not only from below the 60th parallel, but from areas near there, there will be a serious problem for the ecosystem of the whole region. We must ban all whaling and sealing in the region in order to allow those wonderful mammals to breed and, hopefully, to regain their former numbers, although I suspect that in the case of the great whales it is a vain hope and is unlikely to happen.

I hope that the Minister can assure us today on the need for a strong diplomatic offensive among the 26 signatories to the treaty to support fully what is happening and to ensure a new approach to the Antarctic. Above all, we must encourage other nations to support the treaty's provisions, sign the protocol and support the protection of the Antarctic. If 26 countries fully endorse all the provisions to protect and control the environment of the Antarctic, but a few do not and decide to put illegal bases in the unclaimed part of the territory and exploit and break the rules, sanctions will have to be applied against them.

It is not just a matter of sanctions, but of understanding and accepting that the world has moved on and the Antarctic does not exist merely to be exploited. The need for a serious and strong diplomatic offensive around the world is important. Greenpeace has done much to heighten world-wide awareness of the Antarctic. It is a two-way process—popular demand combined with Government-to Government relations will, hopefully, protect the Antarctic for ever.

I should like the Minister to tell us what attitude the British Government intend to take at the Kyoto meeting in Japan, which I understand is in April this year, in terms of launching that diplomatic offensive. The last clause in the Bill states that it will become law at a date to be determined by the Secretary of State, which I assume depends on what happens at Kyoto and other meetings. We need an assurance that the Bill will not be passed only to lie for years on the statute book unimplemented because of insufficient approval from other countries. We need to take a lead. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance on that. I hope that he will also assure us of continuing Government financial support for the activities of the British Antarctic Survey and its fine record of genuine scientific research in the Antarctic.

The environmental message from the Antarctic is absolutely overwhelming. There is no other place on earth where one can drill for a core sample. In the Soviet research base the deepest possible ice-core samples have been drilled. We can check what the water purity was like as long ago as 500 years, 1,000 years, at the time of the Romans, Christ and before. We can see what we are doing to the planet by studying core samples of ice in the Antarctic. By examining the ice and the laying down of air

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

pockets in it when it was formed, we can also find out about air pollution on the planet. It is horrific that lead pollution from cars in the United States, Britain, Germany and France as well as other countries eventually ends up in the air around the Antarctic.

The discovery by Joe Farman, a member of the British Antarctic Survey, of the problem of ozone depletion was a major breakthrough in the advancement of environmental science. It demonstrated that what we are doing to the ozone layer can lead to the death and destruction of us all. It has already caused serious problems for mammals in the Antarctic region and for sheep in southern Chile and southern Argentina. It has caused skin cancer for people in Australia and New Zealand. It is a terrifying and serious problem. Had that discovery not been made by Joe Farman and the British Antarctic Survey, it would not have been made until much later. We are under pressure to remove all CFCs and ozone-depleting chemicals from production and to prevent their use.

The measurement of the temperature rises that have occurred in the Antarctic shows that, since 1945, the average mean temperature there has risen by 2 deg C—a significant rise. The Antarctic has the largest amount of water locked up in it of anywhere in the world. The Antarctic demonstrates the fragility of the planet and the ecosystem. If we do not use the Antarctic as a place for research, we shall be denying ourselves knowledge that will help us to preserve the planet and what lives on it. The Antarctic can help us to find a sustainable way of living with the environment rather than destroying it.

The Bill is important, as is the Antarctic and the message we can take from it. If we do not grasp the opportunity now and ensure that we relay the message that commercial activities and mineral exploitation in the Antarctic are out of court, we shall have failed in our duty.

I understand the wish for tourism but we must control tourism and the numbers of people entering and leaving the Antarctic territory. I can understand why people want to be tourists in the Antarctic. I should love to go there as a tourist and so, I suspect, would many others. The desire to go to the Antarctic is perfectly understandable, but tourism must be strictly controlled. Ill-equipped tourists turn up in unsuitable ships which then get into difficulty and expect British, Russian or French scientists from the various stations to bail them out. Such tourists leave rubbish, pollution and destruction in their wake. The problem is serious and I hope that the Minister can assure us that, at the Kyoto meeting, there will be serious discussions about the role of tourism and visitors to the Antarctic, the ways in which the numbers can be strictly regulated, the routes that they can take and what they can do.

It would be awful if, having stopped the killing of whales by whalers and prevented the exploitation of minerals by the repeal of the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989, we allowed pollution and destruction to follow through people going on Cook's tours to look at icebergs. I want people to be able to visit and see Antarctica, but they will have to recognise that the price to be paid is that they must not touch the environment and must take every piece of rubbish home with them and not leave it to rot for future centuries.

The introduction and passage of the Bill allows us to send out a vital message. Popular demand has been far in advance of parliamentary and political opinion. The work of Greenpeace and many others throughout the world in drawing attention to the importance of the Antarctic should not be underestimated. If we give the Bill a Second Reading today, and it goes into Committee, we shall have made some progress. We can make further use of the Bill by using it as an example of how to preserve the environment in a more general sense. I hope that we shall take that step.

10.46 am

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on introducing the Bill. As one would expect, he has chosen a subject of great importance to people worldwide, particularly those who care about the environment and who wish to maintain regions that, to date, have been relatively unspoilt by man's activities. As my right hon. Friend said, those regions are havens for numerous forms of wildlife, many of which are unique to the Antarctic.

I join the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in paying tribute to the British Antarctic Survey. Those of us who met Joe Farman—who first identified the hole in the ozone layer above the Antarctic more than 10 years ago—and his colleagues when the survey ship visited London a few years ago were impressed by both their enthusiasm and dedication and, above all, their expertise in their chosen profession. Like the hon. Member, I hope that we shall continue to fund Antarctic research at a reasonable level because it provides the baseline for so much environmental research.

The signs of man's activities in the Antarctic are not always something of which to be proud. If the Bill is passed without opposition in the United Kingdom, as I hope it will be, it will put down a marker to the other 25 countries that have signed the protocol. I hope that it will persuade them to ratify the protocol with all speed.

Given our experience of the lack of enforcement of regulations and, in some cases, even the national law, in the European Union, we should be wise to temper our enthusiasm until it is clearly demonstrated that all 26 countries are willing not only to sign the protocol, which they adopted by consensus in 1991, but to ratify it. Having ratified it, they must accept their responsibilities to ensure that the fine words spoken after signing the protocol result in firm action to enforce it.

The UK demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that Antarctica remains unspoiled by being the first to sign the protocol. My right hon. Friend's Bill, if it becomes an Act, will enable us to ratify that protocol. I am glad that the Bill contains provisions to ensure that all waste materials produced as a result of man's activities in Antarctica will be disposed of in a sensible and responsible manner. The recent photographs that we saw in the newspapers, taken not far below the summit of Everest, will provide a constant reminder that the human race cannot be allowed unrestricted access to, and activity in, an area such as Antarctica.

I am pleased that the UK continues to support the concept of a southern ocean whale sanctuary. Whatever arguments we may have in the northern hemisphere about the need to cull whales to preserve fish stocks—a matter which I believe must be looked at rationally where national economies are affected—there can be little argument that a Southern ocean whale sanctuary would provide at least one area of the world where those great creatures could be preserved for the future, free from commercial exploitation, which has bedevilled conservation measures in the northern hemisphere.

I return to my nervousness that some of our partners who signed the protocol will not be as precise as us in their definition of the controls that they intend to exert in Antarctica; nor, I fear, will they be as enthusiastic in enforcing whatever regulations are ultimately agreed. The Bill sets out requirements for British expeditions and scientific research, prohibits mineral extraction and provides protection for historic sites and monuments. I hope that my right hon. Friend has considered widely the effect on tourism in Antarctica. Although it is a modest commercial activity at the moment, tourists increasingly are looking for new areas and new challenges and, while they are a welcome addition to the economies of such places as the Falklands and the southern tip of south America, where ships call on their way south, we have only to look at recent history in Europe to see what effect mass tourism in an uncontrolled manner, motivated purely by commercial considerations, can have on areas which, formerly, were outstandingly beautiful, were managed for the local people and provided a balance between human activity and wildlife.

I understand the attractions of tourism, but all visitors are a potential threat to the territory. However good the rules that are laid down for tourists, experience shows that the greater the number of visits, the greater the threat to wildlife. It is not much good having a rule that says that visitors must not get closer than 5 m to penguin colonies if a tourist ship runs aground and spills 170,000 gallons of diesel oil, as happened in 1989. While most tourist ships try to co-operate to minimise the disturbance to wildlife, it is difficult when zodiac landing craft are ferrying hundreds of eager tourists to the shoreline. Those tourists will have paid several thousands of pounds for the trip and may expect value for money in the form of close acquaintance with the wildlife.

Price alone at the moment may ration the flow of tourists to Antarctica, but in these days of increasingly cheap travel, we cannot assume that mass tourism will not turn its attention to Antarctica, if allowed to do so. Package tours are available from capital cities throughout the world to almost every remote area in the world, which outlines the need for continuing vigilance in this area. The more Antarctica is publicised, the more visitors there will be and the greater will be the threat and the need for effective controls to prevent damage by, for example, carelessness, lack of awareness or plain commercial greed.

My right hon. Friend referred to the fishing industry in Antarctica and the need for balance and control. Again, if we need a warning, we have only to look at what has happened to the fishing industry around our shores and the effect of what I will tactfully call a variable enthusiasm by some of our European partners in enforcing conservation agreements. Krill is the start of the food chain for marine life up to the largest marine mammals. Unless we ensure that it is not over-exploited, we shall see a steady decline in all forms of fish stocks throughout the area. Although it is outside the scope of the Bill, the Falkland Islands has wisely introduced a licensing system, and fishing within its waters is controlled. But if one looks at the areas from where the fishermen obtaining licences come—Japan, Korea and Poland—one will see that travel, with all its attractions, is now much easier and only adequate control of all forms of fishing in Antarctica would be acceptable. It is unthinkable that mankind, for industrial, commercial or tourism activities, should be let loose on one of the last remaining unspoilt areas of our planet.

Like most people, I have to rely on the film reports and the expertise of people such as Sir David Attenborough to understand and appreciate the unique beauty of the Antarctic and its animal and marine inhabitants. Nevertheless, I believe that we have a duty to ourselves and future generations to ensure that the Bill receives a speedy passage through Parliament. I hope that its passage will enable the Government to bring pressure on other signatories to the protocol and that the Government will then take the necessary steps to ratify it.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his expertise and foresight in bringing the Bill before the House today. I hope that we shall speed it on its way.

10.55 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): When I looked at the first clause of the Bill, with its definition of Antarctica as

"all land, ice shelves, sea, continental shelf and airspace south of 60 degrees South latitude",

I could not help but reflect that, if I were to look at a mirror image for the northern hemisphere, I would find that a substantial part of my constituency might be defined as Arctic rather than Antarctic. The House might then understand that, to get back to my constituency before tomorrow morning, I may find it necessary to leave before the end of the debate.

I add my congratulations to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on having had the good sense to introduce the Bill. It is clear from the contributions to the debate, and by looking at the sponsors of the Bill, that it has the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) is in his place. I notice that he is a sponsor of the Bill.

Many of us are pleased to see the Bill, but I take the point made by the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) that simply passing it is only part of the story. It is important that the United Kingdom Government go on to ratify the protocol, but every encouragement must be given to other signatories to the protocol so that they ratify it, too.

It would be churlish to say that perhaps the Government should have introduced the Bill. It would be unfair to labour that point when the whole House should be pleased that there has been a considerable change of heart in the Government.

Many of us also took part in the discussions and protections on the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989. On that occasion, there was no consensus in the House, and many of us were critical of the Government's stance in wanting to allow mineral exploitation in Antarctica. Many of us perceived a lack of understanding about how damaging to the Antarctic environment a major engineering project, such as mineral exploration and exploitation, could be. Many of us warned at the time that Britain was becoming increasingly isolated in persisting with the minerals agreement when one country after another was backing away from it.

Therefore, we were pleasantly pleased—perhaps surprised is putting it too strongly—that the Government's attitude towards Antarctica seemed to change dramatically.

[Mr. James Wallace]

Perhaps that was because of a change of Prime Minister—who knows? Mineral exploitation or mineral excavation is now permitted only for scientific purposes, which cannot be altered for at least 50 years without the unanimous agreement of all parties. That is a welcome step forward.

The Government are also to be congratulated on going beyond the protocol, as I understand it, and allowing provision in the Bill for protection of all mammals—which, of course, will include whales. I believe that, under the international arrangements, the position of whales is a matter for the international whaling convention, rather than for the Antarctic contracting treaty powers. Nevertheless, the provision clearly indicates that the United Kingdom Government would welcome the idea of a whale sanctuary in Antarctic waters. That, too, is welcome.

As the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) pointed out in an intervention—

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Malaysia (Contracts)

11 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Britain and Malaysia have worked hard together over the past 10 years to set our relations on an excellent footing. Trade last year reached the highest total ever—£965 million, up 52 per cent. on 1992. We want to preserve our excellent relationship.

The Government very much regret the decision taken by the Malaysian Government to ban new contracts with British companies bidding for Government business in Malaysia. The problem arises from what Malaysia perceives as unfair reporting by the British press of affairs relating to Malaysia. There is no good reason for the Malaysians to make a connection between British press reporting and the conduct of trade between Britain and Malaysia. Trade is justified on its own merits to the benefit of both countries.

In Britain, the press is free; the Government cannot control what the press reports, and do not seek to do so. The Malaysian Government understand that.

We are in close touch with the Malaysian authorities, and with British businesses, and hope to restore Malaysian relations to a flourishing footing as soon as possible.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I thank the Minister of State for making his statement.

These are very important—indeed, in some respects unprecedented—events, affecting British trade and perhaps thousands of British jobs. It is exactly the handling of the events surrounding the financing of the Pergau dam project that have brought the matter to a head.

Because the Foreign Secretary overruled the decision of his own accounting officer in respect of a quarter of a billion pounds of taxpayers' money, which the accounting officer described as an abuse of our aid budget; because the Foreign Secretary denied that there was any link with an arms deal with Malaysia—a statement that we now know to be untrue; because, at every stage as this event has unfolded, the Government have sought not only to deny the House information, but at times to give misleading information in answer to questions—is it not clear that it is because of that conduct by the Government that we now face these serious circumstances?

Is the Minister aware that Opposition Members believe that links between our overseas aid budget and a formula for the cost of defence deals constitute a clear breach of law, contrary to the Overseas Aid Act 1966 and the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980? Is it not clear that, if councillors were behaving in this cavalier fashion, Conservative Members would be the first to call for them to be disqualified from office and personally surcharged?

Is it true that, at the same time as British companies were involved in discussions about aspects of the Pergau dam project contracts, some of those same companies were involved in discussions about aspects of the arms deal? Does the Minister really expect the House and the country to believe that these things were being done separately, without knowledge of the one being linked to knowledge of the other, in companies such as Trafalgar House and GEC? Are we really expected to believe that?

Is the country expected to believe that expenditure of a quarter of a billion pounds of taxpayers' money was being promised to a Government at the same time as an arms deal was being negotiated with that Government, and that there was no link between the two? Those are incredible statements.

It is precisely because this whole squalid business has started to unravel following legitimate investigations by the National Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Members of Parliament and the British media—who are perfectly entitled to ask questions about these matters—that British trade and British jobs are now at risk; and the responsibility lies with those on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Goodlad: The Malaysian Government have made it clear that the problem has arisen not, as the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) alleged, from our handling of the Pergau dam project—which Malaysia welcomed as a contribution to its development—but from what Malaysia perceives as unfair reporting by the British press of affairs relating to Malaysia.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the matter of my right hon. Friend's overruling the Overseas Development Administration's accounting officer. My right hon. Friend looked at the project in the light of our commitment to continue to assist Malaysia's development, and in the wider context of our overall bilateral relationship with Malaysia. If we had backed out, that relationship would undoubtedly have been damaged.

The Malaysians placed great importance on the Pergau project as a contribution to their national development and diversification of their energy sources. It is the Government's task to promote the national interest, including exports and jobs. I recognise that it is not the right hon. Gentleman's job, as he sees it.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the possibility of a link between the aid offer and defence sales. The Malaysians raised this with us in 1988, in the context of negotiations over the 1988 memorandum of understanding on defence sales. The then Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the Malaysian Finance Minister in June 1988 to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales. We made it clear on several occasions in 1988 that we were willing to consider aid for civil projects. The September 1988 memorandum of understanding with Malaysia on defence matters makes no mention of overseas aid.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the documents for the Foreign Affairs Committee. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made it clear that he will co-operate fully with the Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry. He has sent the Committee a full and detailed memorandum, and both he and the Minister for Overseas Development will be giving oral evidence to the Committee.

I repeat that it is our wish to restore relations with Malaysia to a harmonious footing, in the interests of both countries and the people who work for firms doing business there. I recognise that the right hon. Gentleman may not wish to join us in that task.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): It may interest the House to know that I spent some 15 years of my working life trying to export the construction industry and its products to various parts of the world. I suggest that the only people who should take comfort from the present exchange are our competitors overseas. They are well aware that, in any export industry, the same rules do not normally apply in other countries as apply here; and there is a lesser understanding of our standards in this country.

Would it not be better, however, if, in their desperate attempts to smear the Government, the Opposition waited until after the inquiry? While Opposition Members may glory in the present embarrassment between the two countries, the net result is lost jobs, which are clearly of no concern to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Mr. Goodlad: I agree with my hon. Friend, who speaks with great knowledge of those matters.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I entirely agree with the opening statement by the Minister. Is it the case, however, that the objections that the Malaysian Government have raised are to British press stories about funds paid, allegedly, by British contractors into Swiss bank accounts on behalf of Malaysian politicians? If so, none of us is in a position to know whether those stories are true or untrue, but it is surely up to the Malaysian Government to respond to them. The blast of blather from Malaysia this morning suggests that they may have something to hide.

Does the Minister accept that, a few years ago, an editor of a major newspaper in Kuala Lumpur was jailed for two years without trial for writing stories that were inconvenient to the Government, and will he make it clear that, much though we may be tempted, that is not how we do things here?

Does the Minister also accept that, although there may be Members of Parliament who imagine that kickbacks or misuse of aid funds or arms deals are legitimate if one is pursuing business and jobs, the policy of Her Majesty's Government remains that of good governance—transparency, accountability and freedom of the press—and that we shall wish to return to those matters in the debate on Tuesday?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support of what I said in my statement. He is right to say that I have no responsibility for what appears in the British national press, and that remedies are available to the Malaysian Government if they seek to use them.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am a member of the Committee on Public Accounts. Does my right hon. Friend agree that what has upset the Malaysian Government, understandably, is the suggestion in some parts of the British press—fanned by some Opposition Members, unfortunately—that there has been corruption; or, alternatively, that the deal between Britain and Malaysia was illegal? Is he further aware that there was nothing illegal about the deal that was done with Malaysia? There is nothing in the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980 that would demonstrate that any such deal was illegal.

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the reason why Sir Tim Lankester, the former permanent secretary, quite properly sought a direction from my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was that he was questioning the economy and efficiency of that specific provision of overseas aid to Malaysia?

Is he further aware that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave Sir Tim Lankester a direction, which he was properly entitled to give as Foreign Secretary, and that he

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

gave that direction because he did not wish to renege on undertakings entered into between the then British Prime Minister and Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, the Malaysian Prime Minister, at their joint meeting?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct on the subject of legality and, as I said earlier, he is also correct to say that my right hon. Friend considered the project in the light of our commitment to continue to assist Malaysia's development, and in the wider context of our overall bilateral relationship with Malaysia.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This is bad news from Malaysia, and no one can do anything but regret it, but will the Minister, first, make it plain to the Malaysian Government that trade is a two-way thing, and that we have been running a persistent deficit in our trade with Malaysia?

Secondly, will he continue to make it plain to the Malaysian Government that the Government here control neither the British press nor the debates or questions that are raised in the House of Commons?

Finally, will he assure the House and the country that Foreign Office Ministers and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to co-operate with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in its inquiries into the Pergau dam and all that is associated with it?

Mr. Goodlad: I can give the right hon. Gentleman the assurance he seeks about co-operation with the Foreign Affairs Committee. He is right to say that there is no good reason for the Malaysians to make a connection between British press reporting and the conduct of trade between Britain and Malaysia. He is also right about the nature of the trade deficit and, as I have said, we are not responsible for what the British press reports or for what is said in this place.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does the Minister agree that the House perhaps would be wise, before jumping to conclusions, to await the report of the Select Committee, which is inquiring into this matter, and which will cross-examine two Ministers next week?

Will he also convey two messages? Will he convey a message to the Government of Malaysia that many people in British industry will be perplexed, under the freedoms that we enjoy in this country, to find their jobs put at risk because of the activities of a free press, which we believe to be essential to our liberties?

Will the Minister also convey a message to the press, reminding them of the need for responsible reporting in view of the way in which some countries in practice, and perhaps in an irritating way, respond to irresponsible reporting? Will he suggest to those newspapers which have made allegations that, if they have evidence, they ought to produce it, and that, if they have not, they ought to withdraw the allegations?

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend is right to say that the House should not jump to any conclusions in advance of the report of the Select Committee, and I do not imagine that the House would wish to jump to any conclusions. He is also right to say that people will be bewildered that their jobs should be put at risk by press reporting, and he is obviously right to reflect that accurate and responsible reporting is very important to this country's reputation. I believe that responsible people in the media would share that view.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I, as the Member of Parliament who was responsible for debriefing the original Pergau informants in 1989, and who asked the National Audit Office to carry out the inquiry that subsequently took place, tell the Minister that key questions remain unanswered?

One question is, why was the contract driven through in favour of those companies against the advice of the World bank, of people in the environmental movement and of people in the Overseas Development Administration itself? Even in the Foreign Office there was division; there was division in the Department of Trade and Industry; there were people in the Treasury challenging the decision that was being taken. Why was it driven through when everyone else was advising that the project should have been based on a gas-fired power station, which is indeed business that Britain would have won? Why cannot we have those questions answered at this stage?

Is it not important for the Malaysian Government to realise that the reason why British Members of Parliament are asking questions on the issue, and why the British media are running with the story, is that everyone knows that the project was an abuse—an abuse of Britain's aid budget, of money that should have been sent to third-world countries to help people who were in real need?

Mr. Goodlad: The responsibility for the decision was not in the hands of the World bank, of environmental groups or anyone else. The responsibility was that of the British Government. My right hon. Friend considered the project in the light of our commitment to continue to assist Malaysia. The Malaysians placed very great importance on the Pergau project, as a contribution to their national development and diversification of their energy sources. We have diversified energy sources ourselves in this country.

There was nothing illegitimate about using aid and trade provision. It was introduced by the Labour Government in 1977 precisely for that type of project. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Labour party is now abandoning the use of ATP? Perhaps we should be told.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in Commonwealth terms, this fracas is most distressing? Would not both countries have an immense amount to lose from a trade war? Will he convey a third message to the Malaysian Government—that, under United Kingdom law, it is perfectly open for the Ministers against whom allegations have been made to sue the British press?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right on his latter point. On his former point, of course this is regrettable in the Commonwealth context, and I hope that our relations will return to harmonious and fruitful paths as soon as possible.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is it not a fact that it is the Foreign Secretary, not a journalist, who is personally responsible for the threat to British exports and jobs, because it was the Foreign Secretary who had Sir Tim Lankester read a statement to the Public Accounts Committee, linking British exports with the Pergau dam affair?

Mr. Goodlad: I fear that the hon. Gentleman has not been listening to the exchanges that have taken place in the Chamber in the past 20 minutes. The problem arises not from the British Government's handling of the Pergau dam project, which Malaysia welcomed as a contribution to its development, but from what Malaysia perceives as unfair reporting by the British press of affairs relating to Malaysia. Any attempt by the hon. Gentleman to distort the truth of the matter is, I am afraid, bound to fail.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the top priority for the Foreign Office is to restore relations with the fastest growing economy in that part of the world, that it is best done by time and patient, quiet diplomacy, and that our excellent high commissioner should be encouraged to get on with it? Does he agree that companies such as British Aerospace are exporting at the front of technology, and that it is greatly in the interests of such a Commonwealth country that it should benefit from their products? Will he remind the Malaysian Government that British Aerospace is creating vital jobs in Malaysia?

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, indeed: my hon. Friend is absolutely right. Trade stands or falls on its own merits and is, by its nature, to the benefit of both parties involved. British Aerospace is certainly a good case in point.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May we have some clarification? The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) claimed that the deal was not illegitimate but, in his initial statement, the Minister told us that there was no deal and that the matter was merely coincidental. Was it coincidental, or was there a deal?

Mr. Goodlad: What my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said, which I said was correct, was that there was nothing illegal about the grant of aid and trade provision for the Pergau dam project.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a pretty shameful day for British jobs when Opposition Members admit knowing that the effect of their actions will be to destroy jobs? Is he aware that in Hampshire, close to my constituency, many jobs depend on foreign orders? Will he take it from me that the people employed in the companies involved appreciate his efforts and those of the Government to continue to sell British industry abroad? Will he guarantee that those efforts will continue undiminished?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. We shall continue to work as hard as we can to promote British exports, which are doing extremely well in Asia, and to sell Britain abroad. He is right to point out that Opposition Members are interested only in selling Britain short.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister stop confusing the message with the messenger? Does he accept that the questions being asked in the British press are wholly legitimate and proper questions about the conduct of public affairs and the use of public money? Will he decide once and for all and tell us that the Government are not prepared to condone sleaze, corruption or backhanders in any shape or form anywhere in the world, especially if British companies and the Government's own policy decisions are involved?

Mr. Goodlad: Of course we do not condone sleaze or corruption; nor have the British Government been involved in any such thing. I have already said that we are not responsible for what appears in the British press, but that accurate and responsible reporting is very important to this country's reputation.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): If the allegations made in the British press, especially in the Sunday press, have any substance, should not such evidence be made available straight away? If there is no such evidence, should not the press apologise to the Malaysian Government?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend makes an important point.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does not the Minister realise that the whole overseas aid budget has been cut by half since 1979, and that what we are objecting to in particular is the misuse of aid and trade provision? This case, in addition to many others which I believe the National Audit Office is at present examining, is a reason for an inquiry to be held into the use of aid and trade provision. Should it not be kept separate by the Department of Trade and Industry from the activities of the ODA? Was it not a lack of development soundness as much as anything else which the permanent secretary of the ODA and Lady Chalker were questioning at the time?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Lady's initial statistics are, to say the least, a little misleading. In fact, our overall aid has gone up by 10 per cent. in real terms since 1987. She mentioned aid and trade provision, which was introduced by the Labour Government in 1977, and which currently accounts for approximately 5 per cent. of our overseas aid programme. We give a higher proportion of our aid budget to the poorest countries than other major donors, although one might not think so from listening to the hon. Lady.

Our major competitors use tied aid to win contracts overseas and we cannot allow British industry to be at a disadvantage. To date, some £3.9 billion of British exports has been won through aid and trade provision since the scheme started—272 projects in 50 countries worldwide since 1977. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady may not like it, but she has to listen. If it is the purpose of the hon. Lady and the Labour Party to cease this form of aid, we should like to hear about it; otherwise, they should stop carping about it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are rising on both sides of the House who were not here for the statement. I have said before that hon. Members must be here to hear the statement before I can call them.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend contrast the interesting difference between the very measured and responsible utterance of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the frenzied and exaggerated hysteria of the shadow Front Bench spokesman, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), and others, especially the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), when crucial British jobs and exports are at stake?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that none of this is the fault of the present Government? *[Interruption.]* Yes, that is so. Will my right hon. Friend convey to the excellent Government of Malaysia the fact that we too have suffered

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

at the hands of a wholly free and irresponsible press, which is not under the control of the British Government, and that the British Government and British companies are most anxious to continue to promote the modernisation and development of Malaysia and that it is one of our most sincere objectives?

Mr. Goodlad: I do not wish to drive wedges between the two right hon. Gentlemen, but my hon. Friend is right to say that we should now try to restore our relationship with Malaysia to its former fruitful state, to the benefit of both countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is not desirable anywhere, and not possible in this country, to control the press? Will he also confirm that, if British contracts are not signed, even though they might provide the best value for Malaysia, it is probably an offence against GATT and not in the interests of the Malaysian people? Does he agree that those who want to have clean hands while digging in the graveyard of British jobs will not be very convincing?

Mr. Goodlad: As always, my hon. Friend's points reflect his great knowledge of these matters. He is right to highlight the cavalier attitude towards British jobs shown by Labour Members.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many Conservative Members want more linkage between British jobs and foreign aid? Does he also agree that the present problem is with the press in this country, especially the foreign-owned press, which seems to have little regard for British jobs? Does he further agree that it might well have something to do with the comments made by the Malaysian Prime Minister and the Australian Prime Minister at a recent meeting, rather than with the British Government and recent contracts?

Mr. Goodlad: Accurate and responsible reporting is important, whatever the ownership of the press involved.

Dr. John Cunningham: Everyone will recall that, on the last occasion that relations between Malaysia and Britain were at a low ebb, it was because of the policies of the present Government, so we take no blame for their mismanagement of our relations with Malaysia. We of course deplore the threat to trade and jobs in this country, as I said at the outset, but we shall take no lessons about threats to jobs from a Government under whom there are still 2.8 million people in receipt of benefits and many more unemployed. For every year that they have been in office, they have had many more people unemployed than the last Labour Government ever had. That is the reality.

May I say to the right hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* —and his raucous supporters—that it will never be possible to build a successful economy and stable and secure jobs on squalid, if not illegal, deals like this. Of course we all need a responsible press in any democracy; but even more in Britain, we need the responsible conduct of government in the interests of the people.

Mr. Goodlad: This morning, the right hon. Gentleman seems to be rather a late convert to the interests of British workers and British jobs. It has suddenly occurred to him that he should say something about the matter. I am sure that he will not be pleased that unemployment in this country is falling as it is, and that we are doing so much better than our European competitors. It is feeble to complain about what the right hon. Gentleman called "raucous supporters" on this side of the House: I fear that he may be rather embarrassed that he has so little support on his side.

As I said, Britain and Malaysia have worked hard together over the past few years to develop an excellent relationship, with very high levels of trade in each direction. We are determined to preserve that excellent relationship, and we do not expect any assistance from the Opposition Benches.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This statement was most important to me, because jobs in my constituency could certainly be at stake, as it is extremely important in other constituencies, for that reason and for many more. However, the statement was not notified to 3 Dean's yard where my office is and, therefore, not to me. Although I asked the attendant on duty if she knew about the statement, she said that she did not, and nothing came through. Could you look into the matter and ensure that that never happens again, bearing in mind the great importance of a matter like this, and any other statement?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the statement has been on all annunciators since 10 o'clock this morning. However, if the hon. Gentleman will let me know the annunciator that he looked at, I will have it examined. I call Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Greenway: It was not on the annunciator that I looked at.

Madam Speaker: Order. I just made the point that it was on all the annunciators that I saw. If the hon. Gentleman says that it was not on his annunciator, I will have it examined.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I hope the fact that you did not call me on the statement does not mean that you thought that I was not present for it, because in fact I was present at the start.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members need not raise these points of order. The two hon. Gentlemen I referred to—I will not mention their names so as not to embarrass them —knew exactly whom I meant, and did not rise after I said what I did. We are a little subtle in the Chamber—not very often, but sometimes.

Antarctic Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

11.32

Mr. Wallace: I was talking about the welcome steps that the Government have taken to include in the Bill the protection of all mammals, which of course will include whales. I ask the Minister what the position will be with regard to fish, because reference has already been made to the importance of krill, especially in the food chain.

I note in clause 3(2)(b) that the requirement for a permit will not apply to persons who are entering or remaining in Antarctica for the sole purpose of fishing for profit. I think that we are all well aware—indeed, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, having previously been a Fisheries Minister, will be only too aware of this—of the importance of the conservation of fishery stocks and how difficult conservation can be.

We want to know what arrangements are in place for the conservation of fishery stocks in the Antarctic area. It is clear that a free-for-all would not be in anyone's interest, let alone those of the fishermen who wish to continue to fish in these waters.

I turn to some of the specific provisions of the protocol and the Bill. It is clear that the protocol addresses the issue of environmental impact assessments, although they are not specifically mentioned in the Bill. I understand that, in granting permits, the requirement for environmental impact assessments will be a condition attached to the permit. Perhaps the Minister could confirm that.

I ask the Minister to indicate just how he envisages environmental impact assessments being carried out. I assume that they will have to be carried out before a permit is granted, and that some presentation will need to be given. Perhaps the Minister could make that clear.

Who will determine whether certain criteria have been met and are covered by the environmental impact assessment? Indeed, will that apply to those who are seeking a permit? For example, it may be the British Antarctic Survey. We know that an airstrip was built at Rothera station in the late 1980s. At that stage, the requirements for environmental evaluation were gone through.

Will the British Government be the judge and jury on an application from a British Government agency? That need not necessarily mean that there will be anything improper about that, but we would be grateful for a reassurance about the way in which such applications will be dealt with.

The two areas that are left out of the Bill, which have already been referred to, relate to waste disposal and management. As the hon. Member for Islington, North pointed out, waste is an important issue when the speed of biodegradability is slow. Indeed, Greenpeace must be congratulated on pointing out exactly what damage can be done simply by sewage effluent. Although the Bill does not refer to that, some reassurance that conditions on waste disposal will be part of the permits granted for expeditions would be welcome.

May I enter a caveat about the final part of the protocol relating to marine pollution? There have been serious oil spills in Antarctica. Having had some experience of dealing with marine pollution in the northern hemisphere and in northern waters, I am concerned that the Merchant Shipping Acts, even the international regime that applies under the marine pollution convention, can be weak when it comes to enforcement.

I will not go into all the details, but for some time I have been pursuing with the Department of Transport the case of a Greek vessel which was photographed and videoed discharging garbage into northern waters contrary to the MARPOL convention. Basically, it is now accepted by the Department of Transport and the Foreign Office that little can be done to bring those responsible to account for that, because of lack of evidence or because it appears that the international regime is weak when it comes to enforcement. We want the means of enforcement strengthened when there are incidents of marine pollution, particularly in Antarctica.

All hon. Members who have spoken have mentioned tourism. The useful brief provided by the research staff in the Library gives a figure from the United States Natural Science Foundation. The foundation projected that it expected some 8,460 United States tourists in the 1993-94 season. I thought that was a very precise figure. I share the view that has already been expressed, that there is a great attraction to going to Antarctica—I would like to go there myself some time. Equally, there is concern that, if tourism got out of hand, it could do considerable damage to a very sensitive biological and wildlife area.

It is clear that the protocol is intended to deal with tourists. It is clear from the Bill that any tourists wishing to travel to Antarctica, either on their own or as part of a group, will require a permit. It would be interesting to know whether the Government have a policy for restricting or otherwise controlling the number of United Kingdom citizens who wish to visit Antarctica, and the kind of conditions that they envisage will apply to British tourists to that part of the world.

As to the granting of permits—many parts of the Bill relate to this—I hope that we can have a commitment to openness, especially when permits are refused. It would be useful for those who have had a permit refused to know the reasons why it was refused. In one sense, that might discourage repeat applications, if it were clear that a policy or pattern were emerging, and that there were certain kinds of expeditions which clearly the Government were keen should not take place, perhaps for good reasons. It would be helpful if that was all above board.

Non-governmental organisations, such as Greenpeace, may want to mount expeditions to see whether everything is going on in Antarctica as we have been assured that it ought to, and that the requirements and treaty obligations are being fulfilled. One would hope in those circumstances that such organisations would be permitted to go, and it would be useful to have some guidance on that.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman is on to an extremely important point. There is a danger of abuse with any system where there is no appeal. If the Government, or any Government, felt that the presence of Greenpeace was not conducive to that Government's interests—never mind the interests of the natural environment—they might refuse a permit. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there should be some type of appellate system?

Mr. Wallace: I take that point. Although clause 14 allows

[Mr. Wallace]

"for appeals against the revocation or suspension of permits", it does not appear to make any provision for appeal against the refusal of a permit. Perhaps that important area could be examined in Committee.

I am sure that amendments could be tabled so that the matter could be discussed in Committee, because that is a valid point. No one at this stage is suggesting bad faith —least of all in a Bill for which there seems to be lot of commitment to achieving the objectives of the environmental protocol—but some openness when permits are refused, combined with an appeal system, would give reassurances.

I raise one final point of detail about the Bill, as someone with a qualification in Scots law. It is clear that those who have drafted the Bill have been cognisant of the fact that Scots law does differ, and specific provisions are made for Scottish partnerships.

I note that clause 21 states that, where a UK national does or omits to do anything in the given area which would have constituted an offence under the law of any part of the UK if it had occurred in that part,

"he shall be guilty of the like offence as if the act or omission had taken place in that part".

Under which jurisdiction or which law would that apply?

I will take a hypothetical example. Suppose that, in three or four years' time, a person is found in possession of cannabis in that area. We know that the Home Secretary is proposing a maximum fine of £2,500 in England and Wales, whereas a Scottish Office consultation document brought out last week proposes a fiscal fine of £25. There is a world of difference, and I would like to know which jurisdiction would apply in such causes.

That is a fine legal point, but we should always be on guard in the House when dealing with the historic basis of Scots law, to make sure that it is not automatically subsumed into a different legal system.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale stated that the Antarctic treaties were models of international co-operation. That certainly has been proved during many years. Following the breakdown after the lack of ratification of the minerals agreement, a new regime was quickly put in its place. That is a tribute to all the participating countries, and it is a recognition of the global importance of Antarctica.

It is also important that the area has not become a place of competing political interests; above all, it is important globally for the scientific research which can be undertaken there. Issues such as global warming and the ozone layer are critical to all humanity, and it is important for us to preserve perhaps the only genuine wilderness area left in the world.

I am glad that the Government appear to have given a commitment, and the Bill embodies it. I am sure that the Bill will have a warm welcome, and I wish it a speedy passage through the House.

11.46 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): It is widely recognised that when we deal with private Members' legislation in the House we often have a more interesting time than when we deal with other matters. That is certainly true this morning.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), not only on picking this measure, but on moving its Second Reading so well in the House today. He is a very wily right hon. Gentleman. Many hon. Members know that private Members' legislation can occasionally be a trap. On being selected in the ballot, it is tempting to secure a measure that is perhaps provocative. It sounds exciting at the time, but one lives to regret it. One may provoke constituents, and there can be a huge mailbag. There can be all sorts of difficulties on the Floor of the House and a tedious time in Committee.

My right hon. Friend has managed to select a piece of legislation for a part of the world which is far removed from his constituency. He has no constituents there who will write to him to complain about it. The penguins, whom the legislation will doubtless benefit, cannot correspond with him. They cannot even write to congratulate him on his measure.

My right hon. Friend is wily because he got there before I did. I would probably have selected his measure, but I was obliged to go for a different measure which also appears on the Order Paper today. It is perhaps a shame that my right hon. Friend's Bill dealing with Antarctica does not address the problem that I attempted to address with the Parliamentary Commissioner Bill, because the problem will still apply.

If a tribunal in Antarctica were to sit and the chairman had not been appointed by the Lord Chancellor, that tribunal would not come within the ambit of the parliamentary commissioner, as currently happens in the United Kingdom. That would be a problem not only in Britain, but in Antarctica as well. The other measure before the House today would be of great benefit to my right hon. Friend's Bill because it would increase scrutiny on an exceptionally important point.

The main concern of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration—I am sure that it could be extended to the area covered by my right hon. Friend's Bill—is social security appeals tribunals, and there may be some scientists who work for us in the Antarctic to whom this would apply—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Gentleman will have to be a little more ingenious if he is to convince me that this is relevant to the Second Reading of the Bill.

Mr. Malone: I shall, indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker. The point I am making is that those people who perhaps fall within the need for the parliamentary commissioner would find it important to have my measure applied there also. I have made my point, and I will not attempt to engage in a different Second Reading debate for another measure.

Although Antarctica is remote, we have heard thoughtful speeches from my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale and from the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) which have emphasised that it is in many other senses extremely close to home. That is not just because it is a part of the world in which Britain has always had great interest. We were instrumental in discovering Antarctica and in getting it recorded in geography and history. Since then, Britain has taken a great interest in exploration, and we have participated with many countries in scientific experiments there. These have all been of great benefit. There has been a history of co-operation in an area where there could well have been conflict.

The House should note a rather interesting lesson. Competing claims have been made on that continent by many different nations, but we have managed its affairs to the extent that there has been no real conflict. We have quietly left the problems on one side and got on with the business of ensuring that scientific research is carried out properly and in an ordered way. It is important that the measure is introduced now because there was a great risk if we did not do so that, having been in the forefront of co-operative work with other nations in the Antarctic and having been the first country to sign the protocol, it would look as though we were laggards. I understand the pressure of parliamentary time on introducing legislation which may not appear to be in the forefront of the public interest or the public's mind, but I am glad that we now have the opportunity to put it right. I welcome my hon. Friend's Bill for that reason.

As right hon. and hon. Members have explained, Antarctica is a fascinating place. Not only is it virtually the last wilderness in the world but it is the place where 70 per cent. of the world's fresh water supply exists. The penalty for not getting right our policy on a part of the world that is such an ecological jewel would be high. I read in my research for the debate the rather interesting if somewhat nerve-wracking point that if the Antarctic ice shield melted the water level across the world would rise by some 65 m. It would not be possible to have a debate in the House on the consequences of such a disaster, should it occur, but it is a serious matter because the consequences of getting our policy wrong in Antarctica would affect all of us, no matter how far we may be from it, and we can already see changes happening.

We can see what has happened during the development of the industrialised world from the ice cores that have been taken from Antarctica. We have seen two things. One is the problem of lead pollution which, surprisingly, has already reached that subcontinent. The hon. Member for Islington, North mentioned that. He did not mention, but I shall, that the ice cores also show that since the developed world moved to unleaded petrol, the problem has improved. So we see the consequences of an irresponsible policy but we can also map out in Antarctica what happens once we put those policies right.

Our policy is important from not only a scientific point of view and in terms of lead pollution. Most of the studies on holes in the ozone layer take place in Antarctica. It is the right place for it. I am not one of those people who believe in the Armageddon theory of what might happen if holes appear in the ozone layer from time to time. Let us remember that it is only 20 years or so since the phenomenon was observed. I am not at all certain that we are seeing it for the first time in our history. Perhaps added research in places such as Antarctica will tell us whether ozone holes are a passing phenomenon that we should ignore or a permanent difficulty that we must tackle. The mood now is that the phenomenon must be tackled. That is probably the right judgment. However, continuing work by our scientists in Antarctica will tell us whether it is a permanent problem or merely something that occurs from time to time.

Much other work is done in Antarctica. The protection of that work, the need to ensure that it continues in an unpolluted atmosphere and the regard that we must have for wildlife there is paramount. I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale deal with the matter of controls. When I read the Bill I was concerned that the terms of the permits to be issued for a range of activities were not set out in primary legislation. I came to the early and perhaps uncharitable conclusion that that was to avoid difficulty. I thought that the permits might not address the regulatory framework in the way they should. I was worried that they might not be tight enough and that we might be getting away from our obligations under the protocol. I was therefore extremely pleased to hear my right hon. Friend set out the reasons for that.

I accept entirely that a wide range of circumstances can affect the permits that will be granted to scientists to carry out work. The permits will affect the ways in which waste is dealt with and environmental impact studies. I am persuaded by my right hon. Friend's speech that those matters can vary from time to time. It is important to have flexibility in the arrangements. Perhaps my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will comment on that. I hope that he will be able to confirm that the spirit in which the Government approaches the framing of the permits will be tight rather than lax. I hope that the Government will set firm standards which match the protocol. If we could have that undertaking from my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, I should be extremely grateful.

Tourism has been mentioned. I have a feeling that the 8,000 or so—a very precise figure was given—tourists that it is estimated will go to Antarctica from the United States are but the thin end of the wedge. I do not object to such tourism. The more people who are able to experience at first hand the wonders of a continent that have been displayed only in literature or on television for most people, the better. They should be able to do so. Both the hon. Member for Islington, North and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said that they would like that to happen to them. Perhaps a Select Committee trip may beckon. Who knows? If normal relations can be resumed with the Opposition, perhaps we can agree that Select Committee trips can be made. Antarctica would be a rather good destination so that Select Committees could see for themselves and perhaps suggest to my right hon. Friend how best the excellent measures in the Bill could be monitored and secured.

Mr. Jopling: Perhaps a Standing Committee trip.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent suggestion. He has suggested that the Standing Committee which will consider the Bill should go to Antarctica so that it can conduct its affairs at first hand. I rarely volunteer to serve on Standing Committees. I long ago learned that if one speaks on Second Reading one perhaps expects to serve on the Committee. My right hon. Friend enforces the view that a visit to Antarctica would be the ideal way for the Standing Committee to gain first-hand experience on this important matter.

I return to the issue of tourism. I hope that when the Government consider the implementation of the Bill they will keep in view the voluntary organisation of tour operators that has come together to regulate tourism to Antarctica. It may work or it may not. Tour operators who are not a party to the voluntary arrangements can easily get round them if they suddenly decide that there is an opportunity to exploit. I hope that there will be constant

[Mr. Malone]

monitoring of the rules and regulations that the voluntary organisation applies. It is important that we get it right. I do not suggest that tourists take with them a stick measuring five metres so that they always know whether they are five metres or more from a penguin that they happen to come across, but I am concerned about the conditions under which tourism is conducted.

For example, the type of vessels used must be appropriate. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North. He is right that thin-hulled vessels sailing in those waters are a menace. We must ensure that there is no likelihood of increasing tourism being brought to Antarctica at the expense of an increasing risk of pollution and damage. Tourism also poses a risk to those working on scientific experiments in Antarctica. If a difficulty arises and people need to be rescued, those carrying on scientific work in the area are obliged to come to the rescue. It is a waste of their resources and energy and we should not ask them to bear that risk.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): In support of that point, does my hon. Friend agree that so often it is the sheer volume of tourism that damages the environment? Although relatively few tourists may go to Antarctica, the likelihood is that they will concentrate in particular areas and, therefore, the damage could be great.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is right. Although the statistic may not be 100 per cent. accurate, I think that I am correct in saying that only 2 per cent. of the Antarctic land mass is ever free from ice. The scientists congregate in those areas and they are also the dropping-off point for tourists, which is why there are waste disposal difficulties.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) that it is important that the context within which tourism can take place should be established very early on. Antarctica must not suddenly become fashionable in the way that fashions for other resorts come and go. It must not suddenly become the done thing to up sticks and go to Antarctica. While one cannot deny anyone's right of access to one of the most fascinating parts of the world, any regulatory mechanisms must take great care to consider the arrangements made for tourists when they get there and their numbers. My hon. Friend is right—pressure of numbers is the real problem.

Mineral exploitation is also important and the Bill is clearly designed to deal with it in the firmest possible way. I welcome the fact that we have moved on from the stage where the legislative structure for the Antarctic could have permitted mineral exploitation. Now it does not. Enforcing the protocol in legislation here will be an important step towards ensuring that Antarctica is a no-go area for such exploitation.

I am not so sure that mineral exploitation was a very great risk. Those wishing to extract minerals—for example, hydrocarbons in the shape of oil or whatever—would face almost insuperable problems. It is not easy to extract minerals from a sub-continent where the ice sheet is 5 km deep in some places. It has not been possible to get ice cores for examination from any deeper than 2.5 km, so there is a technical problem and I am not certain that massive exploitation of minerals was ever a likely or feasible proposition in our lifetimes. However, it is good that we have decided to ratify a protocol which will stop it entirely, as it helps to press the case for protecting the Antarctic environment in this country and elsewhere and I welcome that.

I hope that once the Bill reaches the statute book, which I trust it will do in good order and in good time, the Government will make every effort to ensure that other countries which have signed the protocol but not yet enshrined it in their legislation will do so as that is important. I hope that our Government will send out the message that, after a short delay, we have enacted the protocol and it is time for others to act as well.

I hope that we shall continue our commitment to scientific research in Antarctica and that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will deal with that in his speech. The costs of scientific experimentation can be reduced in many ways. Two stations in Antarctica, which were previously manned, are now automatic. Such investment, which ensures that costs are trimmed wherever possible but guarantees continuing experimentation, is an important way to ensure that money is well spent. It would be a great shame if we withdrew our scientific efforts in an area where we have always had the greatest interest and been able to take a clear lead. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to assure the House that our scientific efforts in Antarctica will continue.

I must reinforce something that the hon. Member for Islington, North said about wildlife. He was right to cite the problem of commercial exploitation under the guise of scientific experimentation. What has happened in the whaling industry is a disgrace. Some countries have clearly ignored the undertakings that they gave and have gone in for commercial exploitation on a grand scale, under the thin veil of scientific experimentation. There are lessons to be learnt from that—we must ensure that once the protocol is implemented nothing similar can happen and that we create an exploitation-free zone.

One example where we must be on our guard is in dealing with the seal population, which requires culling from time to time. Experiments with culling and its effects on seals and on the balance within the mammal population have taken place in many nations, not merely in Antarctica. I am concerned that there should be no commercial exploitation of such culling. There is one way to guarantee that: when a scientific decision has been taken that scientific experiments or culling exercises are required because it is in the interests of the mammal population, there should be no commercial exploitation of that decision. Otherwise, I fear that scientific experiments will be the crutch on which commercial exploitation can rest. We have seen that happen before and are forewarned, so it is important that when we implement the treaty and the protocol we remain forewarned and make every effort to ensure that nothing of that kind can happen again.

Antarctica is one of the places from which we can observe our future. In many ways it is vital to the way in which we manage the global ecosphere. We can have summits in Rio, but it is what we are able to observe in places such as Antarctica that will eventually tell us whether our policies are successful.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale has done an excellent job in introducing the Bill, which has been well drafted and matches the protocol in just about every particular, and he has explained that those elements of the Bill that do not entirely reflect the protocol will be set out in permits granted once it is enacted. It is an excellent effort.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale has a great interest in wildlife, not only in Antarctica but also in this place. He has been the author of three pieces of private Members' legislation and a report designed to protect parliamentary wildlife as effectively as the Bill and the treaty will protect the wildlife of Antarctica. There is a better prospect, however, of the protocol being enforced in Antarctica than of his measure to protect parliamentary wildlife coming to fruition. That is a great pity. The benefits of this legislation for the penguin population are one thing. The benefits of my right hon. Friend's other report are greatly needed for the wildlife in this House and I trust that not only the Bill will be enacted but that he will be successful in his other efforts.

12.8 pm

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): The Labour party welcomes the Bill and wants it to proceed as smoothly as possible through its parliamentary stages. The all-party support that it has received is clearly shown in the list of sponsors, which includes the shadow Foreign Secretary and shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, as well as other prominent Members of the House. I also note that the Bill received strong approval from the Liberal Democrat party in the speech by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on his success in winning a high place in the ballot and on his choice of subject, the protection of Antarctica. Since I am sure that he is confident of the Bill becoming law in due course, I am sure that it will be part of his parliamentary record on which he will look back with considerable pride in the future.

As I have said, the Labour party welcomes the Bill. The fact that the Government want the Bill to be enacted is a matter of satisfaction to the Opposition, because we believe that it represents a vindication of our long-held views about the need to ensure the highest degree of environmental protection for Antarctica.

Despite the achievement of the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale in introducing the Bill, I, too, regret that it had to be introduced through the private Member's procedure. Many of us believe that the Government should have taken the opportunity to introduce the Bill themselves at the earliest opportunity. Many people had expected and hoped for the Bill's inclusion in the Government's programme, because the Madrid protocol has been awaiting ratification since October 1991. One wonders what would have happened if the right hon. Gentleman had not had the wisdom to sponsor the Bill when he won a place in the ballot. I hope that we would not have had to wait much longer before a similar Bill was introduced. Now that the Bill has been introduced, the Government must give it their full support quickly so that it reaches the statute book soon.

The Bill has been introduced in an atmosphere of consensus and all-party agreement, which I welcome. Many of us, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), will remember that the last time that a Bill concerning Antarctica was discussed, it was much more controversial. The Antarctic Minerals Bill was debated forcefully by both parties some three years ago. Throughout its proceedings Labour Members consistently argued that it was inappropriate. They argued that, at best, it would be impossible to implement because other signatory countries to the Antarctic treaty would veto it and, worse, that it could be seen as giving encouragement to commercial forces interested in exploitation of the Antarctic. That Bill showed up the fact that the Government's green credentials were not nearly as good as they should have been.

I put it on the record that throughout the proceedings on that Bill, the Labour party spoke strongly in favour of Antarctica being given permanent protected environmental status as a world wilderness park. We continue to hold that view and it is a goal that we would advance in government.

Having read the debates on the Antarctic Minerals Bill in the House and in Committee, I pay tribute to my hon. Friends who took part in those debates for their foresight and commitment to the environment and to Antarctica. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, who spoke knowledgeably and with great feeling this morning, was a member of that Committee as were my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). I am sure that they are all pleased that today's Bill is being considered. They will be greatly relieved that it will make it impossible for mineral exploitation and mineral resource activities in particular to take place.

In 1989-90, the Government seemed to view with some concern the activities of the Governments of Australia and of France. Our Government saw them as trouble makers, who broke the consensus on mineral exploitation and testing. I believe that those Governments were motivated by the highest environmental concerns and I am glad that, in the end, it is their view that has prevailed.

Throughout all the debates on Antarctica, what has been of great encouragement to us all has been the concern that our constituents have shown for the continent and the protection of its environment. It has been heartening to realise the depth of the environmental commitment of many of our constituents. Like many other hon. Members, I was lobbied by constituents, written to and presented with petitions about Antarctica. The importance of its environmental protection is obviously something about which people feel strongly. There was widespread recognition of the unique importance of the Antarctic environment, the research carried on there and of the knowledge about world environmental problems that that research is capable of bringing to light.

Although concern about the environment expressed by groups and interested constituents is important in this country, it is also important in other countries. For example, the work of the Cousteau Foundation in France was important in getting the French Government to adopt a certain attitude about three years ago.

I echo the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) in paying tribute to the research work carried out by the British Antarctic Survey. I know how important that work is. Hon. Members have already mentioned, understandably, the relationship between that research and knowledge about the ozone layer and the hole in it which was discovered over Antarctica. I wish that some of that research had been better funded. The hon. Member for Winchester said that two of the five stations would be unmanned from 1995 to 1996. The excellent paper produced for Members by the House of Commons Library notes:

[Ms Joyce Quin]

"The bases are closing because the BAS cannot afford the necessary £5 million to make each conform to Health and Safety standards."

I hope that that is not some false economy, which we will regret in the long term. Perhaps the Minister could address that when he replies to the many excellent points that have been made by hon. Members.

We have the ice patrol vessel and the research vessel in Antarctica. If I may inject a personal note, I was delighted to be present when the research vessel, James Clark Ross, was launched on Tyneside by the Swan Hunter shipyard. That ship is an interesting example of how modern-day shipbuilding is linked with high technology. In many ways it is sad that Swan Hunter still seems in danger of being closed. I hope that the skills of the managers and the work force at that yard can be used in the construction of similar high-quality vessels in the future. I know that that sentiment is strongly felt on Tyneside, but it is equally important to the nation.

Although I welcome the Bill, I have a number of questions to ask the Minister, to which I hope he will be able to respond. I recognise, however, that there will be an opportunity to consider many of the important issues that have been raised by hon. Members when the Bill is considered in Committee.

The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, SCAR, was mentioned in the Library research paper. Some concern has been expressed about the amount of funding that is necessary to keep that organisation going and in good health. The brief states that SCAR has a budget of only £250,000 a year, which, according to the director of the British Antarctic Survey, is peanuts. Perhaps the Minister can say how the funding of SCAR will be handled in the future. What priority will be given to its valuable work? The Opposition believe that if that organisation is to exist, it should be allowed to have the funds to carry out properly the functions that it considers to be important.

The treaty provides for confidence-building procedures, including exchanges of information about Antarctic activities and on-site inspections. How will that work out in practice and what thoughts does the Department have on that matter?

Several hon. Members have said that they want other countries to ratify the protocol as quickly as possible. They will be interested to learn from the Government what progress has been made towards ratification. All countries responsible need to ratify the protocol for it to be truly effective. We hope that our deliberations are being mirrored by similar proceedings in the other countries involved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North referred to the abandoned UK bases in Antarctica. The Foreign Office said that the British Antarctic Survey had recently reviewed all accessible abandoned UK bases in Antarctica with the aim of removing them, transforming them into refuges, or designating them as historic monuments. Will the Minister update that information and say exactly what is happening in that respect?

There seems to have been some tension within the United Nations between Antarctic treaty states and states that are not party to the treaty but are concerned about the future of Antarctica. Recent accounts in the press say that the tension has diminished in recent times and I hope that that is so. I also hope that the protocol has been a factor in reducing the difficulties. It would be useful to have an update on the position and to know how non-treaty states view the latest developments of the protocol.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned fisheries and the need for conservation measures. It would be useful to have an update of information on that. There is worldwide concern about the reduction of fish stocks in the Antarctic region, including the worrying reduction in the number of krill, and it would be good to know that some of the measures that have been taken are having an effect in renewing those badly depleted fish stocks.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the granting of permits to enter specially protected areas. Again, we would welcome any information which the Minister could give us on the procedures for issuing and refusing permits.

The UK supports the concept of a Southern ocean whale sanctuary, which is of interest to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. It would be helpful if the Minister would respond on that matter, too.

Environmental pollution still causes great concern. The paper produced by the Library says that

"raw sewage is still discharged into McMurdo Sound, and it is alleged that the harbour there is still polluted with oil."

What is the current position and what further measures are envisaged to tackle the problem?

The comments by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale about the huskies will have interested many hon. Members. I am glad that a solution has been found and that the remote possibility that the dogs are harmful to the environment has been dealt with.

I understand that there is now agreement in principle on the establishment of a secretariat for the treaty organisation, although details such as its location have not yet been decided. If we are to ensure that the worthwhile goals of the treaty and protocol are adhered to in future, the problems must be dealt with by a well-established secretariat that can work effectively for the long-term benefits of Antarctica.

Those were my most important questions, but I hope that the Minister will also comment on the likely progress of the Bill's Committee stage and say how he thinks some of the issues will be dealt with in detail. Expert advice and opinion are important. If, at some stage, Committee members can be given such expert advice and opinion and can meet some of the people who will be involved in implementing the treaty and protocol, it would be welcomed by hon Members on both sides.

The Antarctic treaty has been described in a Foreign Office publication on the subject as a "trailblazer" in international law. Let us hope that the trailblazing procedure in Antarctica will spur on other forms of international environmental co-operation and ensure that the international environment on which we all depend is safeguarded in the long term. We hope that the goals agreed at Rio will start to be effectively implemented and that the GATT agreement, which we all welcome, will prove to be sensitive to environmental concerns. Many people have wanted a "greening" of GATT.

Although it is situated at the other end of the earth, the Antarctic's environmental health affects us all. It is proof positive that we are all one world, environmentally speaking. I therefore hope that the passage of the Bill, along with similar and speedy ratification processes in all the other countries involved, will ensure that the Antarctic environment is protected in perpetuity.

12.27 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am conscious that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) is waiting to introduce the important Water (Domestic Disconnections) Bill. There were moments in the speech by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) when I wondered whether she was trying to talk it out. That would be extremely unfair of her.

I am very anxious that we should give ample time for discussion of that Bill, so I am imposing on myself a self-denying ordinance that I shall sit down at near enough 12.55 pm. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we go on to the extremely important Bill promoted by the right hon. Member for Salford, East.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on his good fortune in the ballot, on choosing this subject and on introducing the Bill. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for taking on the burden of this complicated legislation. He will have to sustain much of the burden in Committee, to which we all look forward. I say in reply to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East that there will, indeed, be a Committee stage, and that I very much look forward to her presence then.

We are also fortunate in that my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale is a former Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who therefore brings to the subject a lot of specialist knowledge. Incidentally, I agree very much with what my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) said in support of my right hon. Friend's other proposal, which is designed to ensure that the habitat of creatures rather closer to home is not disturbed and polluted beyond a particular hour at night. All of us rally behind that proposal and look forward to its early implementation.

Britain unquestionably has special responsibilities in the Antarctic, not the least of those being the British Antarctic Territory, our support, as a consultative party, for the Antarctic treaty system, and our commitment to the long-term protection of the Antarctic environment. For all those reasons, and for the reasons mentioned by many other hon. Members, I commend the Bill to the House.

The protocol to the treaty, with which the Bill is mostly concerned, cannot enter into force until it has been ratified by all 26 Antarctic treaty consultative parties. As far as we know, six states have so far ratified: Argentina, Spain, France, Norway, Peru and Ecuador. We understand that most consultative parties intend to ratify by the end of 1994 or by early 1995.

We cannot ratify the protocol until legislation—the Bill—has been enacted. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), the hon. Member for Gateshead, East and others have asked whether we shall press other states to ratify, especially at the Kyoto meeting. The answer is yes. It is important that all states ratify as soon as may be.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East mentioned the James Clark Ross. When I was Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, I visited the James Clark Ross on two occasions, and I was extremely impressed by the way in which the ship had been built. It was built extremely expeditiously, and it was fitted out to the highest possible standards. I greatly valued my two visits to the yard.

The House will know about a resolution adopted by the general assembly of the World Conservation Union which was held in Buenos Aires last month. The resolution called for the early passage into relevant law of the protocol, and that is what we seek to do today. The Bill will do the very things that the general assembly urges us to do.

We hope that the Bill will be successful, and thus enable us to ratify the protocol by the end of the year. It would be a great misfortune if it fell. It would set back our ratification timetable to 1996 or thereabouts, it would draw adverse criticism from other signatories, and it would be a very bad signal. I am pleased that there has been universal support in the Chamber for what we are about.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester and others have referred to the two elements of Antarctic work in which the United Kingdom is especially active: Antarctic politics, in which we have consistently taken a leading role, and Antarctic science, in which we maintain a pre-eminent position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester asked me to give some reassurance about our continuing commitment to that scientific work. I can give that commitment. The same question was asked by the hon. Members for Gateshead, East and for Islington, North. The only positive statement in the Antarctic treaty is that on the need for freedom for scientific investigation and co-operation between states to achieve that end. Article II of the protocol flags up the crucial position of science in its designation of Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science. That embodies environmental protection and science as the critical currencies of Antarctica.

The Government's policy has consistently been that the United Kingdom's physical presence in the British Antarctic Territory should primarily be provided by first-class science programmes. We have a long tradition of scientific endeavour in Antarctica. Our science presence in Antarctica, which is, I think, the envy of much of the international scientific community, is provided by the British Antarctic Survey, one of the research institutes of the Natural Environment Research Council.

We must ask why we are committed to such high-profile scientific research in the region. The predominant thrust of the British Antarctic Survey is to concentrate research efforts on those elements of science that can be carried out only in the Antarctic and that provide vital information on global processes. The near-pristine conditions of Antarctica provide a yardstick against which to monitor a number of key global parameters.

That issue has been mentioned by other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Islington, North and my hon. Friends the Members for Winchester and for Poole (Mr. Ward). The main work includes atmospheric pollution, ozone depletion, climatic change and sea level rises. Actions in one part of the world affect us all throughout the world. Taken together, our actions produce a cumulative global effect.

Antarctica provides the ideal template for scientific investigations into processes that affect us all; we should not underestimate that effect, even though it may be long-term. The influence of Antarctica is considerable. It acts as the major heat sink of the planet. Its surrounding air masses and oceans determine much of what happens in the southern hemisphere, the weather patterns, fisheries, land productivity and agriculture. Its ice cap, which is 14

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

million sq km in extent and, on average, 2.2 km thick, contains about 90 per cent. of the world's ice and 70 per cent. of its fresh water.

Perhaps one of the most significant scientific discoveries this century was that made in 1985 by British Antarctic Survey atmospheric scientists working at the Halley research station, when they detected the so-called ozone hole over Antarctica. That has led to considerable concern and international conventions that govern the use of propellants for aerosols, and refrigerants for fridges and freezers.

I shall seek to answer the specific questions asked by hon. Members, but I first want to mention the implementation of the protocol. I think that we can all be agreed that, if the Antarctic is to retain its critical importance as a base from which science can be conducted, it must be retained in its relatively pristine condition. There are two ways of doing that, and they are harmonious one with the other.

First, knowing that Antarctica, remote as it is from centres of industry and population, is affected by worldwide activities, we must, through other relevant international agreements, reduce atmospheric and seaborne pollution. That means that we must support instruments such as the Montreal protocol, the climate change convention and the Basel convention.

Secondly, we must ensure that any localised impact on Antarctica is minimised, the reason being that we must not sully the very environment that we wish to study. In October 1991, when the protocol was adopted, the Antarctic treaty parties, appreciating that formal entry into force would clearly take some time, agreed that they would do their best to comply informally with the provisions of the protocol ahead of its entry into force.

That has been done by those within the United Kingdom. The main UK operators in Antarctica have implemented the practicalities of the protocol with considerable alacrity. Both the British Antarctic Survey and the Royal Navy are complying fully, albeit informally, with all elements of the protocol. The BAS rapidly introduced an action programme to implement the protocol, and is now one of the leaders in the field.

I fear that, because of the pressures of time and my desire that the right hon. Member for Salford, East should have an opportunity of moving his Bill, I do not have the opportunity to go into all the informal steps that we have taken.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East and others raised the question of abandoned stations within Antarctica. I should like to deal with that matter specifically. We must ask ourselves what is to be done with the numerous abandoned UK stations up and down the Antarctic peninsula. Annex III to the protocol requires that former work places in Antarctica be cleaned up or removed unless to do so would have more impact on the environment than leaving them in situ.

As I mentioned before, our permanent presence in Antarctica goes back a long time. Since 1943, some 20 stations have outgrown their useful life, scientifically or logistically, or have simply been destroyed by the climatic conditions that exist there. We are, for example, now occupying the fifth station to be built at Halley bay. The four predecessors to the current station, which was finished only in 1992, have in turn been crushed by the pressure of the Brunt ice shelf, and have been abandoned.

We have conducted a comprehensive survey of all the accessible UK abandoned stations. Our options are to clean them up, remove the structures, convert them into some form of emergency refuge or designate them formally as historic sites and monuments under the environmental protocol. Any premature or over-zealous clean-up of the huts would, I suspect, be criticised in years to come, there being a great deal of legitimate historical interest in the Antarctic.

Therefore, we must ensure that any assessment of the future of those stations is done with considerable sensitivity. I can assure the House that, when determining their future, we will reflect carefully, taking account of the considerations, for example, that were mentioned by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East.

Reference has been made, on both sides of the House, to the environmental impact assessments. The environmental impact assessment is one element of the protocol on which the BAS moved ahead some time ago. As hon. Members will know, it is a well-recognised procedure in modern developmental planning. The protocol requires that activities in Antarctica, whether governmental or non-governmental, touristic or scientific in nature, undergo assessment for environmental impact before they proceed. Three levels of assessment are set out in the protocol. The detail of assessment that has to be carried out depends on the predicted impact of the activity in question.

Draft guidelines have been prepared by the Government to deal with the EIAs in Antarctica and under the Bill, and the question how those assessments will be carried out in future would be dealt with as conditions in any permit for a British expedition or station in Antarctica.

That takes me to the question of permits. Broadly speaking, the permit regime has been welcomed on both sides of the House. That regime will be the basic means of implementing the environmental protection measures required by the protocol.

The Bill sets out a number of permit provisions. It might be useful if I commented on them—briefly, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale has already explained their impact very clearly. Clauses 3, 4 and 5 deal respectively with British expeditions to Antarctica, British stations in Antarctica and British ships or aircraft going to Antarctica.

In each case, a permit will be needed from the Secretary of State, who in most cases—I think, in all cases—will be my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. Such a permit will have to be issued before any of the relevant activities can proceed; to act otherwise would be to commit an offence under the Bill.

Clause 13 provides that the Secretary of State may attach conditions to a permit. We are anxious not to set up an overly cumbersome bureaucracy, requiring expeditions that intend to set up or extend stations and, possibly, to employ both aircraft and ships to obtain several permits covering every facet of their work. I hope that, in such circumstances—which are likely to arise in the complex logistic and scientific operations of the BAS—a single overriding, over-arching permit covering all elements of clauses 3, 4 and 5 will suffice.

A specific permit will be required for scientific research into Antarctic minerals. We need to strike a proper balance between ensuring that the mineral resources ban created by article 7 of the protocol is made effective, and not constraining the valuable scientific research into earth sciences in Antarctica—geology and geophysics.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand what the Minister is saying about the permits, but I am concerned about two matters. First, what will be the procedure if the Foreign Secretary—presumably—refuses a permit to an organisation that may well be doing something that would embarrass people who are contravening the treaty? In the past, Greenpeace has embarrassed the United States and France by exposing their activities in rubbish disposal. Would the Secretary of State be prepared to grant recognised non-governmental organisation status to certain organisations? That has been done elsewhere.

Secondly, the permits do not cover ships or aircraft travelling through the Antarctic airspace or seas whose destination is not in Antarctica. I envisage a problem: tourist operators could use that loophole to undertake operations there without stopping or landing. What would happen in the case of an emergency such as the plane crash that killed New Zealand tourists?

Mr. Hogg: I do not wish to criticise the hon. Gentleman, but those are essentially Committee points; they are points of some substance. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will interest himself in the Committee stage. I shall be happy to consider any proposals that he may advance then, and in the meantime I shall reflect on whether we could or should do anything to meet his concerns.

This is, in a sense, only a partial answer to the hon. Gentleman's question, but legal difficulties are involved in distinguishing between academic geological science and commercial mineral exploration. As has often been said, the difference lies more in the intent of those carrying out the work than in the operation itself. We must be able to ensure that any geophysical or geological work is being carried out for bona fide scientific purposes and scientific gain.

A number of hon. Members have raised the question of wildlife. The taking of wildlife and entry into protected areas will require specific permits.

As to whaling, the Bill introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) will prevent United Kingdom nationals from killing or disturbing whales or seals in Antarctica. The international regulation of whales and whaling is the responsibility of the International Whaling Commission, not the Antarctic treaty parties; but, to take up a point made by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East, the IWC is today negotiating a Southern ocean whale sanctuary. The United Kingdom supports that concept, which would provide total protection for all of the great whales in the Antarctic and the sub-Antarctic.

Fishing was mentioned by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). The hon. Gentleman informed me that he had to go to his constituency, and we all understand the reasons that took him away from this place.

Mr. Corbyn: His constituency is nearly in the Arctic.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member is right.

To reply to the question asked by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, fish and fishing are dealt with by the convention on the conservation of antarctic marine living resources 1980, not by the protocol, and we are an active party to that convention. Commercial fisheries in Antarctica are regulated by open or closed seasons and also restrictions on allowable catches. We will continue to press for regulations to be imposed on fisheries to be strengthened to ensure proper compliance and conservation.

Reference has been made to the fact that there are powers to delegate the Secretary of State's powers to others—for example, the administrator of the British Antarctic Territory or the director of the British Antarctic Survey. The power to delegate is discretionary, but, to answer an argument by the hon. Member for Islington, North, to forestall potential accusations that any delegated permitting authority could be construed as acting as judge and jury, I suspect that it will be prudent not to delegate to BAS officials the power to grant permits for those activities which might significantly damage or destroy habitats or plant communities. Transparency is important: the point has been well made in the House.

Tourism has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. There has been a substantial increase in the volume of tourism to Antarctica. I am glad that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland wants to pay a visit, and I would also like to do so. The hon. Member for Islington, North was less certain whether he wanted to be a tourist.

Mr. Corbyn: I was certain.

Mr. Hogg: He was certain: I am so sorry.

Mr. Corbyn: I was going there.

Mr. Hogg: He could not go. I remember now: he wanted to oppose the action in the Gulf. He did not get much sympathy from the House, but I am sorry that it cost him his journey. Perhaps I had better stop this private chat with the hon. Gentleman.

In any event, we are all agreed that tourism is increasing, and is likely to continue to do so. It is important to emphasise that that is subject to the controls under the protocol and under the Bill. It has as much bearing on tourist expeditions to Antarctica as on their scientific counterparts and, although there has been reference to a mandatory annex specifically tailored to tourism, that has aroused considerable hostility.

We feel that we might be able to address any of the further problems better by a series of codes of guidance and by self-regulation, although we also think that we could introduce other changes—for example, the introduction of on-board observer schemes.

There was interesting discussion about jurisdiction. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale referred to clause 21, and there has been reference to clause 24. The object of those provisions is to ensure that there is a criminal jurisdiction in respect of acts that might take place in areas that are not claimed territory.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made an ingenious point, as I would expect of him. He asked which jurisdiction would apply in the event of there being a difference between Scottish law and the law of England and Wales. The answer is that the relevant law is that of the country in which the trial takes place—that of Scotland or of England and Wales, as might be material.

I imposed on myself the self-denying ordinance that I would sit down at 12.55 pm in order to allow my hon. Friend the Member for Havant to raise the matters that I know he has in mind, which are of considerable

[Mr. Hogg]

importance. In order to set a good example to other hon. Members, I intend to comply with my self-denying ordinance. In doing so, I commend the Bill to the House.

12.55 pm

Mr. David Willetts (Havant): I begin by thanking my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for his characteristic courtesy in curtailing his speech so as to give me the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I have enjoyed listening to several contributions and I hope to make a modest contribution of my own. I feel slightly embarrassed, however, that in doing so I have shortened the authoritative comments of the Minister.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on introducing the Bill. Clearly, all hon. Members agree that it is important that Britain moves as rapidly as possible to implement the 1991 protocol to the Antarctic treaty.

The significance of the Antarctic to British research and British history cannot be underestimated. We should remember that it was Captain Cook who discovered the Antarctic and we have produced some very distinguished contributors to its history, such as Scott and Shackleton. Most recently, Mr. Joe Farman, a British scientist, discovered the hole in the ozone layer from one of our research stations in British Antarctic territory.

That is a revealing episode because it reveals the difference between British and American science and highlights some of the traditional strengths of British science. The Americans had sophisticated systems in place to monitor the size of the ozone layer. Their systems were computerised; ours were not. The Americans had written into their computer programmes an error elimination element which meant that, if the readings started diverging too much, they were discounted. As the hole in the ozone layer was growing so rapidly, the automatic correction procedures in the American computerised monitoring system eliminated the readings showing that the ozone hole was growing, so the hole was not caught by the American researchers. It was the British researcher, using tried and tested techniques and inspecting his data manually, who discovered the hole, rather than the much more expensive, highly computerised American systems. That reminds us of one of the long-term strengths of British scientific inquiry.

I was sorry to discover that the Faraday and Signy bases, at one of which the discovery of the hole in the ozone layer was made, will be unmanned in future because it would cost £5 million to implement health and safety regulations. I hope that it is not a case of absurd over-regulation standing in the way of legitimate scientific inquiry. Of course, we need the highest environmental standards in Antarctica, but, as far as I know, there has never been a serious physical danger or threat—

Ms Quin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in the subject, is it in order for an hon. Member to intervene who was not present to hear the opening speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Yes, it is in order. If it were not, the hon. Gentleman would not have been allowed to intervene.

Mr. Willetts: May I point out that I have been in the Chamber to hear the bulk of the debate and, indeed, have enjoyed listening to several contributions from hon. Members of all parties.

I was saying that it is a great pity if the burden of health and safety regulations has led to the closure of the Faraday and Signy sites or, at least, to the change from their being manned to being unmanned stations.

I hope that the regulations that will be imposed are rational ones that can be justified by normal cost-benefit analysis.

Several hon. Members have referred to the threats to the environment of the Antarctic which the Bill is designed to address. We have heard much about tourism. Over the past year, there have been some extraordinary examples in the British press of attempts by tour operators to have their cake and eat it. I particularly enjoyed a striking article in *The Guardian* on 19 June 1993, which was a classic example of politically correct advertising for tourism. The article largely comprised anxieties about the effects of tourism on the Antarctic environment and ended with a paragraph giving details of all the cruises, tour operators, addresses, prices and telephone numbers. That was certainly an example of an attempt to look both ways. I welcome the regulations that will be imposed by the Bill to try to limit the environmental damage that tourism can do.

It is not only tourists who can damage the environment; scientists can also damage the environment. The 4,000 scientists who go to the Antarctic every year can do enormous damage to the environment. I hope that they will keep a beady eye on what constitutes scientific inquiry. As science is given such extraordinary free rein in Antarctica, there are obvious temptations for any attempt to visit Antarctica for whatever purpose to be dressed up as science. The borderline between tourism and scientific activity is by no means obvious. Indeed, one can well imagine in the future the final irony of tourism being marketed on the basis that people can go to Antarctica to inspect the damage done to the environment by previous tourist visits. I hope that we will ensure that the scientific activity that will be rightly permitted under the Bill will be genuine and properly regulated and monitored.

My final comments on the Bill relate to the innovations in the legal framework with which Antarctica is to be protected. Antarctica is an extraordinary place not only in environmental terms but in terms of the law of international relations. It is not clear who owns it. Most of the progress in establishing a legal framework for Antarctica has been made by different countries which accept, as a precondition for reaching any agreement, that their conflicting claims for sovereignty must be set aside for the purposes of reaching international agreements. As a free marketeer, I was struck by the fact that in the Bill we are trying to protect an environment without the normal prerogatives of property rights and of people trying to protect the purity of their property. That is how the environment can normally be best protected and looked after.

I welcome the flexibility provided under article 9 of the protocol, which will enable future changes to the environmental regime for Antarctica to be introduced more speedily and easily than has been possible in the past. It would be a great pity if, in the future, we needed to reach wide-ranging international agreement before any serious improvements in the protection of the Antarctic environment was possible. Indeed, as more and more countries have an interest in Antarctica, it is important that we do not become bogged down in ever more cumbersome international negotiations before any serious protection can be agreed. I think therefore that article 9 of the protocol, which will introduce further improvements to the environmental regime for British Antarctica, is of great importance and I welcome the measure.

Another innovative aspect of the measure is the extension of British criminal law outside the United Kingdom. This is a fascinating example of an attempt to ensure that people on the other side of the world find that they cannot escape the long arm of British justice. I commend my right hon. Friend for introducing a Bill which involves such an innovative attempt to ensure proper legal protection for the Antarctic environment.

I conclude by giving the Bill a warm welcome and by congratulating my right hon. Friend on his initiative in ensuring that Britain—which has a long history of ratifying Antarctic treaties promptly and fully—can maintain that tradition by moving to ratify the latest environmental protocol.

1.5 pm

Mr. Jopling: With the leave of the House, I will say a few words on this morning's full and fascinating debate. I am grateful to every single one of my colleagues who have spoken for their flattering remarks, both about my so-called wisdom in picking the Bill and about the quality of the Bill itself. I very much appreciate them.

As I began by saying, the debate has demonstrated that, however far away Antarctica is, it has a great fascination for the House. However inhospitable and unattractive it may be physically, it is extraordinary how many colleagues from all parties have expressed a desire to go there.

I refer to three issues that have been raised in the debate. First, the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) referred to the control of fisheries.

Examination of the powers that are contained in the convention on the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources took me back forcefully to my previous incarnation as a Fisheries Minister, and as president of the Council of Fishery Ministers in Brussels. I remember talking about total allowable catches, prohibitions on designated species, close seasons and grounds, net mesh regulations and data reporting schemes. I know that they have been effective within the European Union over the years and I was pleased that the CCAMLR has jurisdiction over commercial fishing in all the southern nations, including places such as South Georgia and South Sandwich, as well as the area south of 60 deg. which is covered by the Bill.

I am pleased that the regime has already proved to be effective. I understand that, during the season, one Chilean fishing vessel has been fined and a Russian vessel is in the process of being prosecuted. That shows that the convention has some teeth.

Secondly, I was struck by the number of hon. Members who referred to the problem of having too many tourists. They included my hon. Friends the Members for Poole (Mr. Ward), for Winchester (Mr. Malone) and for Havant (Mr. Willetts). My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), whom I glad to see in his place, intervened to talk about the damage that tourists can do. He and I have an interest in the Lake District, which is in my constituency, and we know very well the damage that tourists can do to the very things that they go to look at. It is much the same with regard to Antarctica and it is essential that tourism is properly controlled so that tourists do not again destroy what they are meant to look at.

Finally, the hon. Member for Islington, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester expressed the desire that clause 35, which deals with implementation, would be dealt with quickly when the Bill gets on the statute book. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has been good enough to come to the House and respond to the debate in such an authoritative way. I hope that the Government will implement the Bill as soon as possible after it goes on to the statute book.

I could say a great deal more, but my old friend the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) is bursting to make his speech about water disconnections. So I shall not say any more about my Bill except that I am grateful for everything that has been said and I hope that it will be given an unopposed Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Water (Domestic Disconnections) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.10 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I begin by thanking the sponsors of my Bill, which has all-party support. I also thank the many outside organisations which support it, including the National Consumer Council, the British Medical Association, the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, Save the Children and Age Concern. That is a substantial list of organisations which support the principle behind the Bill.

The Bill seeks to ban the disconnection of water supplies to occupied residential homes for reason of non-payment of charges. The Bill relates to England and Wales only because the position in Scotland and Northern Ireland is different. There is no power to disconnect water in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Government have not taken the opportunity in the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to give the new Scottish water authorities such power.

My Bill will allow water companies to continue to disconnect business and empty premises. It will leave them free to use all the methods of debt collection that non-utility companies use to collect their debts. The Bill also seeks to ensure that pre-payment devices are installed only with the customer's consent.

I shall deal first with the need to ban domestic disconnections for non-payment of charges. The practice of water disconnection is inhuman and unacceptable in a civilised society. I believe that if disconnections continue, they will contribute to an increase in hygiene-related diseases such as dysentery. I always thought that we had banished such diseases from Britain for good.

The average bill across all 10 water and sewerage companies rose by 50 per cent. between April 1989 and April 1993. Inflation rose by 23 per cent. over the same period. So on average water bills have risen by significantly more than double the rate of inflation since privatisation. Unfortunately, in the five years since privatisation disconnections have also risen. On average, the rate of disconnections has tripled. In 1991-92 the number of disconnections reached more than 21,000. Last year there was a slight reduction, but figures were still unacceptably high: 18,636 households were disconnected. Everyone accepts that water bills will continue to rise, so the number of disconnections would also rise in the future.

I have been disappointed with the response to the Bill from the Ofwat customer committees. Nevertheless, the chairman of Ofwat's eastern customer service committee, who is not a supporter of the Bill, makes the point that his committee is concerned about

> "the rising level of disconnection which we may expect following the issue of new water bills in the months of March and April 1994."

That quotation is from a letter to the chairman of the National Consumer Council on 8 February.

Even the Bill's opponents admit that there is a strong likelihood that the pressure of rising bills will increase disconnections. Faced with tax increases and the fuel tax that will come into effect in the autumn, it would be difficult to contradict that view. The recent fall in the number of disconnections was achieved only by a huge effort and a campaign by the organisations representing vulnerable groups. By using media coverage, they shamed water companies into reducing the number of disconnections. My worry is that we cannot rely on such public pressure indefinitely. If the spotlight leaves the water companies, they may return to what they see as an easy option for debt recovery.

The water companies say that they disconnect only the "won't payers"—those who can afford to pay, but refuse to do so. I shall bring to the attention of the House some recent examples of people I know who have been disconnected: in Southampton a lady with seven children, one aged three who suffers from a heart condition; a family of five, in which the mother suffers from a medical condition which requires a constant supply of water and whose neighbours provided that water via a hose pipe; and a severely disabled elderly lady, whose neighbours brought her water in a variety of containers. In south Staffordshire, a single parent on unemployment benefit was threatened with disconnection for arrears of £60·73. When the local citizens advice bureau contacted the water company to say that there was a child in the house, the company said, "So what?—We'll still disconnect." A young mother with three children, aged two, five and eight, handed over £50 —all her family credit for a week—when the company turned up to cut her water off. The water company got its money, but the family had nothing left for food for the following week. In mid-Kent, the water company refused to allow a family with two children under five and a baby on the way to repay £5 a week under an instalment plan and demanded the payment of more than £400 in full.

I do not call those people "won't payers", but "can't payers". Consumer and health groups are so concerned about the increase in disconnections and the way in which they indiscriminately affect both the weak and the strong that in growing numbers they are calling for a ban. The public health of the nation is at risk.

The most fundamental point is that water is not like any other commodity. It is essential and there is no substitute. If the electricity is cut off, people can use a Calor gas heater; if the gas supply is cut off, they can cook on a primus stove for a few days. It would be a hardship—there is no doubt about it—but it would be just about possible to find a substitute which would not necessarily endanger their health or anything else. If water supplies are cut off, there is no substitute. Water is unique because of its very nature and the health dangers that can result from its absence. The Government have recognised on other occasions that the absence of water poses special problems with which the law needs to deal. In the Environment Protection Act 1990, the Government ensured that a disconnected property had to be classed as a statutory nuisance, which local authorities had to do something about. In the Housing Act 1985, the Government gave local authorities the power to deem a disconnected house unfit for human habitation. Imagine how wasteful we would think it if a local authority had to make a family homeless because a water company had disconnected them.

The most worrying example of all is that under the Children Act 1989, children living in a household without running water are at risk of being taken into care, which is a very important point. Do we really think that it would be right for children living in a house that has been disconnected by a water company, which happens, to have to go through the trauma of being taken into care because of the risk to their health? Is that what the Government mean when, in the international year of the family, they talk about keeping the family together?

At this time of deregulation, the Government should remove the burden from local authority social services and environmental health departments by banning disconnections. The three main local authority organisations—the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils—support my Bill. Individual local councils of all political persuasions are voting in support of a ban on water disconnections.

There is more evidence to suggest that at the time of privatisation the Government recognised that there were some special problems with water disconnections. They gave the Director General of Ofwat, the water regulator, special powers to insist that a company did not get a licence to supply water unless it had a code of practice, approved by Ofwat, on debt and disconnections. Section 7·3 of the licence conditions states that a company cannot disconnect if the customer applies to the social services for help and it asks the company to delay disconnection. The Government, therefore, must have wanted to provide some safeguard for the vulnerable—the elderly, the very young and the disabled—who need protection.

Unfortunately, no one, either in the Government or in Ofwat, insists that the water companies inform their customers about the help that can be offered from social services. They only thing that the director general requires companies to do is to write to customers the following sentence:

"you may wish to contact the Social Services Department. They are unlikely to give you money, but they may be able to help in other ways."

I know that my constituents do not contact social services lightly. They have the pride and desire for independence about which the Government often talk approvingly, which means that they would be reluctant to go to social services unless, perhaps, it was spelt out that social services would be able to delay a disconnection. Because that help is not spelt out, the vast majority of people just suffer in silence and shame.

I have a most extreme example of someone who fell through the net and suffered in silence. He is a 50-year-old man living on his own, on invalidity benefit, with a serious hearing condition, mobility problems and a learning disability. By any definition he is a very vulnerable person. Last year, his neighbour complained to the environmental health department about the smell from the drains. That department found that that man's water had been disconnected for two and a half years. No one can convince me that he should be classified as a "won't payer" or that there was no risk to public health from his being without a water supply for two and a half years—clearly, both he and his neighbours were at risk.

Although the director general does not agree that his debt and disconnection guidelines are inadequate, he admits that he cannot get all the companies to follow them. In a press statement in November 1993 he said:

"There are still a few companies whose response . . . has been limited and does not match up to the guidelines."

North West Water, which supplies my own constituency, has decided without any prompting from Ofwat—the body supposed to represent consumers—that it will voluntarily give customers more information. It writes to the customer that if he or she is on income support, has children under five, has someone in the household on state pension, is a one-parent family or unemployed or has a kidney machine on the premises, those circumstances may influence the decision whether to disconnect. North West Water has reduced the number of disconnections, although I still believe that it should be reduced to zero.

While I applaud the initiatives of North West Water, all those half-measures are not enough. The safeguards built in at the time of privatisation have not worked and will not work. It is impossible to give companies the power to disconnect just the "won't pays". So long as the power to disconnect exists, thousands of "can't pays" will also be disconnected, and they will include the disabled, the elderly, the sick and the very young—all those who are most vulnerable.

On public health, the Government seem to be waiting for an epidemic of huge proportions before they accept that being unable to flush the toilet or wash one's hands will lead to the spread of disease. The British Medical Association, which should know how disease is spread, backs the Bill for precisely that reason. At my press conference, Dr. Taylor described the importance of hygiene. The Royal College of Physicians Public Health Faculty and other medical organisations, such as the Royal College of Midwives, also support the Bill. The Scottish medical officer, Dr. Robert Kendell, appears to disagree with the English medical officer, for he opposed the introduction of disconnections in Scotland because of the consequences of disease.

Although the Bill bans disconnections, it allows companies to continue to use all other means of debt collection. Companies should offer more flexible payment methods to pay off debts. It must be recognised that water bills have risen above the inflation rate since 1988 and that the water component of income support has not been increased by a comparable amount.

People on low incomes are more likely to be able to cope if they can pay bills and debts in many small instalments. I was amazed to find citizens advice bureaux and others still reporting that some companies refuse to offer instalments to customers, almost as though the companies prefer to cut people off.

The chairman of Ofwat South-West customer service committee wrote to the National Consumer Council on 29 October 1993 as follows:

"We have experienced difficulty in persuading South-West Water to make frequent payment options freely available."

The director-general of Ofwat also outlined that problem in his press release in November 1993.

Why can one company reduce the number of disconnections while another cannot? According to Ofwat figures, in the first six months of this financial year Wessex Water made no disconnections while neighbouring Southern Water made 882. That is a classic example of the difference between two adjacent water companies. The companies could pursue "won't pays" through the courts to get deductions from benefit, attachment of earnings orders and administration orders. If companies are worried about the need for sanctions, I should have thought that those were enough.

Last year, in the middle of a recession, the water companies made profits of £1·7 billion. They are therefore paying record dividends, whereas they should be more concerned about their customers than their shareholders.

The Bill ensures that pre-payment devices are installed only with the customer's consent because the Water

[Mr. Stanley Orme]

Industry Act 1991 does not spell that out clearly enough. Pre-payment devices have caused a worrying increase in hidden self-disconnections, when customers have been without water for several days. That does not show up in official disconnection figures. I do not like pre-payment devices because of the danger of self-disconnection. It is a fundamental right that at least they should not be imposed on customers without their consent—a protection included in the Bill. I am amazed that even that proposal is opposed by Ofwat.

Anglian Water is ahead of Ofwat in customer protection. The company says in a letter to the National Consumer Council, dated 21 February 1994:

> "We have never viewed prepayment meters as something to be imposed on particular groups of customers as a condition of supply. Section 3 of the Bill would therefore cause us little practical difficulty."

In the interests of customer choice, the Government must give a commitment that if pre-payment devices become widely available, they will carry the safeguards included in the Bill.

Yesterday, I had a letter from a man who said:

> "I am going to get my water supply cut off one day next week if I don't pay my bill. I am on invalidity benefit and suffer from angina, high blood pressure, and asthma."

That is the sort of case that the Bill would prevent. I received a letter this morning from an East Sussex councillor who also runs a small plumbing business. He writes:

> "I run a small plumbing business and I have been into dwellings where some cowboy builders have cut off water supplies and left people without water for days on end. The stench becomes appalling and the amount of flies do certainly help in the spread of people's ill health."

He says that he wants me to make the best use of this information.

In view of the evidence I have put before the House today, I urge the Government to accept the Bill as a positive contribution to solving the serious problems that afflict many people, especially the sick, the elderly and children. The Bill will play an important part in making life more acceptable and it will remove the threat and horror of water disconnection.

1.31 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on the way in which he introduced the Bill. I fear that, from that point, we must diverge slightly because I consider that, although the Bill is well meaning, it is somewhat impractical. I have read the Bill with some care and I am tempted to think that I understand it. Thankfully, in any case, we are provided with what I suppose we must now call a preamble in this day and age, but which is officially entitled, "Explanatory and financial memorandum". I tell my hon. Friend the Minister that it is the very first paragraph that concerns me most because it states clearly, as did the right hon. Gentleman, that the intention of the Bill is to remove

> "the present power of companies . . . to disconnect residential premises for non-payment of charges."

Despite the cases described by the right hon. Member for Salford, East—I have heard them before as I served on the Committee that considered the Water Bill—I believe that the Bill is, in essence, a non-payers' charter and that it will badly affect the vast majority who do pay. The flaw in the right hon. Gentleman's argument was when he had to admit that Ofwat and its director-general were not keen on the Bill. In the light of that advice, we need to consider more carefully how practical the Bill is.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Knapman: I am flattered to have a choice on a Friday. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) will allow me, I shall give way first to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) who is, like me, a member of the Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. McAllion: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in Scotland it is illegal to disconnect domestic consumers from the water supply? If we live in a unitary state, as Conservatives argue, why is such disconnection illegal in Scotland, but legal in England and Wales?

Mr. Knapman: I have no doubt that we shall discuss the position in Scotland at some length in the near future. The water supply system in Scotland currently requires £5 billion of new expenditure. One could argue that the figure might be slightly lower if everybody there paid their bills. We should look at the proportion of unpaid money there rather than just at whether it is legal to disconnect.

Some £5 billion worth of investment is needed in Scottish water and drainage undertakings. If that were to be shared among the 5 million people of Scotland, as the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) wants, the capital investment would be £1,000 per person.

Mr. Stern: Before the intervention of the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), my hon. Friend was discussing the general principle of the Bill. Can he reassure me on one matter? The Bill seems to ensure that goods or services will continue to be provided on credit whether or not the person can, or intends to, pay for them. There is no sanction to stop the continued provision of the specific goods or services—in this case, water. Like me, my hon. Friend is having difficulty finding another example in English law where the law is weighted so heavily in favour of the provision of goods on credit.

Mr. Knapman: I accept the argument of the right hon. Member for Salford, East that water and sewerage services are uniquely needed in particular households. However, the way forward is not to introduce a Bill that makes the position of companies impossible, but to ensure that the poacher-gamekeeper relationship established in the Water Act 1989 is effective and up to date. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West for raising that issue. I fear that the Bill is a non-payers' charter that will not achieve its commendable objectives.

As a surveyor, it is not open to me to become a member of a Select Committee that considers the effect of bananas on Caribbean economies and to face the excitement of being arrested by warlords in Somalia. My outings tend to be to Willesden sewage station or similar places. I readily pay tribute to the staff at that sewage station. I had not been long in this place before I found myself on the Committee that discussed the privatisation of the water supply industry.

One example given by the right hon. Member for Salford, East of people being disconnected involved residents in mid-Kent. I think that he will find that their water was provided by a private water company that had become a statutory company long before the privatisation of the industry. Therefore, his comments were not related to the privatisation of the water industry.

The Water Bill was steered through the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the present Home Secretary, who stressed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West mentioned, the poacher-gamekeeper relationship. Until privatisation, it was, in essence, a Government Department that dealt with such matters. If a complaint was made about disconnection or anything else, we would merely be asking one Government Department to look into another, which was a recipe for bureaucracy, red tape and inaction.

We had a lengthy Committee stage on the Water Bill. I mention its length for the benefit of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), because I think that we are rehearsing the same arguments in the Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill to which I was recently promoted. Ofwat is the gamekeeper and the companies, the poacher. One looks after the other—guaranteeing standards and ensuring that customers and companies are placed in a reasonable position in relation to each other.

The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) confidently forecast the sort of tales that the right hon. Member for Salford, East recounted this morning. We heard lengthy descriptions of emaciated and dehydrated families up and down the land and pictures were painted of the greed of private companies. At that time the right hon. Member for Copeland and the hon. Member for Dewsbury were good socialists whose arguments were, "God gave us water and you have no right to privatise it." We would have to explain that, unfortunately, God did not give us the stopcocks, valves, pipes and the other bits necessary to that industry.

If the industry was in Government ownership and control, and the choice on Government expenditure was either an extra £1 billion for the national health service or the repair of a Victorian drain, we all know which would get the money, and probably rightly so. What was never explained, and has not been explained this morning, although the right hon. Gentleman could have done so, is why the Labour party is so much against those private water companies. What is the dogma behind all this, because we never found out at the time from the right hon. Member for Copeland? What we know is this. At that time, the people of France had a socialist Government—although they have seen the light since then—and despite its socialist Government, nearly all the water and sewerage undertakings were privately owned. In Britain, even at the time of privatisation, 25 per cent. of the country was supplied by private companies and statutory water undertakings, including, as I have said, one of the examples that was given by the right hon. Member for Salford, East.

Mr. Orme: We are not debating the renationalisation of the water industry. The Labour party has faced the reality that it is privatised. I want the hon. Gentleman and the House to face the facts of what happens now. Why does not Wessex Water cut anybody off, yet Southern Water does? Why are not people cut off in Scotland and Northern Ireland? The hon. Gentleman should face the reality of the present situation, not fight old battles.

Mr. Knapman: I can understand why the right hon. Gentleman does not wish to fight old battles that he has lost. I must say, however, that he does not approve of Southern Water for cutting people off and Wessex Water because they have a prepayment scheme. That came out quite clearly in his speech. Anything that the companies do is, according to the Bill and the right hon. Gentleman, patently wrong. I see that the hon. Member for Dundee, East is in his place. No doubt we can continue, as the right hon. Gentleman said, these arguments in due course.

The right hon. Gentleman singularly failed to describe the pretty precise procedure that is laid down by Ofwat in agreement with the water companies. I find it rather extraordinary to read such a Bill at a time when we are hoping that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will go through the House.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I note that my hon. Friend keeps saying that Ofwat and the water companies are in complete agreement. Perhaps that is one of the problems. Ofwat is supposed to be there to look at what the water companies are doing. Recently, Diana Scott, the chairman of Yorkshire Water's customer services committee, who has done a superb job on behalf of consumers, was removed—because she rattled too many cages during her work—and somebody else appointed by Ofwat.

Mr. Knapman: What I was trying to say was that it was a matter for Ofwat and the companies—in some cases, for Ofwat as regulator to direct the companies. I am not saying that they should always be in agreement. It is patently clear that, frequently, they have not been. I do not shed many tears when I hear the companies screaming that Ofwat has been unfair to them. They have substantial resources. It is quite right that the public should be protected. Ofwat has been selected to do just that. It probably achieves a fair balance and has done so ever since the industry was privatised. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend on my position. I will check *Hansard* in due course to see whether I said that that was my intention.

I was hoping that in this day and age we were deregulators. If I am ever fortunate—or perhaps unfortunate—enough to win the ballot for private Members' Bills, I think that I shall introduce the Roger Knapman Reduction of Legislation Bill. It would work something like this. Every time there were 10 Bills going through this place and ready for Royal Assent, I would introduce another one to decide which of them was good enough to receive Royal Assent. If there were a Labour Government, it would be one in a hundred. We need less legislation. The Bill is not necessary, because it does not take into account the facts relating to disconnection. I should have thought it patently obvious that the water companies use the power of disconnection reluctantly, because of the publicity that ensues. The right hon. Gentleman has not commented that only nine out of 10,000 customers have been disconnected and seven out of the nine have been reconnected within 48 hours. If the number of disconnections can be reduced further through negotiation between Ofwat and the companies, all well and good.

[Mr. Knapman]

Despite what the right hon. Gentleman has said, I believe that the ultimate sanction is imposed not on those who cannot pay, but on those who will not. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West pointed out, the companies concerned would be placed in an impossible position if that ultimate sanction were removed from this service: it is unique in that regard.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) suggest that a unique proposition is involved. Currently, someone who fails to pay his council tax is, quite properly, taken to court and procedures are undertaken to ensure that he pays it. That person's children, however, are not prohibited from going to school and using council services. I argue that that is a precise analogy with the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme).

Mr. Knapman: I do not agree. That is precisely why Ofwat and the companies have agreed a very detailed procedure and why demands for payment continue for a full six months before the cases described by the right hon. Gentleman can arise. There are six months of negotiation about the bills involved. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West, I consider that a reasonable period in which to determine whether it is a case of "can't pay" or a case of "won't pay". If it is "can't pay", no action will be taken: I am convinced of that. If it is "won't pay", in the final analysis—in certain very limited circumstances—it may be necessary to disconnect.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that that does not apply to a customer who, because of difficult financial circumstances, has experienced problems in paying a water bill and has already reached an arrangement with the water company in regard to payment which then collapses? It will not be a case of six months then; the company will be entitled to disconnect much sooner.

Mr. Knapman: Has the hon. Lady any evidence that, in those circumstances, any company has failed to comply with requests from the Department of Social Security for specified customers not to be disconnected? If so, she may include that evidence in her own speech—if she catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I suspect that, if the right hon. Member for Salford, East had had any such evidence, he would have included it in his speech; the fact that he did not shows that this is a dog that did not bark in the night. The hon. Lady's comments bring me to the way in which companies now approach such cases, through agreement with Ofwat.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I think that the uniqueness of the Bill stems from the fact that it restricts the ability of privately owned enterprise to withdraw its service in the event of wilful non-payment. All the examples cited by Opposition Members involve state services, which ultimately are under political control.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Despite the denial issued by the right hon. Member for Salford, East, that is what the debate and the Bill are all about—sheer hatred of private profit-making companies. The Opposition have not got over that and I suspect that some of them never will.

Mrs. Peacock: It is nothing to do with a hatred of privatisation. I support the Bill, but I do not remember standing up in the House and shrieking my opposition to privatisation. As my hon. Friend develops his argument, however—if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I may make such a statement.

Mr. Knapman: I would not dream of writing my hon. Friend's speech for her; but I know that she, like me, supports the privatisation of the industry. What we seek is fair and substantial regulation of it, because it provides a vital commodity: on that we can agree. I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend has to say—and she will say it soon, provided that I do not give way too many more times.

This is how the companies deal with these matters. First, a bill is issued. We have all studied our water bills and seen, on the back of them, instructions on what to do if one cannot pay, but that is not the end of it. One does not suddenly turn on the tap and find that there is no water.

First, there is a reminder. After a further period there is a pre-summons notice. That warns the customer that if there is no compliance at that stage costs may be incurred. Later there is a visit and/or a solicitor's letter, and at that stage the company will try to negotiate payment arrangements.

Notification is given to the customer that the company has received a judgment order and that the payment arrangements must then be made to avoid disconnection. Even after that, a notice of disconnection is delivered by hand and at that stage the company attempts to make face-to-face contact with the customer to seek some type of payment arrangement—not payment of the bill, just payment of even part of the bill. Then a final visit will be made before disconnection and even at that stage the company will negotiate a payment arrangement.

That sequence of events takes about six months to achieve. The number of disconnections is very small. As an ultimate sanction, disconnections are necessary to the water companies and they are aimed at those people who will not pay, not at those who cannot pay. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) will not be tempted to support the Bill.

1.51 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on achieving a Second Reading debate on this excellent Bill, which has such widespread support in the country. There is no doubt that the Bill originated in the alarming figures that were published in November 1992, which showed an increase in water disconnections during the years since privatisation from about 3,000 disconnections a year to more than 21,000. It was that startling increase that led so many organisations throughout the country to come together at a meeting in February 1993 with the Institute of Environmental Health Officers, housing organisations and community groups, who were pulled together by the Campaign for Water Justice, to urge a number of Members of Parliament to introduce a Bill that would outlaw the disconnection of water from domestic properties that are lived in.

Those arguments were obviously based on assumptions that arose from other pieces of legislation. When I first recognised the increase that had taken place, I was reminded of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. It is illegal for a workplace to be without a constant supply of clean running water. If that is the law of the land for workplaces, how many of us—I say "us" for obvious reasons—spend many, many years of our lives with the home as our main place of work, often in a caring capacity with children or with elderly people? The Children Act 1989 and the community care regulations would render it out of the question for a residential establishment to continue to stay open if there were not a constant supply of clean and adequate running water.

Similarly, we were minded in February 1993, at the time of the housing legislation, that for years local authorities and environmental health officers have been under a duty, under the housing legislation, to declare unfit for human habitation houses that did not have a constant supply of clean and running water.

There were, therefore, many reasons why people backed the call in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to make the disconnection of water to domestic property illegal.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): And Wales.

Mrs. Jackson: And in Wales—I beg my hon. Friend's pardon.

Mr. Stern: Would the hon. Lady apply the principle that she has just outlined to premises that are squatted and, if so, why? Surely in such circumstances there is no possibility of the supplier of water recovering the cost of the water being supplied other than by disconnection.

Mrs. Jackson: That is a red herring. We are discussing property—homes—in which people are living legitimately and for which they pay their council tax.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady point out the part of the Bill that excludes squatted premises from the general disconnection power?

Mrs. Jackson: It is clear that the Bill refers to houses that are lived in and are recognised as such.

Because of pressure from various organisations across the country, we introduced a ten-minute Bill on 13 May last year. It was supported by many hon. Members and received widespread publicity, partly because of research emerging at that time which showed a sharp increase in cases of dysentery. It sharpened focus on the potential for a worsening of the standards of public health if there was an increase in the number of families living in homes without an adequate clean water supply.

It was, therefore, natural that organisations such as those representing health visitors and midwives and, more recently, the British Medical Association itself and the Institute of Public Health Officers came on board. Although the health bodies are not saying that there is a direct correlation between water disconnections and the increase in dysentery, they are saying—rightly—that it should not be necessary to have to argue again and again that a home without clean water is a health hazard to the family living in it and to the people living nearby. As a representative of the BMA said on Tuesday, it is matter of basic hygiene that we wash our hands after going to the toilet. If such basic hygiene cannot be complied with, there is a risk of infection in the dwelling and, for that reason, if for no other, the Bill should be supported.

I am sure that hon. Members are aware of the fact—although we should remind ourselves of it—that 80 per cent. of the world's disease is attributable in one way or another to the lack of water or to unclean, impure water. There is not an acute shortage of water in this country; by and large, we have adequate plumbing.

Therefore, it is extremely important that we, among United Nations countries, should take the lead in emphasising that this key commodity to public health and civilised living is something to which we are proud that every house in the country will have access.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East said that access to education is not denied to people who have problems paying their council tax. In this context, the commodity of water is so crucial to healthy living that it must be seen alongside services such as the fire service, the police and the health service. We do not query someone's income tax record of payment before we say that he can be connected on a 999 call.

Mr. Knapman: What sanction would the hon. Lady suggest for those who will not pay, although they can afford to do so?

Mrs. Jackson: There are clear sanctions for debt collection through the courts for those who do not pay their income tax or local taxes and they should be brought into play, as they are in Scotland and Northern Ireland, for people who do not pay other debts. *[Interruption.]* I am conscious of the time and I want to ensure that other hon. Members can get in.

I challenge head on the concept that 1,456 homes—30 a week—were disconnected in Yorkshire last year. It is simply not the case that all those disconnections related to non-payers. If they were analysed, one would find that they related to people in severe financial hardship but not necessarily on income support. Many families in this country are in severe financial hardship and in low-paid occupations but not necessarily on income support, so the Department of Social Security does not always have a chance even to intervene in such cases.

Now is the time for the Government to allow the Bill to go forward because the water industry is preparing its new form of charging systems to follow on from the present system of rateable value charging. It would be to the credit of this Parliament, the House and even the Government to take on board and include in the new regulations and the new considerations of charging for water the requirement that disconnections should be made illegal. That is what we are asking for in the Bill. I compliment my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East on bringing the Bill to the House and I hope that it makes progress.

2.2 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): We have already heard that water is essential to life and therefore is always essential to all residential properties. There is no substitute for it. Therefore, I believe that disconnections of household water supplies should be made illegal. They do not take place in Scotland and Northern Ireland and, as we are part of the United Kingdom, I am sure that water companies in England could follow exactly the same procedure.

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

Any household that does not have running and clean water runs health and welfare risks. In such households, people cannot even wash vegetables to cook. They have no means of bathing and no means of flushing toilets. It is not only my belief that any property that does not have that supply is considered unfit for human habitation; I understand that that is the law. As far as I can remember, we have spent the past 50 years clearing properties that did not have that service piped in. If we have spent time, money and effort over the years on doing that, I do not think that we should give water companies the ability and the legal right to disconnect those supplies.

It is true that Ofwat and the water companies often agree. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that they agree far too often. Perhaps we want a director of Ofwat rather like Sir James McKinnon of British Gas. He made great achievements and perhaps should be reappointed, but only to be in charge of water.

It is said that disconnections do not last more than a few days. I wonder how many of us have tried to survive in any household or establishment without water even for a few days. Of course, Ofwat and the water companies say that people then pay their bills. Yes, they do, and I am quite sure that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) suggested, many of those who won't pay do pay.

It is also true that many of those who can't pay eventually pay, because they are desperate for water supplies. How do they pay? They must go out and borrow money, often from a loan shark because that is the only place where they can get it. That puts them deeper into debt, so they will be worse off the next time they get a water bill.

I believe that water companies have systems for helping people, but I could give the House a list of the times when those systems have fallen down and because of that we have seen a huge increase in water disconnections. Although the number has decreased during the past 18 months, that has been only because the water companies have been aware of the campaign to do something about their charges and they have taken more care. I shall be interested to see whether the number stays reduced, or whether it goes up.

The Royal College of Nursing has said:

> "A clean water supply is essential for human life. Cleaning up water supplies in the nineteenth century was one of the key improvements in public health that transformed the epidemiological situation in Britain."

Much of the disease which occurred in the back streets in houses not fit for human habitation was cut out. The college also said:

> "In 1992 there were over 22,000 disconnections, which represents a three-fold increase over the previous year".

I admit that since then the numbers have decreased, which I believe is due partly to the interest that Parliament is taking. The college went on to say:

> "There is some evidence to show that many disconnections are not notified to the local authority despite the attendant health risks . . . This is despite the legal obligation of the water company to do so."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health said in a parliamentary answer:

> "The rise in notification of dysentery in 1992 was seen in all major conurbations other than London. Trends in dysentery also exhibit a periodicity, with peaks every seven to eight years, although the peak in 1992 was higher than other peaks in the previous two decades."—*[Official Report*, 10 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. *395.*]

That obviously comes from official figures and tells us a little about the problem. I believe that if disconnections are banned in Scotland and in Northern Ireland, water companies in England should not have the power to disconnect water to residential premises, even in cases of non-payment. I believe that, in such cases, they have and should use other means of recovering that debt.

2.8 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I shall be deliberately brief because I am hopeful that the Bill will receive a Second Reading and move into Committee. I hope and trust that there will be no attempt from Conservative Members deliberately to talk it out.

I begin by paying a warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) for taking up the issue and for introducing the Bill in such a splendid fashion this afternoon. I also pay a special tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), who has pursued the issue so ably and consistently for more than two years.

I note in passing that not one Liberal Democrat Member has been present for any of the debate. It is clearly something in which that party is totally uninterested, and I trust that that point will be made strongly elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): It is a point that I have made on occasional Fridays. It is possible that Liberal Democrat Members did not know that the Bill would be reached. Other than that, I am with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Smith: Water is an essential commodity for life, health and hygiene. That is why I would put water in a completely different category from the normal run of goods and services of which people might well be deprived if they could not pay for them. As water is such an essential commodity, we really must make sure that it continues to be available to everyone. It is not acceptable in a civilised society to disconnect water simply to recover debt.

We know what happened. After privatisation, the figures for disconnections soared. In the past year or so they have started to inch their way down, largely as a result of pressure from Members of Parliament. Even so, on average more than 300 families every week face disconnection of their water supply. That is not acceptable. I hope that the Government will ensure that the Bill goes forward today and reaches the statute book. I give a commitment that if, for some dastardly reason, the Government do not permit the Bill to go forward, a Labour Government will certainly legislate to put it on the statute book.

2.11 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I follow the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) with some trepidation. He made an excellent and moving speech earlier this week. It is ironic that we find ourselves clashing so soon on another issue.

I accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that water is one of the fundamental human rights in a civilised society. I do not resent the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) feels that the purpose of a Bill such as this is in a typically high Tory tradition. Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th, the

Conservative party introduced much socially desirable legislation motivated by the same high ideals to create a civilised and humane society.

However, the question is whether that purpose could not be achieved by other and perhaps fairer means. The main objection to the Bill, which would prevent water companies legitimately applying pressure to collect their debts, is that it enfranchises the "won't pay" customer to the detriment of other customers. Other customers would have to pay for the services for which wilful non-payers refused to pay their share.

There is surely a limit to which we can go in a civilised society to insulate people from what they wilfully do to the detriment of society as a whole. If they wilfully refuse to pay debts that they are capable of paying, it does not seem sensible to give them yet more power and leverage to exploit the system.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his argument would break down if it could be shown convincingly that the vast majority of people who do not pay are short of money and do not pay because they cannot pay or they have not managed to make arrangements to pay in small instalments?

Mr. Jenkin: I would accept that if it could be proved. The onus is on the hon. Lady and her right hon. and hon. Friends to prove it. They have not done so and I shall cite examples in my constituency that paint a strong alternative picture.

This debate does no harm and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on the fact that we are having it and on introducing the Bill. I do not dispute the fact that it is legitimate to apply public pressure to make the water companies behave responsibly. I have no doubt that their employees may have applied the sanction of disconnection in a way that is not entirely as we might wish. However, that does not mean that there is a case for passing legislation which will affect all customers, to the detriment of the majority, in order to deal with the problem.

One question asked during the debate is why Wessex Water has made no disconnections during the past six months, although other companies have done so. Water companies may well be able to work for some time without disconnecting anyone, but that does not necessarily mean that they have not benefited from the availability of that sanction. If we take it away it would not necessarily mean that we would be leaving Wessex Water in the position that it is in now, because its customers know that it is legal to disconnect the water of a wilful non-payer and so they behave accordingly and pay their bills.

My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen mentioned public health problems at length. There is no solid evidence to connect the recent peak in the incidence of dysentery with water disconnections. I have here a brief from the House of Commons Library which refers to several claims in the newspapers during the past few months. It states:

> "However, there is no evidence in any of these reports of a direct causal link between the disconnections and dysentery or hepatitis outbreaks."

The Library official continues:

> "I have spoken to officials at Sandwell Health Authority, who are conducting a study into the issue . . . They said that in their study, they found a strong correlation between the postcodes of homes which had been disconnected and the postcodes of people who had been infected with dysentery or hepatitis. However, they said that this correlation does not necessarily mean there was a direct link between the two issues, but that it could just reflect the poverty in the areas covered by the postcodes."

The real issue is not that a few people are being disconnected by the water industry for not paying their bills, but the level of water bills. There are a number of methods that the Government could use to reduce water bills. Perhaps we could require Ofwat to consider a higher gearing level in the privatised water companies. They are safe investments and have an incredibly secure cash flow. Why cannot they borrow more and charge less? Ofwat and the water companies should consider that. Perhaps it needs public pressure, but it is not something that we should necessarily legislate for.

I shall now examine the way in which Anglian Water treats its customers in the North Colchester constituency. If it sends out a bill in March, with a pay-by date at the end of April, the reminder—with an advance notice of legal action—would not go out until early May. That would be followed up, in most cases, with a pre-summons visit and at that point a pro-active opportunity is generated by the water company to get involved with the customer's difficulties and understand the issues. It might refer to social services to find out whether the customer is on income support or in difficulties. It will gain a county court summons only if it is constantly beset by obstructions and wilful non-payment. That is followed by the first of two pre-cut-off visits. I would describe that as exemplary behaviour and perhaps Ofwat should require it of all water companies.

Mrs. Peacock: I have made a note of how that water company operates. Undoubtedly, many follow those procedures, but occasionally the system falls down because the companies know that they have the ultimate disconnection procedure. Those companies may not always be careful to go through the various stages.

Mr. Jenkin: There are two types of regulation. There is regulation which requires a ban or offers a blanket assertion. It is that type of regulation that is getting our industry and our competitiveness into all kinds of difficulties. The kind of regulation that is far more preferable is that which assesses the cost benefit of a particular action or guideline.

It is that type of regulation that means that airlines stay airborne, because we could overregulate aircraft to the extent that they would be totally uneconomic to fly. We do not do that, but make hard decisions about how many millions of dollars a life is worth. If it costs more than a certain amount, a particular safety feature does not end up on an aeroplane. We need to consider disconnections in the same way. I am merely arguing that the objectives that the right hon. Gentleman is seeking are desirable, but that the Bill is the wrong way to go about it.

From April last year until now, Anglian Water, which supplies part of my constituency, disconnected a mere 29 customers. Twenty five of them have been reconnected; three paid their bill in full, 18 made arrangements to pay in monthly instalments—in one or two cases those payments are as little as £1 a week—and two made direct arrangements with the Department of Social Security. Of the 25 who were reconnected, 19 were reconnected within a mere two days. That is the kind of practice which we need to promote and which can be promoted without the right hon. Gentleman's Bill.

2.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): It may be helpful if I set out the Government's approach to the Bill.

Water is a precious commodity. It is essential to life, health and hygiene. We all want high standards of drinking water quality, clean beaches, safe bathing waters and effective systems of sewage disposal. Continuously raising such water standards involves continuing investment of further money.

At the privatisation of the water industry we invested £1,572 million in a green dowry for water services. Since privatisation, the water companies have invested a further £3 billion, on average, each year in improving water quality and striving to meet tough environmental targets. Such investment is massive. It works out at approximately £8 million each day, £5,000 every minute and £960 per household in the five years to 1995.

North West Water alone, which supplies water to the constituency of the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), the promoter of the Bill, invested almost £500 million in improvements last year and, on average, £189 was spent on each customer's property. It is planning to spend £150 million on the Fleetwood Marsh waste water treatment plant, which will clean up the Blackpool and Fylde coasts, and £400 million on improving the bathing waters of the north-west, again including Blackpool. Those are substantial sums of money.

That essential investment in improving water standards is unparalleled in our history, and what a contrast it is with the previous Labour Government, who cut their spending on the water industry generally by 30 per cent. and specifically cut their capital investment on sewage treatment by 50 per cent.

Such investment must be paid for and it is fair and reasonable that water customers overall should meet such costs. We have ensured that a regulator, the Director General of Water Services—Ofwat—is in place to help ensure a proper balance between continued and further environmental improvement, and manageable bills.

It is important to get water bills into perspective. Those who seek to be alarmist tend to quote percentage increases without referring to actual costs. That happened this morning when the right hon. Member for Salford, East referred to percentage increases without mentioning the actual cost of water. It is important to make that clear. The average cost of water to the average household in England is about 51p a day—less than the cost of a bottle of fizzy water. That is a reasonable sum to enable the water companies to ensure high standards.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): How much of that 51p a day goes into the water companies' profits?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has obviously not been listening. I made it clear that the water companies have been investing substantial sums in water infrastructure. It would be impossible for them to make that investment if they were losing money. We all know what happened to the water industry when it was a nationalised industry and at the behest of Treasury external financing limits. In 1976, all investment in capital spending in the water industry was cut overnight.

Whatever the level of water charges to customers, some people will have difficulty in meeting the bill and some simply will not pay. The Bill deals with the treatment of such customers. We consider it right that customers should be expected to pay their bills. That is not a new concept. To hear some hon. Members speak today, one would think that the concept was either new or had been introduced since privatisation.

The framework for regulating the water industry in terms of disconnections is exactly the same as it has been since the Water Act 1945, which came into effect under a Labour Government. Under that legislation, water undertakers in England and Wales had access to provisions to disconnect a water supply for non-payment. As there seems to be some misunderstanding about that, I quote from the relevant legislation. It states:

> "where a person fails to pay within seven days after a demand therefor any instalment of a water rate payable by him in respect of any premises, the undertaker may cut off the supply of water to the premises and recover the expenses reasonably incurred by them in so doing".

So the provisions for the disconnection of water are not new. They go back almost half a century. Such a power is still necessary as an ultimate sanction against those who can but will not pay. Equally, those who have difficulty in paying should be given every assistance to enable them to do so.

To hear Opposition Members speak, one would think that disconnection was instant upon non-payment following receipt of a bill. That is far from the truth. The procedures involved are quite protracted, involving written communication with the customer and lasting, on avergae, some six months. Typically, customers receive a bill with details of what to do if they cannot pay. They then receive a reminder that the bill has not been paid and, subsequently, a notice of the company's intention to issue a summons and warning of the additional costs that the customer will thus incur. That is followed by a visit and/or a solicitor's letter, an attempt to negotiate payment arrangments and, where no arrangement is entered into, the subsequent issue of a summons.

If payment is still not received, an application is made to the court for a judgment order. The customer is then notified that the company has received an order and that payment must be made to avoid disconnection. Finally, if all else has failed, a disconnection notice is delivered by hand and, after further attempts to seek agreement over payment arrangements, a visit is made to disconnect the water supply. Even at this late stage, the company will still negotiate a payment arrangement if the customer is willing. All of that takes a very considerable period—on average, about six months.

The Water Act 1989 built on the statutory framework of the 1945 Act and strengthened safeguards for customers. A number of the provisions introduced then were specifically designed to meet the concerns voiced at the time by consumer representative bodies. The result was a much more demanding legislative regime on disconnection for non-payment and a more comprehensive code of practice, enforceable by the Director General of Water Services, as part of water companies' licences. That was far more demanding than anything previously experienced or enjoyed by the water consumer or required——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that if the Minister had terminated his remarks after seven and a half minutes and then sat down, there being no other hon.

Members wishing to contribute to the debate and rising in their places, we could have proceeded to a decision on Second Reading?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is hypothetical. We do not speculate like that.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 4 March.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Second Reading what day? No day named.

BUILDING CONVERSION AND ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [11 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 25 March.

INSHORE FISHING (SCOTLAND) BILL [LORDS]

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 4 March.

PROTECTION OF DOGS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [4 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Sir, Friday next.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 4 March.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) at the sitting on Monday 28th February—

- (i) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Hurd relating to European Communities not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion;
- (ii) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Representation of the People and of Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew relating to Representation of the People and Northern Ireland not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion; and
- (iii) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Lang relating to Local Government (Scotland) not later than half-past Eleven o'clock; and

(2) at the sitting on Monday 7th March, put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Anthony Nelson relating to Building Societies not later than one and a half hours after their commencement;

and the said Motions may be proceeded with, though opposed, after the expiry of time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Hostel Closure (Sydenham)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about this important facility for young homeless people which is located in Lewisham, West, although its importance stretches far wider. I am not sure what mystical processes allocate Adjournment debates, but I am grateful for having been granted this opportunity, at relatively short notice. I shall try to remain temperate in my language, although I come here today feeling a mixture of anger and sorrow at the prospect that the Lawrie Park road hostel for young homeless will close. It is to close because of the deliberate actions of the Department of the Environment.

I have raised the matter in the House on previous occasions, including the Consolidated Fund debate in July 1992. I have met the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction on a number of occasions and I have written on far more occasions. I am pessimistic, to put it mildly, about what is likely to emerge from today's debate, given the fact that the Minister with whom I have been dealing all this time is not here today. Doubtless his precious time is occupied elsewhere. This does not bode well for the response that I am likely to get. I rise with a heavy heart because the attitude of the Department to date has been one of simple-minded repetition of current Government policy without any recognition of the project's value, not just to the young people whom it serves, but a far wider community in London.

I am extremely angry and sorry that what is likely to emerge from the business is the irrecoverable loss of an extremely valuable asset. The circumstances, efforts and commitment that produced the hostel are unlikely to be replicated, so my speech is probably, to that extent, a swan song. I am determined that the valuable asset of the Lawrie Park hostel should not

"go gentle into that good night"

if it is to be consigned to the dustbin by the Government.

The hostel is designed for 16 to 25-year-old single, homeless people off the streets, predominantly in central London. It suffers the misfortune of being located on the borders of my constituency in the London borough of Lewisham and Bromley. It is an extremely desirable location, with a few trees and grass around it, unlike the normal surroundings associated with short-term direct access hostels for the homeless in London.

The hostel is purpose-built accommodation, not a draughty church hall. It was originally a management training centre and is still owned by the National Westminster bank. The accommodation is of a remarkably high standard compared with what young, single homeless people in London normally have to put up with. To some degree, those high standards have proved its downfall. It offers experiences and opportunities denied to many of London's homeless young people, but it is likely to close for good.

The hostel originally opened in December 1991 under the Government's former cold weather shelter scheme. It was funded until March 1992. The funding was, unsurprisingly, extended to the end of May 1992 and then for a couple of weeks into June. It does not take a genius to realise that a general election took place between March and June 1992. The last outstanding demand of the chartists is that there should be annual elections. If the net effect of that would mean that the Government's generosity and largesse was displayed every year, I would support that demand. I have no doubt that the election was a fundamental factor in keeping the project open.

The hostel obtained funding by various means through the summer of 1992—principally through the efforts of the South London Housing Family Association, which strove commendably to maintain that important resource until it qualified for cold weather payments in the winter of 1992-93. I met the Minister on various occasions during 1992 to ensure that that valuable resource was not lost. In the middle of last year, a revised rough sleepers initiative strategy document was published. I have no doubt that the Lawrie Park hostel not only meets every criteria in that document, but exceeds by a wide margin the minimum requirements.

The hostel's greatest failing is that it is not located in central London. Even though it draws the overwhelming majority of its residents from central London, the fact that it is located in south-east London means that it does not qualify. I have no doubt that the hostel meets those funding criteria as well as those of the Housing Corporation. It met every criterion, but, because the Government were seeking to reduce the amount of money available for the rough sleepers initiative as another post-election cut, the hostel's funding for the winter of 1993-94 was eliminated. The young people, particularly those of south London, have to pay for the Government's cut through the closure of the hostel. I shall demonstrate how the elimination of the hostel's funding has been crucial to the sad and deeply hurtful decision to close the project.

The hostel was funded in part by close co-operation with the London borough of Lewisham. The South London Family Housing Association has invested about £250,000 in the two years that it has existed. Unfortunately, that is a burden that it can no longer carry. Revenue funding is crucial to the project. Approaches to the Housing Corporation seem to show that capital funding for the acquisition of the building and its institution as a permanent project is likely.

I have already mentioned the determination that the South London Family Housing Association has shown, with its energy and drive. It has devised a comprehensive project, utilising many agencies, groups and energies to provide an opportunity for some of the most vulnerable young people in our society, save for the support of the Department of the Environment and the critical revenue funding that has not been forthcoming. I believe that all that will be wasted in future. As I mentioned, it will be impossible to recreate and will all have been for nothing.

Although many will have benefited in the past two years, those who come after them will be left to fight for a place somewhere on the streets of London. I can do no better than quote from a couple of letters from the managing director of the South London Family Housing Association. When I was first notified of the impending closure of the hostel, he said:

> "With several other direct access hostels and short term provision also closing this Spring, I can foresee single homelessness reappearing in the street in a significant way. The Government must provide some better sources of revenue support."

In the few moments that I have left, I can read only part of a further letter in which he said:

> "In total we estimate that up to 500 people have passed through the hostel. Recently the hostel has come under increasing pressure from homeless young people and has been absolutely full—55 young people—since early January."—

There are equal numbers of young men and women. While all young people who are forced to live on the streets of London are vulnerable, young women must be the most vulnerable group of all. That hostel has provided equally for young men and women.

> "We have secured a lot of local support for our volunteers and a number of local schools, among them Dulwich College, are preparing to make links and raise some funds for us. We had also made plans for linking the hostel (as far as Lewisham people are concerned) with a 'Foyer' in Sydenham Road, opposite the library, which would provide a place residents could have moved on to and take a suitable training course, probably at Lewisham College on a Training for Work scheme."

The most important features of the project have been:

> "half of all the single homeless in London are from London itself and the best way to provide for them is with direct access hostels near to where they have some connections rather than forcing them into the West End because there is no local provision . . . we were able to show that local boroughs will join together to tackle this problem despite tight budgets: Lewisham (and to an extent Bromley) were especially supportive. Given more time and some more matching funds, Southwark, Lambeth and Croydon might have joined in. The problem with running direct access hostels is that there is simply no one source of funding to turn to. For Lawrie Park, SLFHA and Centrepoint secured funds from London Boroughs Grants Unit, the London Housing Foundation, Tudor Trust, LB Lewisham, LB Lambeth, LB Southwark and potentially from the Housing Corporation. All of these took time and effort to secure—and we remain £120,000 short of the annual sum we need to staff the hostel with 2 staff on duty at all times . . . Meanwhile SLFHA itself has put in £250,000 to keep the hostel open. The Government must provide some simpler route for revenue funding for direct access hostels of this kind, outside central London, otherwise it is simply impossible to make them happen."

I briefly draw the Minister's attention to the early-day motion on the rough sleepers initiative, which indicates that it has been successful so far as it goes, but the problem of young homelessness is not restricted to central London; it exists not only in outer London and the part of inner London that I represent, but in every city. If all that the Government can do is concentrate their efforts in the central London area, they will create a magnet that will drag young people from all around the country to the only place where they can get decent support.

A note was passed to me before I came into the Chamber to say that the South London Family Housing Association, in connection with Centrepoint, is organising a conference this September to discuss the problem of young homelessness in south London, which has been occasioned particularly by the impending closure of the Lawrie Park road hostel. I hope that the Minister will make a commitment—if not on his own behalf, on behalf of his Department—to attend the conference and discuss the problems that the closure of the hostel will leave in south London.

As you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have papers sent by numerous organisations—by hostel residents, the Housing Corporation, the housing departments of Lewisham, Bromley, Southwark and Lambeth, the London Connection young homeless project, the Longstop project, Stopover Lewisham, Centrepoint Soho, Shelter, the Mental Health Team single homeless project, Letts house Croydon direct access hostel, Deptford centre, Shaftesbury homeless project and numerous others. They all describe the insurmountable difficulties that the closure of Lawrie Park road hostel would create for homeless young people in south London.

I appeal to the Minister. It is not too late to provide the kind of support that such a valuable project needs. It must not be allowed simply to wither on the vine. It has been said in another context that, if someone is given a fish, he can be fed for a day, but if he is taught to fish, he can be fed for life. That is what the hostel does: it not only gets young homeless people off the streets, but it makes it possible for them to stay off the streets. It has undertaken to perform that task perhaps too well, and it continues to do so.

If I did not consider them to be totally incapable of shame, I would say that it was to the Government's eternal shame that that work is to be frittered away and wasted because of their short-sighted meanness. There will be victims of the closure of the hostel; hon. Members may not be able to put names to them, but they will see them again on the streets of central London.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) for raising the important question of the funding of local services for single homeless people outside central London and for giving me the opportunity to comment and to clarify a number of issues that are clearly being misunderstood.

It is clearly important to recognise the valuable work that projects such as the Lawrie Park road hostel in Sydenham can contribute to the relief of homelessness among single people, but it is also important to recognise that responsibility for all homelss people properly rests with local housing authorities. Local authorities are in the best position to assess local needs; and each local authority is required, when drawing together its housing strategy, to consider the needs of all homeless people within its area, including the single homeless.

It is not for central Government to decide which local housing services should be funded and in what way: indeed, I think that local authorities would be rightly indignant if Ministers in Whitehall sought to tell them how they should deliver every detail of their housing programmes, what local housing should be funded and in what way it should be funded.

In central London, however, we recognised the particular problems of people sleeping rough, to which it was reasonable for the Government to direct extra help and resources. That we have done through the rough sleepers initiative. The initiative is working alongside the voluntary and statutory sectors, with the aim of preventing and relieving homelessness among single people.

We committed £96 million to the first phase of the initiative, in 1990-93. As part of that, we funded the South London Family Housing Association to run 50 bed spaces at the Lawrie Park road hostel during the winters of 1991-92 and 1992-93. The funds were part of a programme to provide shelter for people who might otherwise have slept rough in central London during the winter months.

During the early stage of the rough sleepers initiative, we were unable to confine all the cold weather projects that we funded to the centre of London. Therefore, the net was widened to fund several schemes in the outer London boroughs, one of which was the Lawrie Park road hostel. I understand—and the hon. Gentleman has confirmed—

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

that the South London Family Housing Association kept the hostel open, using other sources of funds, during the summer of 1992.

The first phase of the rough sleepers initiative in central London has been very successful in helping people—especially young people—to start a new life away from the streets. Independent research into the first phase of the initiative, undertaken by Geoffrey Randall, has shown that it has helped several thousand people to find accommodation and has prevented many more from becoming homeless in the first place. The strategy for the second phase of the rough sleepers initiative was published in June last year after wide consultation with the voluntary and local authority sectors. The strategy proposes an additional £86 million funding available for three years to 1996 to build on the success of the original rough sleepers initiative. It is to be targeted on central London, where many rough sleepers remain concentrated.

SLFHA was well aware, and has been aware for some time, that its winter shelter funding would end in March last year and that, being located in Lewisham, several miles from central London, there was scant prospect of further RSI funding being directed towards Lawrie Park road. I think that that had been made clear to it on many occasions. SLFHA has kept the hostel open since last March, when Government funding ended, using its own resources.

I understand that SLFHA has, rightly, approached five neighbouring London local authorities, Lewisham, Bromley, Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon—because, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, West said, that hostel is located on the border of a number of London boroughs—with a view to working in partnership, with each borough contributing a share of the revenue costs needed to operate the Lawrie Park road hostel in future years. Unfortunately, only two authorities—Lewisham and Bromley—have agreed to that request. That is obviously most disappointing.

It is understandable that Lewisham borough council is unwilling to meet alone the full cost of the Lawrie Park road hostel if neighbouring authorities benefit freely from the services on offer by having that facility on their doorstep. It is to the mutual advantage of all the neighbouring boroughs that that facility exists to help people in their boroughs. They may have withheld funding in the hope that the Government might be persuaded to fund the hostel directly, but, for the reasons that I have set out, we do not see it as appropriate that we should do so and now, knowing that, those boroughs may review their previous decision.

Moreover, those five London boroughs' decisions not to fund the Lawrie Park road hostel should be put in the context that, in the financial year 1994-95, those five local authorities between them have been allocated a total of more than £93 million in grants under the Department's housing investment programme. I am surprised that, between them, the local authorities could not put together a proper "rescue package"—a proper package for Lawrie Park road hostel to maintain and sustain its revenue costs.

Having failed to secure sufficient long-term funding from the local authorities or other charitable sources, SLFHA has decided that it has no option but to close Lawrie Park road hostel. I am sure that such a decision has been taken reluctantly, but obviously that is a decision for the association and it alone.

The number of people sleeping rough in central London continues to decline. From voluntary sector estimates of more than 1,000 before the RSI began in 1990, it had declined from that peak to 287 in a count undertaken last November by Homeless Network—an umbrella group representing 20 voluntary organisations in central London. Of those 287 people, only three were aged under 18. Fewer than 40 others were aged between 18 and 25. The vast majority, therefore—about 240—were aged more than 25. Since that count was taken, we have opened up 350 bed spaces in seven cold weather shelters throughout central London. Those shelters are open from 1 December to 31 March and provide free, direct access and basic accommodation during the cold winter months. Up to 250 further places are available in the event of especially severe weather. Those emergency beds have been called into service on four occasions this winter, but no more than 55 places have ever been occupied on any one night.

Voluntary street-level agencies being funded under the rough sleepers initiative in central London have told us that they are able to make early contact with newly street homeless young people who are almost always willing to take up offers of accommodation. The rough sleepers initiative is continuing to make temporary hostel places available specifically for young people under the extended initivative. These people then have access to some 3,300 units of permanent new accommodation being developed under the initiative.

The voluntary agencies who work to resettle people currently in RSI temporary accommodation are encouraged to look not merely to the RSI-funded permanent accommodation but to the public or private sectors and housing associations.

Mr. Dowd: Is it the thrust of the Government's message that young homeless people—not only from around London but from across the country—should come to central London?

Mr. Baldry: The thrust of the Government's message is that there is a duty on the borough of Lewisham and its neighbours to meet the needs of the homeless in those boroughs. They are given considerable funds to enable them to do so. It is no good the hon. Gentleman brandishing wodges of paper from various London boroughs, all of which—with the exception of the two that I mentioned—have refused to support the Lawrie Park road hostel. If the hostel is doing such good work—as the hon. Gentleman suggests—I should have thought that the directors of housing and the housing committees of the boroughs involved would have had no difficulty in making a contribution between them towards the revenue costs of the hostel.

All the substantial RSI funds are now fully committed. If we were to accede to further demands to fund additional hostel places, it could only be at the expense of some of the planned 3,300 permanent developments and the key element of the programme is to ensure that people can move on from sleeping rough on the streets and into permanent accommodation.

Furthermore, some 950 places in temporary hostel accommodation will have been phased out by the end of the initiative in March 1996. In most cases, the closure of the temporary hostels is outside our control because the leases on the buildings are due to end or the sites are being redeveloped.

As part of the extended initiative, some resources are being targeted on five zones in central London, such as the Strand/west end and the bull ring at Waterloo, where there are large remaining concentrations of people sleeping rough. In those zones, consortia have been set up with representatives of the voluntary sector, local authority housing and social services departments, the police, local health service providers and the local business community to co-operate in pursuing common aims and objectives to relieve street homelessness in a given geographical area.

In particular, I greatly welcome the active involvement in the consortia of four local authorities—Camden, Lambeth, Westminster and the City of London corporation. It is encouraging that the services offered by specialist care providers are being integrated with the street-level work being funded under the rough sleepers initiative.

Partnerships between local authorities to meet a particular problem are not novel. They happen all over the country and there is no reason why there should not have been such a partnership to continue the work of Lawrie Park road hostel.

There are already encouraging signs that the co-ordinated approach of the rough sleepers initiative is producing real benefits. For instance, in several of the consortia the local authority housing department has offered some of its own housing stock or its nomination rights into housing association properties for the benefit of all rough sleepers in central London.

The key to the success of the consortia is the additional resources from member organisations. Central Government input is, therefore, just one element of the resources on offer. In addition, the voluntary agencies in central London are running a consortium in a sixth zone —in the Paddington/Marylebone area—without any targeted resources from us. It is a splendid example of how organisations can co-operate to maximise the impact of the resources available.

I hope that agencies outside central London will use the rough sleepers initiative as a model of how to co-ordinate the input of all voluntary and statutory bodies and local authorities involved in helping single people who are sleeping rough or who are in immediate danger of doing so. A consortium of south-east London agencies might have highlighted the issue of the Lawrie Park road hostel earlier and have been better able to focus attention on the need for local authorities to inject modest cash sums to keep the project afloat.

I trust that the South London Family Housing Association will manage the phasing out of the Lawrie Park road hostel professionally—that is, unless the boroughs concerned are not prepared to come forward even at this last moment and work in partnership to protect and take the hostel forward. If they do not do that, I am sure that the South London Family Housing Association will want to assist those people still living there to find alternative accommodation before the hostel closes. Clearly, Lawrie Park road is not the only hostel catering specifically for young people in that part of the capital.

It is clear that the rough sleepers initiative is continuing to make a significant impact on the issue of people sleeping rough in central London. By March 1996, around 5,000 places will have been provided in a variety of permanent and temporary accommodation solutions and thousands of people who would otherwise have slept rough will have been helped to find a new home. The number of people sleeping rough in the very heart of our capital city continues to decline and we are funding considerable outreach and resettlement effort to assist those who remain to start a more settled life away from the streets.

I am confident that the consortia of voluntary and statutory agencies established under the rough sleepers initiative, along with local authorities, will provide the basis of a structure that will continue to direct help to single homeless people in central London for many years to come. I hope that local authorities in other parts of the country will look at what we have achieved by working together in central London and that voluntary and statutory agencies will work together in south-east London, as in other parts of the country, to meet the needs of all homeless people, whether they be young single people or——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. Deputy Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 28 February 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

CONTINGENCIES FUND 1992-93

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House Accounts of the Contingencies Fund, 1992-93, showing:—

(1) The Receipts and Payments in connection with the Fund in the year ended 31st March 1993.

(2) The Distribution of the Capital of the Fund at the commencement and close of the year; with the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.—[*Mr. Arbuthnot.*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Maxwell Pensioners

1. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps the Government have taken to help Maxwell pensioners.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): We have succeeded in ensuring that all Maxwell pensioners have continued to receive their pensions in full while asset recovery work has progressed.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the liquidators and the Mirror Group trustees for recovering £84 million-worth of assets? That is a marvellous help to all the people in their later years who could do without worry, stress and tension. It is a magnificent example of the way in which the Government have worked closely with those two parties to ensure that —as was said in an earlier statement, not what the Minister has just told the House—all existing Maxwell pensioners should now receive their total benefit. That is marvellous.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time, not statement time.

Mr. Lilley: I entirely endorse the point that my hon. Friend made and will certainly convey his congratulations. We are fully behind Sir Peter Webster, who is working on behalf of the Maxwell pensioners' trust to seek a global settlement of all outstanding issues. That will be very much in the interests of pensioners and we hope that he will succeed.

Mr. Ingram: On 7 June last year, the Under-Secretary of State, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), told the House:

> "The long-term gap between the Maxwell pension scheme's assets and liabilities"—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 9.]

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman perhaps did not hear the statement that I made last Thursday. I do not want statements at the Dispatch Box or from the Back Benches. It is Question Time and, therefore, I am seeking brisk questions and brisk answers.

Mr. Ingram: I apologise. Does the Secretary of State agree that last June it was calculated that the gap between assets and liabilities would be less than £100 million? In the light of recent out-of-court statements to the Maxwell pensioners' trust fund, is the Secretary of State now standing by that assessment or has it been readjusted? In the light of the answer that he gave the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is he now saying that all the thousands of Maxwell pensioners will receive their pensions in full as a result of the recent settlements?

Mr. Lilley: I understand the important point that the hon. Member makes. Of course a lot of work remains to be done, especially if a global settlement is to be achieved, or even more if it is not achieved. I understand that the scheme trustees are cautiously optimistic—that can be no more than an assessment on their part—that there is a reasonable chance that all their long-term obligations will ultimately be met if the present progress continues.

Family Credit

2. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent modifications he has made to family credit.

12. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of families receiving family credit; and how many families were receiving a family income supplement in 1979.

14. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many awards of family credit have been made since the introduction of the scheme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): Three for the price of one, for the sake of brevity.

About £4.5 million of awards of family credit have now been made. In September 1993, 515,000 families were receiving family credit, compared with only 78,000 receiving family income supplement in March 1979. In April, we shall streamline the claims process for the self-employed, which will help 70,000 families, and extend the fast-track claims service to those people just starting self-employed work. From October, we are introducing a child care disregard in the in-work benefits, which will make 150,000 working families better off.

Mr. Hargreaves: Can my hon. Friend's reply be interpreted as meaning that we are working, we have worked and we shall continue to work to ensure that those in greatest need receive that benefit?

Mr. Burt: Yes, and the benefit will continue to do its job very well.

Dr. Spink: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the £40 child care disregard in family credit that is to be introduced in October will help 50,000 families back into work and will help 100,000 families who are already in work?

Mr. Burt: Yes, the provision for the child care disregard has been widely welcomed and will indeed help the number of families that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mrs. Roe: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the family credit case load is more than 500,000—the largest ever—and that the number of awards has increased each year since 1988? Does not that confirm the success of the Government's policy of introducing family credit?

Mr. Burt: Yes, the Government's success in introducing that policy was welcomed only last week in a report from the Policy Studies Institute, which revealed that family credit was a benefit. The recent changes that we have announced in relation to child care will be popular and will help low-income families still further.

Ms Eagle: How can the Minister justify subsidising very low-paying, exploitative employers by using a benefit in that way? Should not we be trying to increase the wages paid by such employers, rather than subsidising them with taxpayers' money?

Mr. Burt: The biggest determinant of family credit is the age and number of children, not any variant in the wages paid.

Invalidity Benefit

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received as to the impact of reductions of invalidity benefit on family incomes.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We have received a number of representations about our proposals to replace sickness and invalidity benefits with incapacity benefit from April 1995.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not it true that, by the end of next year, the Government will be on course for saving £6 million in west Cumberland alone by the switch from invalidity benefit to incapacity benefit? What measure of the effect on the economy has been made by the Government?

Mr. Scott: In essence, the new arrangements are designed to produce a system to meet the needs of those who are incapable of work because of disability or long-term sickness and that is affordable and sensible, and sensitive to the needs of those who really need help.

Mr. Brandreth: Does my right hon. Friend share the frustration of a constituent of mine who is an invalid on invalidity benefit and who read in *The Daily Telegraph* today about someone who is also on invalidity benefit but is playing a game of squash three times a week and about someone else on invalidity benefit who plays two rounds of golf a week? Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that the legitimate use of invalidity benefit is still being abused and needs to be examined and that we need not be frightened to acknowledge that fact?

Mr. Scott: I am certain that since invalidity benefit was introduced, the conditions for being able to get it have been altered and made increasingly flexible. I believe that, with incapacity benefit, we are restoring the original intention of invalidity benefit. We are ensuring that general practitioners are not put under pressure to passport people on to this benefit and that there is an objective medical test of those who should receive it.

Dr. Godman: It is the Government, in the shape of the Department of Social Security, who are abusing the invalidity benefit system. Will the Department reconsider its decision not to pay invalidity benefit to women aged between 60 and 65? Only this morning, I received a letter from a woman who will lose almost £60 because of this harsh, rotten decision. Will the Department reconsider?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will write to me about the particular case he will, as ever, receive an appropriate answer.

Pensioner Incomes

5. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners had incomes in the lowest fifth of the national income distribution in (a) 1979 and (b) the last year for which figures are available.

17. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners had incomes in the lowest fifth of the national income distribution in 1979 and in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: In 1979, it was estimated that half of all pensioners had incomes in the lowest fifth of the national income distribution. By 1990-91, the proportion had fallen to less than a third.

Mr. Evans: Do not those welcome statistics show a combination of the effects of low inflation in the 1980s, the spread of occupational pension schemes and the Government's direct action in favour of pensioners in keeping up benefit levels?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In 1979, only 77 per cent. of pensioners had additional income on top of state benefits but, in the most recent year for which figures are available, the proportion had risen to 85 per cent.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Secretary of State now tell the House which poor people occupy the position at the bottom of the income scale once occupied by pensioners?

Mr. Lilley: By and large, of course, the well-being of the population as a whole has increased. However, it is true that pensioners have done disproportionately well. Clearly, there has been a rise in the number of unemployed people, who therefore form a larger proportion of those on low income.

Maxwell Pensions Unit

6. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on the work of his Department's Maxwell pensions unit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): The Maxwell pensions unit continues to work in a variety of ways to encourage an early resolution to the Maxwell pensions dispute. A speedy settlement must be in everyone's best interests, especially those of the pensioners.

Mr. Lidington: Although I welcome the recent out-of-court settlements, what practical difference are they likely to make to the thousands of pensioners in, for example, staff and works schemes, who are still desperately anxious about their future?

Mr. Hague: The drip-feed funding from the Maxwell pensioners trust will last longer if some of the schemes are able to reduce their calls on the trust. To date, 60 per cent. of trust funding has gone to the Maxwell Communication Corporation works scheme. I hope that, in the light of the settlements, the scheme's trustees will be able to make a substantial reduction in their calls on the trust.

Social Fund

7. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the position regarding grants and loans from the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Our routine monitoring arrangements for the discretionary social fund already allow us to keep its operation under regular scrutiny.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister consider extending the provision for people such as two of my constituents? After many months of unemployment, they have recently managed to obtain casual work, but they cannot afford the fare to travel across London to take up that employment, and they have found that a loan from the social fund is not available.

Mr. Scott: The social fund was not introduced to provide help with travel to work. The Department of Employment has a variety of schemes, including schemes to pay for travel for those who are being interviewed for jobs. It is right that once people are in work—unless they are entitled to family credit in certain circumstances—the responsibility for travel is theirs.

Mr. Willetts: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that every social fund loan repaid is money that is then available to help someone else on income support?

Mr. Scott: It has been a feature of the success of the social fund that the resources can be recycled to help many more people than were helped under any previous scheme.

Mr. Bradley: Does the Minister not realise that his monitoring has led to a crisis in social fund loans? Department of Social Security offices throughout the country report that they can give loans only to people who are in the highest risk category. When will the Minister put more money into the system so that people can be treated fairly, whether they walk through the door at the beginning of the financial year or at the end of it?

Mr. Scott: There has been a substantial increase in the social fund—by 15 per cent. over the past 12 months and by 50 per cent. since April 1991. We have responded to the increased needs of the social fund over that period.

Nursing Homes (Top-up Payments)

8. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from voluntary organisations with regard to top-up payments for old people living in private nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Income support is now given to 281,000 people in residential care and nursing homes at a cost of £2.5 billion, compared with support for just 12,000 at a cost of £10 million in 1979. We have regular contact with voluntary organisations and others on all aspects of the system, including the income support limits, but I have to say that we have received very few recently in relation to top-up payments.

Mr. O'Brien: Obviously, the Minister neglects to answer the question. Is he aware of the fears and anxieties of carers who have been looking after elderly people and who find that their homes could be sold over their heads because of the inhuman approach by his Department to the top-up procedure? When will he accept that hardships will be caused to many of the carers? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Burt: With respect, I did answer the hon. Gentleman's question. He asked what representations I had received and I said that we had received very few, especially in relation to the top-up payments. Practically all the limits have increased in real terms since 1985. The limit for people in residential care homes increased by 13 per cent. in real terms and that for those in nursing homes by 36 per cent. between April 1985 and April 1993. We shall, of course, keep the limits very much under review. I shall be happy to receive representations in the manner that the hon. Gentleman mentions at any time.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister accept that I am surprised that he has had few representations on the matter of top-up, against the background of local authorities now negotiating fees that are higher than nationally set income support levels? Will the Minister agree to see a small delegation, perhaps consisting of the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), myself and representatives of some voluntary groups associated with the problem, in order further to discuss the matter?

Mr. Burt: I would, without any problems, but I repeat to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) and to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that I saw a group not too long ago. We discussed a range of items, but, since the increase that we have made, we have not received many expressions of concern about that matter. That is because we do not believe that the gap between income support limits and costs is widening.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the payments have increased 250 times in cash terms? Does not that underline the commitment of the Government and the hypocrisy of the Opposition?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is talking about the £2.5 billion income support expenditure during the currency of the Government, compared with just £10 million in 1979—true evidence of commitment to people properly in need.

Income Support

9. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of Age Concern to discuss income support payments to older people.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security met representatives of Age Concern last February. I also met Age Concern representatives in July last year.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that several voluntary organisations concerned with older people are worried that a number of income support claimants are wrongly placed in residential care and nursing homes? In view of the ombudsman's recent report on Leeds healthcare, what steps are being taken by the Department to review cases independently of people in residential and nursing care homes, to ensure that they actually need that form of care when they receive payments from the Department—people with preserved status?

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. We will certainly study the report that he mentions and other reports on the matter.

Mr. Streeter: Is my hon. Friend aware that what my elderly and retired constituents really want is certainty of income, particularly in these days of very low interest rates? When will the guaranteed income bonds be available, so that my constituents can have the benefit of the granny bonds to which they are looking forward?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend raises a matter on which my colleagues in the Treasury are expert—whether the bonds are available shortly or available already.

Pensioner Incomes

10. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners now have some other incomes from occupational pensions, savings and state earnings-related pension scheme in addition to basic state pension.

Mr. Lilley: An estimated 84 per cent. of pensioners receive income from savings or an occupational pension, in addition to basic retirement pension. Thirty nine per cent. receive state earnings-related pension in addition to basic retirement pension.

Mrs. Knight: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although Britain is increasing pensions in accordance with the rate of inflation, the Governments of France, Germany, Italy and Portugal are reducing benefits? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that earnings-related schemes in other European countries mean that low earners receive low pensions, but without the comprehensive network of support that only Britain provides?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. We have taken care to ensure that pensioners are protected against inflation. This year, of course, we are increasing pensions faster than inflation, to allow people some extra to cope with VAT on fuel, even though the Opposition voted against that measure and that increase. Not one of them voted for it. We in this country are far better off than those in many continental countries, where people face pensions that are being cut or that are entirely earnings-related and therefore significantly lower than ours for those who were low-earners during their working lives.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is not it a scandal that a large number of people have come out of occupational pension schemes and gone into private pension schemes as a result of the encouragement of, and inducements from, the Government, and have found themselves with pension terms that are much worse than before? What will the Government do about that? The Government are responsible for those people being deceived.

Mr. Lilley: As the hon. Gentleman may know, the Securities and Investments Board issued a statement today on its progress so far in investigating people who have opted out of occupational funds and gone into private pension funds. It has the Government's support in looking at that matter thoroughly and making sure that remedies are applied where they are found to be necessary.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although the important decision on SERPS was taken some years ago, it will start to apply only at the beginning of the next century? That is why the country needs to think carefully about long-term pension provision—not for people who are about to move to pensions but certainly for people under 40? Is not that exactly what is happening on the continent?

Mr. Lilley: We have improved the position for those over 30 by boosting the rebate for over-30s since April last year. That ensures that it should be attractive for people, even if they are over 30, to opt out of SERPS into private pensions. In accordance with our manifesto commitment, we are considering introducing age-related rebates which will make it equally attractive for people of all ages to opt for private pensions.

Mr. Dewar: Is not the Minister concerned about the atmosphere of scandal that now surrounds the sale of private pensions? Has he studied the figures featured in the *Financial Times* today which suggest that 60 per cent. of the 5 million people who have taken out private pension cover since 1988 are contributing only the basic SERPS opt-out figure and many of them therefore are likely to be very inadequately provided for on retirement? If he wishes to protect people in private pensions, what does he intend to do about the estimate that, since 1988, between £400 million and £1.3 billion of the money contributed by the taxpayer to encourage the pension provision of those people has been taken in commission? Should not he be acting on that now?

Mr. Lilley: If we had not allowed people the opportunity to opt for private pensions when their firm did not have occupational pensions, many of those 40 per cent. who are making greater provision than they would have had if they had stayed in SERPS would not have done so. I want to see more and more people make additional pension provision over and above the minimum level laid down by SERPS and therefore laid down for those who opt out of SERPS. I am glad to see that one of the leading pension providers, Prudential, believes that 70 per cent. of those taking out personal pensions with that company are now making extra provision over and above the minimum laid down by the state. If the Labour party is against private, personal and occupational pensions and wants to re-nationalise them, it should tell the pensioners of this country before the next election.

Child Support Agency

11. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further changes he plans in the Child Support Agency rules.

Mr. Burt: We have no current plans for further changes to the scheme. It is important that the recent changes are allowed time to take effect. However, we have always said that we will keep the operation of the Child Support Act 1991 under close scrutiny, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Lord: Everyone agrees that fathers should contribute to the upkeep of their children, but there is great dissatisfaction with some aspects of the Child Support Agency. May I ask my hon. Friend to look, as a matter of the greatest urgency, at those cases where fathers have taken on binding legal agreements with their former wives to contribute to their children's upkeep? They have maintained those payments throughout and are now being asked, because of the changes in the rules, to contribute amounts of money that they either simply cannot afford or that, in many cases, will deeply damage their new family arrangements.

Mr. Burt: The impact of the recent changes should be a help in terms of phasing and also reducing some payments made by absent parents. It should not be forgotten that any decrease in payment from an absent parent will have a short or long-term effect on the receipt of money by the parent with care. It was always an intention that levels of maintenance might be raised and previous settlements were looked at very carefully both in the setting up of the Act and more recently by the Select Committee. Indeed, we will keep the operation of the Act under review, as we have made very clear to my hon. Friend, but we want to give the recent changes that we have made some time to have an impact.

Mr. Olner: Is the Minister aware of the double standards of the Child Support Agency? It seems to be chasing responsible fathers who have court orders and are doing everything properly, but it is also saying that it will dispose of such court orders and when there is another low court order for a woman, it will not take action or follow the case through until 1996. Is not that the CSA adopting double standards?

Mr. Burt: No, I do not think so. The Act set out a take-on strategy which means that by law some cases cannot be taken on until 1996. Just before Christmas, I announced that where it was possible to take on some cases before 1996 by application from a parent with care, we would look sympathetically at that—that had not previously been the case and it would be a help.

As to whether we are going after the right people, about half of the cases taken on by the CSA at present involve those who have not paid maintenance before. By the end of this year, we hope that the figure will be up to about two thirds. Some 15,000 people who have been difficult to trace in the past and who might have escaped paying any maintenance altogether have been found by a specialist tracing unit. We are conscious of that particular criticism and we are doing our very best to meet it.

Mr. Matthew Banks: My hon. Friend rightly has drawn attention to the many changes and concessions which have been made, and they have been widely welcomed by hon. Members of all parties. Will he give the House an assurance that he will continue to take a close interest in the operation of the CSA? Unless we stop tinkering and take firm action quickly, many of my constituents and those of other hon. Members—honest, decent and hard-working people—will go bankrupt.

Mr. Burt: I recognise the force with which my hon. Friend speaks. Of course, I keep a careful eye on the cases and the correspondence brought to me. The system carries a great deal of good will because of the change from the previous discretionary system, under which the amount of maintenance paid to women with children was falling to extremely low levels.

We have made a series of changes that should improve the system and we will keep it under review. However, it is important to remember that we do not want to go back to a system that failed to obtain maintenance for women in the past. That meant repeated returns to courts and sometimes the avoidance of responsibility. When we make further changes—if they are needed—they must be carefully considered.

Mr. Barnes: The Minister's initial reply was disappointing. The CSA will be like the poll tax; in that case, one bit of transitional relief was followed by another, before the poll tax was finally scrapped. Should not responsible and respectable parents in second families have their interests taken into account by a further alteration in the measure?

Mr. Burt: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but my earlier reply suggested how seriously we take the issue and how determined we are to make sure that the system is right. We have made some changes, and we want to make sure that they have an impact, but we will keep the matter under careful review. We all have a vested interest in making sure that there is a good system of child maintenance throughout the UK, and that is not a point at issue between the parties.

Pensioner Households (Assets)

13. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the current value of the assets held by the average pensioner household; and what was the comparable position in real terms in 1978-79.

Mr. Hague: We do not have the information on the capital value of pensioners' assets. However, in 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, the estimated average weekly income that pensioners received from their savings or investments was £30.30. The comparable figure for 1979 was £11.20.

Mr. Heald: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in 1979, 62 per cent. of pensioners had additional income from savings and investments?

Mr. Winnick: Reading.

Mr. Heald: I am not reading. That figure has now risen to 76 per cent. Does my hon. Friend agree that that shows that a partnership between the private and public sectors can lever up standards for pensioners? Will he pay tribute not only to the financial and pensions industry but to the pensioners who are prepared to make the effort to provide for their retirement in addition to the state provision?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—even without notes. He points to a significant improvement in the opportunity for and the success of pensioners in saving. The proportion of pensioners with income from savings has risen to 76 per cent. That reflects partly an improvement in their incomes over the years and partly the fact that inflation is lower than they experienced in the 1970s.

Mr. Winnick: Has the Minister seen the report today from the Adam Smith Institute which recommends that pensions be abolished, together with all the other features of the welfare state? Does not that report show the hidden agenda of the Tory Government as, time and again, the Adam Smith Institute's recommendations have been brought about by the Government?

Mr. Hague: The abolition of the state pension has been advocated by at least one Opposition Member, and not just by the Adam Smith Institute. We will read the report from the institute with interest, but the Government are engaged in sustaining the welfare state, not in ending it.

Mr. Jessel: Is not the biggest form of pensioners' savings very often the house in which they live? Will my hon. Friend see what can be done to improve the position of the large number of pensioners living in valuable houses who have low incomes?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is right to say that home ownership is an important part of pensioners' assets. Indeed, 94 per cent. of pensioners who own their home own it outright. That has contributed to the general improvement in pensioners' financial position.

Pensions and Income Support

15. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage change in real terms since 1979 in (a) average earnings, (b) the basic pension for a single person and (c) the level of income support for a single parent with two children.

Mr. Hague: Since 1979, average earnings have increased by 35 per cent. in real terms. In the same period, the basic state retirement pension has risen by 3.2 per cent. in real terms, although the total average income of single pensioners has risen by 39 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

It has been estimated that the level of supplementary benefit or income support for a typical lone parent with two children under five has risen by about 16 per cent. in real terms since 1979. However, direct comparisons between income support and supplementary benefit are difficult to make because the two schemes are very different.

Mr. Williams: Will the Minister comment on the "Social trends" survey figures published last month, which showed that since 1979 the share of national income of the richest fifth of our population has increased from 35 to 43 per cent. but the share of the poorest fifth has dropped from 10 to 6 per cent? Does he agree that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? We are "back to basics" Tory style.

Mr. Hague: What is important is that since 1979 there has been an increase in income for all groups in society. That is what really matters. For example, the proportion of pensioners in the bottom decile of the income distribution, which was 31 per cent. in 1979, fell to 11 per cent. in 1990. That is a dramatic improvement in pensioners' living standards.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Has my hon. Friend had time to assess what would have been the effect of success by the 53 Opposition Members who attempted to stop the recent pensions increase?

Mr. Hague: If that vote had been successful, it would have deprived pensioners of several hundreds of millions of pounds of income.

Mr. Rooney: Does the Minister recognise in his manipulation of statistics that 8.25 million people are dependent on income support whereas 3 million were in 1979?

Mr. Hague: Income support did not exist in 1979; there was supplementary benefit. I have compared the level of supplementary benefit as closely as possible to income support now. Income support now is approximately 16 per cent. higher than in 1979. That reflects the commitment of the Government to help people in a difficult position.

Mr. Duncan: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is sensible to increase benefits in line with inflation and not in line with earnings? Has he seen a report that suggests that if we increased benefits with earnings, in the next century we would have to add 17p to the basic rate of income tax to pay for it?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that increasing benefits in line with earnings would clearly add many billions to expenditure in future years.

Invalidity Benefit

16. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he expects to lose entitlement to invalidity benefit as a result of the measures introduced in the November 1993 Budget.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that, as a result of our proposals, an average of 130,000 fewer people will receive long-term incapacity benefit in 1995-96 than would have received invalidity benefit.

Mrs. Campbell: Is the Minister aware that many people who suffer from acute anxiety and depressive illnesses receive income support and that for them a game of squash might be part of the treatment? That is a reference to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). Will the Minister please give some assurances to those people whose worries about the Government's plans are making their depressive illness worse? Will he reassure them that his plans will not reduce their benefits arbitrarily and suddenly?

Mr. Scott: Our clear intention is to ensure that those who are incapable of work through either physical or mental disability receive incapacity benefit and that those who are capable of work receive back-to-work benefits. I can give the hon. Lady an undertaking that, in the objective medical test, special arrangements will be made to take account of mental incapacity.

Mr. Bates: Will my right hon. Friend reassure my constituents who are existing beneficiaries of invalidity benefit that if they are genuinely incapable of work they will suffer no loss of benefit whatever and that the benefit will retain its tax-free status? Will he reject and condemn the scaremongering of the Labour party that has suggested otherwise?

Mr. Scott: I will give my hon. Friend that assurance. At the point of change to the new system, there will be no cash losers, as long as people are able to pass the new, objective medical test.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: If benefit records are held at the Long Benton complex in my constituency of Newcastle, East, why has the Minister allowed a local manager to purchase 22 Olympic jackets to keep senior management warm, at a cost of more than £300 a jacket? Would not the money have been better spent on—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman. That matter does not relate to the question.

Unemployment Benefit

19. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people who would lose entitlement to unemployment benefit in the current year if the period of entitlement were reduced from 12 months to six months.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that a total of 240,000 unemployed people at any one point in time during the current operational year would lose unemployment benefit if the length of entitlement were reduced from one year to six months, although 150,000 would be eligible for income support.

Mr. Enright: Are not the unemployed paying for the incompetence of the Government's financial policies? Will the Minister give an assurance that if—as he and other Ministers are constantly stating—there is an upturn in the economy, he will instantly restore to the unemployed what is surely their right?

Mr. Burt: The Government are giving more practical help and advice than ever before to aid the unemployed to get work. The Employment Service is set to find 5,632 placements in each working day, having placed 1.4 million people in employment in 1992-93. Employment and training programmes are providing opportunities for 1.6 million people, which represents an increase of 50 per cent. on the past financial year. That is a good record.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Butte Mining

31. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Attorney-General what consultations he has had with the director of the Serious Fraud Office in relation to the length of time being taken for its inquiries into the flotation of Butte Mining and allied matters.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Serious Fraud Office investigation into the affairs of Butte Mining plc began in June 1992. The matter is complex and the investigation is proceeding as quickly as possible.

Mr. Morgan: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the fact that for 18 months the Serious Fraud Office has been investigating a south sea bubble affair in the City of London, which occurred almost seven years ago, tends to bring our legal system into disrepute? I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that we need to control City fraud. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman assure the House that there is a prospect of the matter coming to some sort of conclusion?

The Solicitor-General: I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that. The matter did not come to light until comparatively recently. As I said, the inquiry began in 1992. It involves inquiries in many foreign jurisdictions. It is a good example of the special skill and powers required to get to the bottom of cases of that nature. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the matter is being pursued rigorously.

Serious Fraud (Trials)

32. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the average time for a serious fraud case to be brought to trial after the accused has been charged.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The average time between acceptance of a case by the Serious Fraud Office and the preparatory hearing which constitutes the start of the trial was 27 months for the year ending April 1992 and 24 months for the year ending April 1993.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Surely it is intolerable that it has taken so long to bring to trial someone who has been charged and against whom there is already some evidence. Surely it is not in the public interest or that of the accused that that length of time should be taken. How long will it be before the number of months is reduced to a more acceptable level?

The Attorney-General: The reason for setting up the Serious Fraud Office to deal with these complex cases was precisely that given by my hon. Friend—the matters needed to be investigated more expeditiously and efficiently. The length of time that it takes to deal with those complex matters is a great deal shorter than it was before the Serious Fraud Office was set up.

Mr. John Morris: Is the Attorney-General satisfied that the Serious Fraud Office has adequate resources to investigate and proceed with cases expeditiously? Will he look into some of the cases to which much publicity has been given as a result of the delays and into prosecutions involving Ministry of Defence property?

The Attorney-General: Yes, I am satisfied that the Serious Fraud Office has adequate resources. When it has taken on particularly big cases, such as the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and Maxwell, special arrangements for extra resources have been made. I will certainly consider what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about Ministry of Defence cases, but I have no reason to believe that such cases are unduly prolonged. A number of extremely complex cases—for example, in relation to the North sea—have recently been brought to very satisfactory conclusions.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Since fraud cases must vary in their complexity and length, surely there is not much point in criticising the average length of time it takes to bring a fraud case to trial. On the other hand, however, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the longer a case takes to come to trial, the more likely it is that a company will be destroyed when news of the investigation gets around?

The Attorney-General: My hon. and learned Friend makes a good point, although that news is likely to get around at the beginning rather than at the end of the investigation. That the cases should be dealt with promptly and expeditiously is extremely important.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Attorney-General accept that, in the average case appearing before the Crown court, it takes 13.7 weeks between committal and trial? Although the matter of fraud is appalling, the average length of a trial is far too long. What is he going to do about that?

The Attorney-General: I am not sure that I agree with the hon. Gentleman. He compares relatively simple cases that appear before a Crown court and large complex cases. If he casts his mind back to the early 1980s, for example, he will find that some large cases from the City of London took five, six or seven years to come forward, whereas the equivalent period now is two, three or four years. Expedition is extremely important. We have made improvements; we must continue to work at it.

Mr. Thurnham: Where the Serious Fraud Office has spent millions of pounds preparing its case, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider appealing against a grossly lenient sentence, such as that imposed on Levitt?

The Attorney-General: I cannot comment on individual cases, but a clause has been tabled to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to give my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary the power to extend the power of the Attorney-General to refer sentences in serious and complex fraud cases.

Asil Nadir

33. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent progress the Serious Fraud Office has made regarding the Asil Nadir case.

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office is ready to bring Mr. Nadir to trial as soon as he returns to the jurisdiction.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Attorney-General tell us whether the Government, the Serious Fraud Office or he himself have been in negotiation with Asil Nadir's lawyers with a view to trying to get him to plead guilty to one of the lesser charges—as was the case with Levitt—so that he can get off on the more serious charges? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give a guarantee to the House today that in no circumstances will he or the Serious Fraud Office allow Asil Nadir to have those charges against him dropped so that he gets a plea on a lesser charge?

The Attorney-General: I know of no such negotiations.

Crown Prosecution Service

35. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the criteria on which the Crown Prosecution Service determines whether to prosecute; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I am satisfied that the criteria in the code for Crown prosecutors which determine whether a prosecution should proceed are sound. But, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General announced to the House on 15 December 1993, the Director of Public Prosecutions is currently revising the code so that it may more easily be understood by the police and the public.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that we expect the Crown Prosecution Service to act as judge and jury, a halfway house, in deciding whether we should prosecute? In those circumstances, would my hon. and learned Friend have any objection if Members of Parliament approached their local CPS office about a case of particular interest to the local police and the victims?

The Solicitor-General: I should welcome, as I am sure would the CPS, the attendance of any hon. Member who wished to visit his local CPS office. I am sure that such offices would be cheered up immensely at the prospect of a visit by my hon. Friend. Any hon. Member who visits those offices will discover that cases are discontinued only after close liaison with the police. When that happens, it is done in the interests of justice and it is not any criticism of the police.

36. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the cost of the Crown Prosecution Service in the final year in which it was administered by local government; and what is the percentage difference in real terms, between that figure and its cost in 1992-93.

The Attorney-General: Before 1986, there were no uniform arrangements for the handling of prosecutions and it is not, therefore, possible to make the comparison which the hon. Gentleman requests.

Mr. Gunnell: I am sure that the Attorney-General will find that costs have increased. Does he agree that in West Yorkshire, for example, what has been purchased is a loss of local democracy? Does he also agree that the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill, which is before the House of Lords, threatens further to erode local democracy and to create great national interference in respect of both the police and the Crown Prosecution Service which may not be in the interests of justice?

The Attorney-General: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. Prosecution decisions are not matters for elected members either of Parliament or of local authorities; they must be carried out by independent prosecuting authorities. The hon. Gentleman might care to reflect on the huge release of police time and effort away from the time that they had to spend in the courts prosecuting, giving evidence and providing antecedents in the Crown courts. That has enabled them to become free for much more front-line policing.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

40. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of overseas aid.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Provision for aid this year is more than £2.1 billion.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Minister explain why his Department appears to ignore its stated policy of giving aid to those countries that have good government and are among the poorest in the world? Instead, it favours countries that are major purchasers of British weapons, such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: There is no connection whatever between the sale of defence equipment to recipients of aid and the aid programme. The good government criteria which we apply to aid are extremely important, as are the criteria for tackling poverty. Eighty per cent. of our bilateral aid to developing countries was spent in the poorest countries in 1992-93. One of our priority objectives is to help developing countries to design and implement poverty reduction strategies. There is, therefore, no basis whatever for the hon. Lady's allegations.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in an analysis of overseas aid, the United Nations said that Britain's overseas aid was equivalent to the sixth highest in the world?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Britain maintains a substantial aid programme, which is the sixth largest in the world.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister recall that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), who was put up to answer overseas development questions a few weeks ago, assured me

> "our aid programme is not and will not be linked to arms sales"?—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. 17.]

Is the Minister aware that the Foreign Secretary admitted on Friday that aid and arms were entangled with the negotiation of the arms deal with Malaysia signed in 1988? Has British aid been entangled with the sale of arms on other occasions?

Mr. Goodlad: I repeat that our aid programme is not linked to arms sales. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said on 25 January in a written answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham),

> "During discussions in 1988 about the proposed memorandum of understanding on defence sales, the Malaysians expressed their wish to make a reference to aid. A protocol was signed during the visit to Kuala Lumpur in March 1988 by the then Defence Secretary, my noble Friend, Lord Younger of Prestwick. This set out the Malaysian Government's intention to buy defence equipment from the United Kingdom, with the details to be elaborated in the later memorandum. The protocol included a reference to 'aid in support of non-military aspects under this programme.'
>
> After consultation with ministerial colleagues in London, the Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the Malaysian Minister of Finance in June 1988 to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales"—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Minister will know that I have asked for brisk answers to questions. Overseas development has only 10 minutes, so I repeat my request.

Mr. Goodlad: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My right hon. Friend said:

> "As a result the issue was not taken up in the memorandum of understanding on defence procurement which the British and Malaysian Prime Ministers signed in September 1988, and which did not cover aid. Our aid programme is not linked to arms sales—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. *145-46*.]—

however much the Opposition may continue to repeat that it is.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Just to be absolutely clear about this, and so that the Minister cannot be accused of being economical with the actualité, can he tell us whether aid, now or in the past, has ever been entangled with defence and arms sales—yes or no?

Mr. Goodlad: To avoid the risk of being accused of giving excessively long answers, I refer the hon. Gentleman to what I have just said.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that all this fuss is seen by business men in my constituency as, at best, humbug and, at worst, cynicism?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right. There is a rich mixture of humbug and cynicism among Opposition Members. They will not tell us whether they are in favour of defence sales, whether they are in favour of the aid and trade provision or whether they are in favour of destroying jobs—so we must assume that they are in favour of the latter.

Lomé Agreement

41. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reviews have been conducted on the completion of the first half of the current Lomé agreement; and what conclusions were drawn.

Mr. Goodlad: The fourth Lomé convention included provision for a mid-term review by February 1995. Negotiations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries will begin in May.

Mr. Enright: Is it not odd that the start should have been so late? If the Government are going to get down to a hard and proper analysis of what aid is needed, should not they be looking at regional structures in the ACP countries, particularly at the Economic Community of West African States? They should also be looking at education and, perhaps, at monetary union, which those countries, but not the European Council, are discussing.

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman makes two important points. The scope for regional co-operation is a unique feature of the Lomé convention. The seventh European development fund includes 1.25 billion ecu for regional co-operation projects. Regional allocations are subject to the same processes as national funds. Programming takes place at the beginning of each EDF. That is likely to be discussed in the negotiations with the ACP countries, which start in May.

Human development, in which education plays a major part, is a stated objective of the convention—one which will be upheld in the mid-term review. The Commission is producing a paper on education policy; it should result in a resolution at the Development Council in November this year.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend expect that, as part of the review of the Lomé convention, it will be pointed out that British exports to Malaysia trebled after the signing of the Pergau dam deal?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right. Our exports to Malaysia have been extremely healthy; in 1993, they doubled the 1992 figures. I hope that, despite the efforts of the Opposition, they will continue to prosper.

Game Reserves (South Africa)

42. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make assistance available to the South African authorities for the upkeep of that country's game reserves following the impending elections.

Mr. Goodlad: We expect to discuss future priorities for our aid programme with the new Government after the elections.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that enormous pressures will be put on the new Government of South Africa after the April elections, even if a civil war is avoided? There will be many priorities, but will he give us an assurance, on behalf of animal lovers in this country, that much of the good work that has been done in the South African game reserves will be upheld and that that will be one of the items that the Government will look at sympathetically in terms of aid to South Africa?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman's dedication to animals, especially elephants, is well known, and the importance of game reserves is clear. We have not received requests on this matter, but we might consider helping conservation projects with clear community benefits. Of course, we support the convention on international trade in endangered species. We spent more than £600,000 on elephant conservation projects in Africa last year. The black and white rhino, as well as the elephant, are flourishing in South Africa, which is a tribute to the game management there. I will certainly draw what the hon. Gentleman has said to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Somaliland

43. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on aid to the Republic of Somaliland.

Mr. Goodlad: Since May 1991, Britain has committed £3.8 million-worth of bilateral humanitarian assistance to north-west Somalia.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to organisations such as Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children which are doing such excellent aid work in a territory which, after all, was administered by Britain? Can he tell the House what further help might be given to that territory, which is doing its best to re-establish efficient democratic government?

Mr. Goodlad: I readily join my hon. Friend in his tribute to the work of the non-governmental organisations that he mentioned. We are keen to continue support for those organisations. Their assistance to date has helped to re-establish water supplies and human and animal health delivery services, and to support mines clearance work. The increased assistance depends on the existence of a secure environment in which to deliver effective aid. We hope to concentrate future British support for rehabilitation activities in north-west Somalia on police, primary health care and education, but concern remains about the security of people there in the light of recent events.

Levira Foods plc

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order. No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent attention, namely,

"the passing into receivership of Levira Foods plc at Preston Farm industrial estate in Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland."

The matter is specific; it relates to a brand new factory, announced by the right hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), then a Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, two years ago this month. The factory was expected to create 700 new jobs with a further 100 being created in the company's suppliers. It is also specific in that it relates to circumstances causing the lay-off of more than 140 workers last Friday and the further lay-off of the remaining 300-plus early today.

The matter is important because the factory was announced as a specific response to the breach of the Government's four-year promise of relocation of the quality assurance facility at Woolwich to that site—a promise which, on several occasions, had excluded Cleveland from consideration as an alternative position for other governmental functions that were being relocated to the provinces. It was, we were told, the result of the Prime Minister's personal trawl of Ministries to find a replacement for the Woolwich disappointment.

It is important to note that, despite all the foregoing, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) is reported in today's edition of the *Evening Gazette* as stating:

"The business was highly leveraged in the first place."

and that

"it has had to be refinanced a couple of times"—

and all in less than two years.

The matter is in need of urgent attention, for the development has already been held directly responsible for the collapse of the construction contractors, Jewitt Builders, due to outstanding bills estimated at £1 million. The House will need to know how much money from the public purse was expended on that abortive scheme. While hon. Members are calculating that, they might also feel the need to assess today's claim from the Teesside development corporation:

"It is a remarkable achievement for Levira Foods to have created the most advanced food manufacturing plant in Europe."

It is indeed remarkable that a custom-made unit lies idle so early in its life; remarkable that 500 people starting on a flagship project with so much hope should be compelled to take to the boats quite so quickly; remarkable that such a flagship should be allowed to generate so much debt repeatedly; and remarkable that, after all that, a fellow hon. Member should plead for

"a less contentious financial background"

so that it might

"make a go of it".

To my mind, Madam Speaker, all the foregoing facts show clearly that those matters deserve urgently the closest scrutiny of the House—today.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to respond first. I shall deal with points of order in a moment.

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) has said and must give my decision without giving any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider the matter that he raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me take first a point of order from the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), because he was mentioned.

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I congratulate you on what I consider to be the right decision?

A temporary cessation of trading has taken place at the factory, which is in my constituency. Unfortunately, I received no notice from the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) that he was going to raise the matter in the House today. I can say, however, that the Teesside development corporation is taking urgent steps to examine the matter. The present position will not be made clear for a few hours, but, in any event, the Government, who have invested heavily in the factory, have done so quite correctly, as the asset remains available for sale—

Madam Speaker: Order. That is barely a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman rightly raised a point of order because he had been mentioned, but I cannot allow a debate on a Standing Order No. 20 application that I have just been unable to grant.

Mr. Frank Cook: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: There can be no further points of order on that matter.

Mr. Cook: The accusation was made that no notice had been given, Madam Speaker. Notice was given.

Madam Speaker: That has cleared the air very nicely. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am not seeking to name hon. Members at this point, but, if they have something to discuss, perhaps they will do it outside while we get on with our business.

Points of Order

3.34 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Today, unprecedented—indeed, historic—action has been taken by NATO war planes, which have shot down four Bosnian Serb war planes. That action, although authorised by resolutions 781 and 816 of the Security Council of the United Nations, nevertheless represents a serious escalation of events in Bosnia. It has already apparently resulted in an increased bombardment of Tuzla by Bosnian Serbs. We need to know whether the NATO ultimatum will be extended in any way to Tuzla or anywhere else, and whether these events are to be considered by the United Nations Security Council.

The Foreign Secretary has made a statement in Athens; the Secretary of State for Defence has made a statement in Leicester. Is it not unacceptable that the House of Commons has had no opportunity to hear a statement, and to question Ministers on these issues—especially when we bear in mind that Ministers are answering questions on these matters in the House of Lords? Have you, Madam

[Dr. John Cunningham]

Speaker, had any indication of the intention of Her Majesty's Government to make a statement about these important events?

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, as soon as the news of the shooting down of the aircraft came through, I contacted your office seeking an opportunity to raise the matter this afternoon. Subsequently, I heard the Prime Minister speaking from Washington, the Foreign Secretary speaking from Athens—that was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) —and the Secretary of State for Defence speaking on television. I have also been in another place, and heard a statement volunteered by Ministers. We have, however, heard nothing in the House of Commons.

Every single soldier serving in Bosnia, and every civilian, is represented by a Member of Parliament. The House of Commons, however, has been denied the opportunity to hear a statement by the Government, allowing us to cross-examine them about the escalation of events, the risk to our aid convoys—which have been stopped today because of that risk—the danger to troops and their families, who might also be at risk, and, indeed, the international aspects of the matter.

This is not an affront to the House of Commons, but a denial of the rights of those who look to the House of Commons when seeking explanations from Ministers about actions that may affect their lives and welfare and the future peace of Europe and the world. In the light of that, Madam Speaker, would you be prepared to accept tomorrow a Standing Order No. 20 application that I would have tried to move today, had I not failed to do what must be done in the first instance—that is, obtain a statement by private notice?

Madam Speaker: As hon. Members fully appreciate, a private notice question has to meet certain criteria, one of which is a change of policy. In this case, there has been no change of policy; the decision was a logical consequence of existing policy. If a Minister from the Foreign Office or from the Ministry of Defence, however, had wished to make a statement, that of course would now be taking place. [*Interruption.*] Order. I have had no request from a Minister to make a statement. I remind hon. Members that there are Foreign Office questions on Wednesday. I shall consider the Standing Order No. 20 request that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) wants to submit to me tomorrow, as I always do, with all seriousness.

Mr. Benn: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Your statement that a private notice question has to be about a change of policy is an absolute innovation and is not to be found anywhere in "Erskine May", which states that the question must be definite, urgent and a matter of public importance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is an alliance of which we are a member and it is the first time that NATO troops have ever been in action since 1948. That, dare I say so, even falls within the definition of a change of policy. I urge you to consider carefully the statement that you have just made.

Madam Speaker: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, I do not have to give reasons for my decisions in the House. I have always attempted to be helpful in the House by giving my attitudes and some of my reasons. Lack of a change of policy was simply one of the reasons for my decision. I have to consider many others and I have done so today. I realise, as do all hon. Members, the seriousness of the matter. If a Minister wished to come to the Dispatch Box, of course we would have a statement from him.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In your infinite wisdom, have you been able to detect the slightest improvement in the length of questions—or speeches—from Front or Back Benchers at Question Time? The position seems just as bad as it was.

Madam Speaker: I must say to the hon. Lady that I am agreeably surprised. I appreciate the co-operation of hon. Members, but I want us to do better tomorrow and from then on.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, that arises from the Minister's reply to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). You will remember that the Minister, who appeared to be making a statement, seemed to contradict what he had told the House on Friday. More important, he appeared to speak in contrast to what the Foreign Secretary told not the House, but the British Broadcasting Corporation, on the link with the arms trade—

Madam Speaker: Order. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am not concerned with the content of ministerial replies, although, to some extent, I am concerned with their length. The hon. Gentleman will recall that I asked the Minister to cut his reply short. Will he now make the point of order that is for me? Content and argument are not subjects for me. Does the hon. Gentleman have a point of order about breaches of procedure?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. Tomorrow afternoon, we have an extremely important debate—initiated, to its credit, by the Liberal party. The House is entitled to hear from the Foreign Secretary in that debate. Has he requested the opportunity to make an important statement?

Madam Speaker: No.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. No doubt you will know that there is horror and shock in the civilised world, certainly in the House of Commons, over the massacre at Hebron in which about 50 people were gunned down while they were worshipping. That was one of the most terrible crimes that has been committed in recent months. Will there be an opportunity for the questions on the middle east to be taken after Foreign Office questions on Wednesday?

There will, I trust, be an opportunity for hon. Members on both sides of the House to contribute and to make clear that not only Britain, through the diplomatic channels, but Parliament itself wants to express in the clearest possible terms its horror over what has happened and its sympathy with the relatives of the bereaved.

Madam Speaker: It would set a bad precedent were I to anticipate questions that may be on the Order Paper in two days' time. The hon. Gentleman is a member of the

Procedure Committee, so he should be aware that he should wait until Wednesday to see how the questions fall in place.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you are aware that the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), the Minister for Trade, the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), the Secretary of State for Employment, and the right hon. Member for Bexley and Old Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the Father of the House, are among 11 hon. Members who are in breach of a resolution carried by the House requiring them to provide information relating to Lloyd's in the Register of Members' Interests, which was published this morning? I wonder whether you are prepared to arrange a meeting with the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests to give him your advice on how the House should now proceed in the light of the fact that 11 Members have decided that they should breach our resolution.

Madam Speaker: This is a matter for the House as a whole. As the hon. Gentleman said, the Register was published this morning and it is now in the public domain for all Members to inspect.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Law Officers in the Government—in any Government—and in the House of Commons occupy a rather special position. Therefore, I ask whether you have had any request from the Law Officers to report to Parliament on the statements made by the President of the Board of Trade this morning at No. 1 Buckingham gate, to the effect that he was forced to indulge in some type of cover-up, and that undertakings that were apparently given to him in relation to the defence in the Matrix Churchill trial were not carried out by the Law Officers. Any matters relating to Law Officers surely should be a matter of a report to Parliament when it is a matter of principle, rather than waiting for the report of Lord Justice Scott.

Madam Speaker: I have not been informed by the Law Officers Department that anyone is seeking to make a statement, but, of course, the Treasury Bench will have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Has it been brought to your attention that, apart from the Members mentioned by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), neither the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams) nor the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) has completed any entry in the Register of Members' Interests, as they should have done?

Madam Speaker: Order. I do think that this to and fro about the Register of Members' Interests is quite unnecessary—a total waste of our time here. The Register is in the public domain. It is available to all Members as well as to those outside.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am a member of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. You said that the requirement that information be placed in the Register is a matter for the Committee. That is so, but the basic authority for the Committee to be established and conduct its business is the Chamber and those in the Chamber. As I understand it, there has been a concerted and co-ordinated attempt by members of Lloyd's to refuse to provide information to the House via the Register of Members' Interests. If that were the case, it would be unfair on those Members who have provided information fully and properly, but, if it is the case, I hope that if the Leader of the House hesitates about putting down a motion you will encourage him to do so to ensure that they are brought to book.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, as a member of the Committee, it is a matter for the House as a whole—the House in its entirety.

Mr. Benn: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Reverting to the matter that I raised with you earlier, I was guided by my recollection that a request for a Standing Order No. 20 had to be given before 12 o'clock, but I refreshed myself of the Standing Orders and they say:

> "If the urgency of the matter is known at that hour. If the urgency is not so known he shall give notice as soon"

as possible. The urgency is created by the statement made in another place, where the Minister has gone into all sorts of aspects of the suspension of the aid programme and so on, and therefore it is, I submit, in order for you to accept a motion that I would now like to move, That the House do adjourn under Standing Order No. 20 in order to consider a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the assent given by Her Majesty's Government to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to take military action in the former Yugoslavia.

Madam Speaker: I will not hear the hon. Gentleman's application now, as he has put it to me, but he would certainly not be out of order if he would like to submit it to me in writing at any time for tomorrow and I would certainly look at it seriously, as I have already indicated that I would.

BILL PRESENTED

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Mr. Jeff Rooker, supported by Mr. Neil Kinnock, Mr. Austin Mitchell, Dr. Tony Wright, Ms Glenda Jackson, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. John Garrett, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Keith Hill, Mr. Mike Watson, Mr. Giles Radice and Mr. Hugh Bayley, presented a Bill to repeal the Septennial Act 1715 and to introduce a fixed term for the House of Commons; to bring the age of nomination for election to the House of Commons into line with the age of voting by amending the Parliamentary Elections Act 1695; to improve electoral registration and absent voting procedures, to introduce weekend voting and increase the number of signatures for nomination of candidates by amending the Representation of the People Acts 1983 and 1985; to change expense limits for candidates; to introduce early voting; to set up an Electoral Commission to administer and monitor all elections in the United Kingdom and to allow that Commission to register political parties and set limits to the expenditure nationally of registered political parties in the period prior to the fixed term elections; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 20 May 1994, and to be printed. [Bill 161.]

European Communities (Treaties)

3.49 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Bulgaria) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

Madam Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss the following motions:

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Czech Republic) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Slovak Republic) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Europe Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and Romania) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

Mr. Hogg: This is an opportunity for the House to discuss the relationship between the European Union and central and eastern European countries. As the House will know, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has spent a great deal of time in recent months discussing the enlargement of the European Union. As the House will also know, my hon. Friend the Minister of State is currently engaged in negotiations to that effect. Indeed, that is why he is not participating in the debate; he has asked me to apologise to the House on his behalf.

We are debating the Europe, or association, agreements between the European Union and the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. As the House may know, the agreements are known as mixed competence agreements. In other words, they require the approval of European Community member states and the assent of the European Parliament. The purpose of the debate is to set United Kingdom ratification in train by approving draft Orders in Council specifying the agreements as European treaties under section 1(3) of the European Communities Act 1972.

The events of 1989 presented us with the opportunity to put an end to the post-war division of Europe, and we are all now seeking to assist central European countries to establish—or, in many cases, to rebuild—the institutions that are essential for a pluralist democracy and a healthy market economy.

In promoting that general objective, the United Kingdom has put in place a programme of bilateral technical assistance under the know-how fund. In addition, we have supported the participation of central and eastern European countries in a whole range of European institutions and, especially, in the European Union itself. That is why we are debating the orders. As the House will know, central European countries wish to belong to the Union, and the United Kingdom looks forward to the time when that can happen.

The agreements that underpin the draft orders were a United Kingdom initiative. Developing relations with central Europe was a key priority of the United Kingdom's presidency and was symbolised by the summit with the Visegrad countries in October 1992. We worked hard for last June's European Council decision that the associate countries should join the Union as soon as they were ready to take on the obligations of the membership.

The European agreements lie at the heart of our efforts. They are the essential framework for preparing these countries for membership of the European Union. The four agreements that we are debating are very similar to the European agreements with Poland and Hungary that the House debated in detail in February and November 1992. They aim to establish a comprehensive framework for the development of trade, economic co-operation and political dialogue. I shall highlight five elements of the agreements.

The first and most important element is trade liberalisation. These provisions are already in force under interim agreements. Opening European Community markets to the central European countries is crucial to their economic restructuring and political stability. The agreements will, in turn, provide new commercial and investment opportunities to United Kingdom firms operating in the east. They envisage a liberalisation of trade in industrial products over a 10-year transitional period, with the markets of the Community opening more quickly than those of associate countries. They also allow for reciprocal concessions in agriculture, meaning that over time imports from these countries will benefit from progressively lower tariffs.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify a point that is a little obscure to me? Over that 10 years, the products listed in the back of all the agreements will move to a zero level of tariff. What about the products that are not included there? There seems to be some ambiguity about whether any of those products will be included and whether, thereafter, those countries will be able to trade in those products within the Community on the same basis that we do.

Mr. Hogg: There are specific agreements on textiles, steel and coal. Other industrial products are treated collectively, with the Community abolishing its quantitative restrictions at the outset and abolishing its tariffs within three years, according to sensitivity. Central European states will dismantle trade barriers more slowly. Customs duties will be abolished over seven to 10 years and quantitative restrictions will be abolished over 10 years.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Hogg: I will proceed at this stage.

The second element of the agreements is economic co-operation. That heading covers a wide range of sectors —education, agriculture, science and technology, nuclear safety and consumer protection. It complements the trade liberalisation provisions in aiming to develop the economic and political structures of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia. Technical assistance from the Community's PHARE programme is available to finance this co-operation.

The third element concerns approximation of laws and standards. The Union will help the four countries to bring their legislation closer to existing European Community standards. Approximation to existing Community standards is a key step in preparation for Union membership. Some of the associate countries are already ensuring that all new legislation is compatible with Community law. The Copenhagen European Council additionally decided that the Union should establish a task force composed of Commission and national experts to co-ordinate and direct that work.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On the subject of education and culture, may I yet again raise the question of the trade, fearfully one way, in ecclesiastical art? I refer to letter C93/18235.MA from the Department of National Heritage. Northern Bohemia contains some of the most beautiful wooden ecclesiastical art anywhere in the world. Theft for the Frankfurt and London markets is such that part of the European heritage is being destroyed. That is not an easy problem to resolve. I give notice that if I catch your eye, Madam Speaker, I should like to refer to the matter in some depth. I hope that the Minister can consult his colleagues before the winding-up speeches.

Mr. Hogg: I recall that, in February 1992, when the agreements were debated on the Floor of the House, the hon. Gentleman raised precisely that point; he has a long-standing interest in it. My right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) responded at that time. I shall listen with considerable interest to what the hon. Gentleman says. Like him, I suspect that the problem is extremely difficult to tackle, but I will most certainly listen to what he says.

The fourth element is political dialogue. The agreements establish Association Councils which will meet once a year at ministerial level to review the agreements and to build on them. The agreements also provide for meetings at Head of Government level and for close co-operation on foreign policy at senior official level.

Fifthly, there is the question of financial co-operation. The agreements provide for continuation of temporary financial assistance to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania through the PHARE programme, which has so far resulted in the Community contributing £725 million of technical assistance to the four countries. In special circumstances, the Community may also provide balance of payments support to those countries in the context of the G24. The Community has committed more than £2 billion in balance of payments support to those countries since 1991, and it is currently considering requests to give further support to Romania and Bulgaria.

I should mention the inclusion—

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I am proceeding now.

I should mention the inclusion of the important preambular paragraph in each of the agreements that look forward to the associate countries' accession. We want the associate countries to join the European Union as soon as they are ready to take on the economic and political obligations of membership. That commitment was made, at British urging, by the Copenhagen European Council in June last year.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: The agreements will help Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia to prepare themselves, and—

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. I am given to understand that the Minister is not prepared to give way. The hon. Lady must not persist in the circumstances.

Mr. Hogg: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The object is to enable those countries to prepare themselves, and the agreements are vital to those countries as a symbolic and practical confirmation of their place in Europe.

4 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): We support the motions, which represent significant developments in trade with former communist countries and newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe. Undoubtedly, such links will become strong and trade will increase and lead, as the Minister has said, to closer formal relationships when internal economic, political and trade conditions are met by aspirant countries of eastern Europe.

The issue of enlargement, of course, is for another time; the motions relate specifically to trade and economic relationships and the development of them. It is important for us in the west to support economic development, which is surely the underpinning of democratic societies.

The agreements open political dialogue which is intended to familiarise central and eastern European countries with the political framework and foreign policy activities of the Community. More important in the short term, the agreements allow the free flow of, and access to, goods, but they do not particularly contribute to the creation of well-functioning market economies in eastern European countries. That is something for countries to work out for themselves.

The Minister referred specifically to textiles, steel and coal. One matter of concern is dumping. What provision will be made, and what discussions have taken place, on restrictive anti-dumping legislation or controls? At present, as we all know, the problem cannot be resolved inside the European Community. It certainly cannot police it in any way. The general facilities to enable the European Community to do that are quite small. Unfair trading and state subsidies are still burning issues in the present European Community.

South Wales and other industrial areas have suffered from the dumping of special steels and white goods, for example. A long time ago, when the Davignon plan was introduced to control and restructure the iron and steel industry in the European Community, this country virtually volunteered to have its steel industry annihilated over three or four years from about 21 million liquid tonnes down to about 11 million liquid tonnes. At the same time, the Germans and Italians were increasing their production.

In respect of works such as the Hoover works in south Wales—those works are near the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), and many of his constituents work there—we saw the dumping of white goods. Goods were put on the market by Italian washing machine manufacturers at a lower price than Hoover could buy special steels. There was an obvious case of state subsidy going to Italian washing machine manufacturers, but the European Community did not have the resources to police it. It is all right to bring in these agreements, but they do not work in the European

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

Community in their present form, and we should not extend them to other countries if we are not able to control the problem of dumping in the Community.

There are other larger issues such as agricultural products and gaining access to markets because many of the aspirant countries are large agricultural producers. Another issue is the freedom of movement of labour within the Community and the agreement areas. Outside those major issues, we have the possibility of creating trading opportunities for the various member states.

Whereas we must recognise that the agreements are between the European Union and countries individually, trade within the agreements will be between individual countries in the European Union and the individual countries of the agreements. It will not be trade between the European Union and a group of countries—individual countries in the European Union will have to do the trading. Of course, if countries do not take up the opportunity, we miss out yet again.

Typically, Britain is already lagging behind. In the circumstances, the Government do not have the additional leverage of overseas aid to correct the distortion of market forces. Indeed, we are falling rapidly behind other European Community nations in our level of trade with former communist countries. For example, Germany has almost ready access into those markets. Indeed, some of the markets have a large German speaking and ethnic German population. Last year, Germany exported $23.9 billion worth of goods into those countries. Britain exported $2.7 billion worth of goods—that is one tenth of what Germany exported. We are way behind France, which exports $4.7 billion worth of goods. Italy exports $6.4 billion worth of goods.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*—

Mr. Rogers: I will give way, but I shall finish my point first. Our exports to those countries are about equivalent to that of Holland, which has a population of about 15 million. Surely we will not be measured by that particular yardstick.

Mr. Jenkin: Would the hon. Gentleman like to comment on the fact that the Commission has reduced the PHARE programme, which is equivalent to the European Community's know-how fund? The money appears to have been diverted through a new structural programme, predominantly under German influence. The Commission spent large chunks of that money in Sudetenland, where there are many German-speaking people, to promote trade in German goods. That does not quite bear out the denial to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and I wonder whether he could comment on that.

Would not it be better if we got the Commission back under control and spreading its money on a more objective basis, rather than letting it be hijacked by particular national interests?

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman is a specialist in Europe, shall we say, or a specialist in being anti-Europe, so he would know more details about such little nuances.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth) *rose*—

Mr. Rogers: I shall just answer this point. I do not think that anyone is foolish enough to believe that countries in the European Community act in the Community's interests—they act in their own interests. There are no ifs or buts about that. That is by no means an anti-European Community or anti-European Union statement—it is the truth of the matter.

I remember some time ago—the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) will certainly remember this, because they were Members of the European Parliament at the same time as I was—that the external trade commissioners for the European Commission were always Frenchmen: Pisani and Cheysson—

Mr. Jenkin: And Brittan.

Mr. Rogers: No, it was long before Brittan. I did not realise that Brittan is French.

If one went anywhere in the world, one could see that a lot of European Community business went to France. The hon. Member for Hendon, South said—in weaker terms than those used by Mr. Alan Clark, a previous Minister for Defence Procurement—that he did not particularly care to which countries we exported, as long as those exports provided British jobs. That is what the French are all about within the EC. The hon. Gentleman is practising the same principle here today.

Mr. Enright: Is not it true that continental companies, and especially German companies, keep much closer tabs on the various funds that are available? That is because of the regionality as much as anything, and Governments are able to assist firms in instantly reaching those funds. That is quite contrary to something that I overheard today from one of those wretched mobile phones as I travelled from Doncaster to King's Cross. A business man was saying, "Well, we were doing all right in Czechoslovakia until the damned Foreign Office got in the way".

Mr. Rogers: That is very perceptive. I will press on. I was given the brief a short time ago, and I decided that I would speak only for a few moments.

Our volume of trade with eastern Europe is increasing more slowly than that of other European Community countries. We are not only behind other countries; we are falling further behind them. That adds to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth. The Government do not help British industry in the matter and we are losing markets to other countries.

Even if we are noble about the matter, we must realise that increased trade with those countries is certainly the best form of long-term aid. We have heard today that the Foreign Office believes that the agreements create no problems for British industry. I think that the proof of the pudding might well be in the eating.

I have read details of the negotiations that have taken place and I do not think that the Government have stood up for Britain, or batted for Britain, quite as much as they did in Saudi Arabia or Malaysia. Perhaps we had better bring back a new opening bat, although that would not be a proper description of the noble Lady, the previous right hon. Member for Finchley.

The Foreign Office and Ministers must get the CBI, chambers of commerce and trade organisations involved, give them assistance and stress the importance of building up trade. We cannot sit back and watch imports and exports between other EC countries and eastern Europe. If we are in the EC, we must get in there pitching to improve Britain's position and our access to eastern Europe.

We must make assistance more effective by supporting infrastructure developments, and that is why we welcome the technical and educational assistance to those countries. If there are to be free market economies and stable democracies in those countries, we must extend our trade into the ex-communist countries. It is in all our interests to create a stable climate in Europe. At the same time, it is certainly in our interests for the Foreign Office to be more forceful in increasing our exports to get British jobs.

4.13 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I will try to obey your injunction to be brief, Madam Speaker, but I would like to congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on his performance at the Dispatch Box on behalf of the Opposition. I thought that the hon. Gentleman spoke just like a member of the 1922 Committee, in particular when he placed strictures upon the performance of the Foreign Office. Scratch a Tory and one finds a Foreign Office-phobe at any time.

I support my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister who introduced the statutory instruments. I should like to take advantage of the opportunity that he set again to discuss enlargement and to say that, particularly as a result of the decisions of the Copenhagen Council of June 1993, enlargement is at the centre of Community policy. It is a decision that will have the consequence of transforming the nature of the Community through a passage of time. To some extent, what we are debating this afternoon is what will be that passage of time and how uniform it will be. We do that particularly in the context of the prospective European elections in Britain.

I welcome the debate because it enables us, as a preliminary to the elections, to debate issues that will properly be taken to the hustings in June. I say "properly be taken to the hustings" because it will be important to identify in the elections not merely the divisions—divisions which are reflected in the House—but the areas of common concern.

I welcome the support expressed by the hon. Member for Rhondda for the draft instruments and the concept of enlargement. He was properly somewhat agnostic about the speed with which that enlargement might be achieved.

I thought that the hon. Member for Rhondda was wise to remind us of the difficulties that are inherent in the economic fusion of the applicant countries and the European Union. In this debate we necessarily confine ourselves to the terms of reference. The politics of enlargement come behind the economics. For example, there was not much delay on the part of Germany when it sought to assert its interest in Croatia. I do not make any criticism of the German behaviour. I am simply acting as the hon. Member for Rhondda said. He did not say it in quite those terms. He said that he was not here for all that Euro-fuzz but as an honest-to-God Front-Bencher given the job only a few hours or days ago. He could bring to the debate only his own robust, South Walesian common sense tempered by some experience at Strasbourg. I cannot think of a more magic and potent formula than that.

We know that the politics of central and eastern Europe are at their most challenging. I believe that the imperative today, whatever the uniformity of the eventual economic arrangements, is to give political assurance to the countries of central Europe as they see the turmoil in Russia and some of the adjacent states still unresolved.

In those circumstances, when we come to our election year and we talk about enlargement, we talk about the politics, which must be imprecise. The economics are rather more tangible because they are contained in the statutory instruments that we are discussing today. We have to ask what is the general thrust of the policy. That is a crucial question for the European Union as a whole. Will the thrust to embrace nations with very different economic performance than our own be sustained or hindered by a commitment to a single currency, a European bank and converged economies?

That is not some odd question from a member of the awkward squad below the Gangway. It is absolutely at the heart of the debate, whether those in authority wish it or not. I say that because the Copenhagen Council, referring to the applications for membership of the Community from the central European countries, said:

> "Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions, guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy"—

God help us—

> "as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union."

That is the sort of ritual language with which we are all reasonably familiar. It is Euro-speak and the hon. Member for Rhondda must not rock his shoulders in mirth at my description, as he is now an eminent person with responsibilities sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. That is the challenging passage for him and for the Labour party, which is committed to economic and monetary union and to converged currencies.

The passage continues:

> "Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union."

No one who listens to this debate or hears about the problems caused by the different backgrounds of member countries—such as agriculture, textiles and steel—can envisage any future for the Union other than one in which there is much elasticity in the relationships between the east and central European countries and ourselves.

Economic and monetary union will merely make infinitely more difficult what, in any circumstances, will be a challenging economic proposition—namely, bringing those countries into our partnership. We merely have to consider the difficulties that were created by the entry of Portugal and Greece, which have substantially different economic standards from those of the core EC member states.

Mr. Jenkin: And eastern Germany.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, my hon. Friend is ever helpful and encouraging and I accept that reinforcement.

Because enlargement of the Community is so important for both it and all the peoples within it, enlargement will obviously be central to the debate in this country in June at the European elections. We are entitled to discuss how we envisage that that objective will be pursued.

Furthermore, it is impossible to consider the exhilarating challenge of enlargement without realising that it will take a long time and that the objective will adjust with time. Enlargement will therefore be at the heart of those aspects of the Maastricht treaty that will be

[Mr. Biffen]

renegotiated in 1996. The June election campaign will be incomplete unless our political leaders make clear statements about how they view prospects for enlargement and renegotiation.

I have shamelessly sought to widen the debate to more philosophical considerations than the relatively narrow platform provided by the statutory instruments. However, if we are to have a successful Community it must be based not only on a relaxed relationship between the nation states of Europe, but on the peoples of Europe being led to understand the objectives of the political elites of those countries that fashion the relationships. That opportunity will come in this country in June, at the European elections. A forewarning of what might be a legitimate agenda does not come one moment too soon.

4.23 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As so often during the past thirty one and a half years, I agree with many of the insights of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He is absolutely right about the importance of the subject under discussion. I am therefore a little shamefaced about turning to a subject that I must concede is not the most important aspect of the matter—the problems associated with the transfer of ecclesiastical art and valuable objects from Czechoslovakia to the art markets of western Europe, about which I have set down a marker.

It would be a great irony if, having suffered a decade of the Nazis and four decades of the communists, and having maintained much of the traditional heritage of the eastern European countries, now that those countries are opening up, the imperatives of the market were to wreak havoc on the art treasures of eastern Europe. Neither the Nazis nor the communists succeeded in doing that.

The House will forgive me if I tell colleagues a true little story. Two years ago, the all-party heritage group, which is extremely well led by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), went to Czechoslovakia. That organisation, in case anyone jumps to conclusions, does not organise freebies. We pay a full and proper amount for ourselves and for our wives, although we get an exceeding number of privileges in being received by the experts in the country to which we go. When we went to Czechoslovakia, we also had the privilege of going to the private apartments of President Havel. The all-party heritage group is known to a number of hon. Members.

On the eighth day of our visit, based in Prague, we went to northern Bohemia. On the way up there, as we passed through a small town, a number of us at the back of the bus said, "Hey. We must stop here. That looks like a fascinating church." The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South acceded, somewhat reluctantly, because he is a great disciplinarian, to that request from the back of the bus. We stopped at the church. Out we got and went into it. It was full of the most beautiful objects in marble and wood.

After looking around for some 10 minutes, it was then discovered that those of us who had gone into the church were locked inside. There was no way that we could get out. Imagine the scene. A number of distinguished Members of this House and a number of distinguished Members of the Upper House, such as Lord Crathorne, who is joint secretary of the group, together with our wives, were locked firmly in a church with no visible means of getting out.

An elderly priest eventually appeared and produced his keys. When it was realised that we were the parliamentary delegation to Czechoslovakia, everyone was full of apologies at having such distinguished souls, some of whom were very meek, like me, but others, like my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), were less meek on the subject, locked in the church.

That elderly priest then explained in halting English what it was all about. He was full of excuses and said that had he known who we were, he would not have locked us in, but that people had had such bad experiences in so many of the country churches in that part of the country that they were doing what they could to protect what remained of their heritage. So many objects had been just snaffled, whipped and taken away. It was pure common-or-garden theft of holy relics.

The German army, many of whom were Roman Catholics, did not, it was said, quite like to steal such objects. Many of the Russian soldiers, who may have had feelings about icons in their countries, demurred from taking other people's religious art. The elderly priest explained to us that those who thought that they could make money in the art markets of Amsterdam, Frankfurt or London had far less inhibitions than those in the Nazi armies or the Soviet armies.

In a sense, it was a poignant moment. But it highlights —I hope, poignantly—the fact that it is a tremendous financial temptation either simply to take objects or to reach a pitiful bargain in which the money exchanged bears no relation to the value of the objects in the western art markets.

When we returned, I raised the matter immediately with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and received a concerned response, as I had from the ambassador. I then discovered that the Prime Minister was going to Czechoslovakia. I saw him personally before he went and said that, although it was probably not the main content of his discussions with President Havel, would he nevertheless mention it to those quarters in Prague who might be concerned. The Prime Minister kept his word. On his return, he said that he had asked the ambassador to look at the matter on an on-going basis.

I am criticising neither the Government nor the police but it might be for the convenience of the House if I stated the latest position. It is set out by the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of National Heritage in a letter to me dated 25 February. It said:

> "During the debate, on 14 February, on the draft Statutory Instrument to implement the EC Directive on the return of cultural objects, you drew attention to the problem of thefts from the Czech Republic, Russia and elsewhere; and I undertook to look at previous papers on this subject. You also enquired where the question of monetary thresholds came into the problem of the theft of cultural objects. I have now had an opportunity to consider these points.
>
> I fully appreciate your concern about the growing problem of arts thefts in the Czech Republic, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The previous papers on this subject make sad reading. As a criminal matter, the subject is essentially one for Michael Howard as Home Secretary; but, as you know, Tim Renton, when he was Minister for the Arts requested the cooperation of the London art trade in helping to identify the missing objects should they appear on the market here."

First, what is the latest stage of the request to the London art trade? Secondly, I am told by people in the art trade that, in most cases, experts know jolly well what is likely to have been taken, especially when it comes from Russian orthodox and Czechoslovakian or Polish churches. It is not too difficult to identify what is likely to have come from those sources because of the nature of the art, so identification is not the major problem. The major problem is what to do once identification has taken place.

The Minister's letter went on:

> "I understand that the Metropolitan Art and Antique Squad are also working closely with their counterparts in the Czech Republic (and other Eastern European countries) to try to give assistance in countering the problem."

I did not mention the name of the place where distinguished colleagues of ours were incarcerated in the church because no one wants to give away place names and make matters worse. I am, however, prepared to tell anyone interested after the debate.

There should be some kind of register so that the British and European authorities can invite the Czechs and Russians to register what has gone missing and what worries them.

The Minister went on:

> "I think that there may be some misunderstanding about the EC Directive. This provides a mechanism for one Member State to request the return from another Member State of a cultural object, which falls within the scope of the Directive, and which has been unlawfully removed from the requesting State on or after 1 January 1993. The Directive is essentially aimed at objects which have been illegally exported. The European Union does not have competence in criminal matters (i.e. art thefts), although a stolen object could fall within the scope of the Directive if it had also been exported in contravention of the requesting State's export laws."

I am told that things would have been much easier had Britain been a signatory to UNESCO. The Minister may reply to me in his speech or, if he prefers, by letter, but I should like to know whether that is true. Would being a signatory add more legal clout to any action to protect the heritage of eastern Europe?

The Under-Secretary ended:

> "as you know, co-operation via Interpol already provides a means for recovery of a stolen item regardless of monetary value."

I know better than to make detailed inquiries into how Interpol goes about its business, and it would not be desirable in this case that I or any other hon. Member should be told about that. But I do ask for a clear assurance that the Government are in active touch with Interpol on this matter and are making real efforts to do something about it.

Although this is a difficult issue, the stakes are extremely high—including, first, the cultural heritage of eastern Europe; and secondly, more importantly, the self-esteem of the people of eastern Europe and their deep regard for their relations with the west. In Czechoslovakia and Russia people of influence are deeply upset by the fact that, after they have tried for much better relations with the west, part of the result of those better relations is the depredation of their own cultural heritage.

The House has kindly given me time and attention to submit this—admittedly narrow—aspect of a much wider and important measure. I do hope, however, that right hon. and hon. Members will come to regard the matter in the same sustained way as some of us have already tried to do over past months.

4.37 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I am aware of the time and I shall try to keep my remarks brief.

I welcome the Minister's comments about the inclusion of the four countries in the agreements, but I should like to make a few points about some of the detail, which is important—the more so in the light of the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen).

The debate gives us an opportunity to look back in on the Community. That can sometimes be difficult; it is rather like looking through a glass darkly. We often see in only from the outside, so important matters can be missed by those who give their full support to everything that the Community does, without proper scrutiny or without determination to find out why.

One of the greatest difficulties that we face is the fact that the Community is obsessed with political ideals, to do with the single currency and so on, instead of with free markets and the sort of competitiveness embodied in the measures. The trade agreements give us the chance to stop and look again at what Britain's purpose in the Community has always been.

Although I welcome the agreements, recognising that they are based on our original intention to open up the Community to wider markets, it is also clear that when the provisions come to be written, self-interest comes increasingly to the fore—short-term political interest and short-term goals. That avoids long-term, serious considerations such as those on which I believe that our Government have been set but from which they have been distracted in the course of the negotiations.

I am particularly interested in a letter to the *Financial Times* of 2 June, in which the Czech minister for industry and trade, Vladimir Dlouhy, said:

> "Economic recovery is simply stifled if fair trading access is not assured, for trading is really the only long term effective aid."

He is right. The key is to open up our markets and ensure that both we and eastern Europe improve our abilities as a result.

When we look at the documents, we find that the two key sectors are industry and the common agricultural policy. I shall deal first with the common agricultural policy. The debate gives us the opportunity to look at it again and to try to understand what has gone so badly wrong. The system takes up fully £46 billion—more than half the Community budget. Only 40 per cent. of that ends up in the hands of farmers; nearly £28 billion goes in administration support matters and, dare I say it, a vast amount of growing corruption. The Commission has finally seen fit to put in the right people to sort that out, but corruption is part of the system and goes right to the bottom.

We can no longer carry on with a system of agricultural support that ensures that the very people at whom it is aimed see least of it. The absurdities are demonstrated time and again. Each family pays something like £1,000 extra every year as a result of that intervention at the supermarkets and shops, where they pay higher prices as a result of the shoring up of that inefficient policy. We see clearly how self-interest, support for the CAP and the determination to keep it as it is has meant that we have shut our markets to the eastern Europeans to a far greater degree than we should have done.

[Mr. Iain Duncan Smith]

We should be opening our market to those countries and saying that we welcome all of their agricultural produce and their processed agricultural produce. We should ask them to come and show us exactly how far we have departed from proper free trading principles. We have not done that. We have allowed self-interest to dictate that we shut areas of the market. I made the point earlier to my right hon. Friend that, even after 10 years, areas are still excluded. No mention has been made of those.

Let us look again at steel and coal. Recently, in the debate on steel, we saw a fascinating exchange in which my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry went to the Dispatch Box to defend the absurd practice that has been going on in the Community for so long and that has resulted in failure to open the market and to get rid of subsidies. I notice that the document is carefully worded so that we end up helping to protect those heavily subsidised industries in Germany and Spain, those 60,000 jobs that everybody is scared of getting rid of, when Britain has set about that task without fear or favour. Poland has shed more than 70,000 in its steel industry, yet we still wish to help the Germans, Spanish and others protect themselves from what is justifiable free trade with eastern Europe, which would help to lower the costs of our manufacturing industry and make us competitive world wide.

Mr. Rogers: Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that the Conservative Government took us down this road and were hellbent on destroying the British steel industry in the early 1980s? That was a conscious policy of the British Government.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am grateful for that intervention, because it gives me an opportunity to declare again how much I supported my Government's drive to make our industry efficient throughout the whole of the 1980s. It is now one of the most efficient in the world. I am saying not that we should have shored it up but that we should now ensure that the others play the same game. We could then expand our industry as a result of our competitiveness. That is what the purpose of the eastern European deal should be about: letting them come in and compete.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am conscious of the time and should like to press on.

Mr. Rogers: It is only a small point. The hon. Gentleman and the Conservative party, in the so-called strive for efficiency and streamlining, are quite prepared to sacrifice tens of thousands of workers and their jobs, with no foreseeable possibility of the other countries in Europe coming into line with us. It will be 20 years before they do that.

Mr. Duncan Smith: The hon. Gentleman clearly thinks that it is 20 years. If we are both right, we should do something about it. The point is that, by restructuring the steel industry in Britain, we have shown the way to the rest of Europe. It is high time that the rest of Europe did the same and stopped playing games with their 60,000 jobs. Such an agreement as this is the perfect opportunity to do so.

Mr. Jenkin: Is it not a fact that, during the 1980s, we increased our steel exports to the European Community and elsewhere from a mere few hundred million pounds-worth to well over £2 billion per annum? That is the reward for getting one's steel industry into a fit condition. That is how one keeps permanent jobs in the UK. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister said, even the products listed in the agreement for the phasing out of the tariff barriers are to be phased out according to sensitivity. Does not that allow every Community country to put an obstacle in the way of the falling tariff barriers so that they are likely to remain there for a good deal longer than the 10 years according to the agreement?

Mr. Duncan Smith: My hon. Friend makes his point well and backs up all the points that I have made. I fully agree with him.

Let me move on for the benefit of hon. Members and my right hon. Friend on the Front Bench. I noticed the other day, when reading through documents from the European Community, a report commissioned by DG 16 on the competitive market of Europe, which analysed the benefits and problems that would come to the European Community. The report comes to terms with that and decides that huge benefits are to be drawn from opening the market to eastern Europe immediately. In so doing, one would have thought that the Commission would follow suit and publish it with much publicity, but the Commission changed the head of DG 16 and the man who was put in his place was none other than an ex-cabinet colleague of Mr. Delors. Clearly it does not suit his purpose to have its report, because the cohesion group of countries, which so much supports many of his policies, would not like it. Nor, perhaps, would some of the French farmers, so the Commission has sat on the report.

Hon. Members would be forgiven for not knowing of the report's existence, because it was deliberately excluded from their view. That applies also to the report that is now being published on the CAP; it, too, is being sat on by the Commission because it does not like what is in it. Rotten practice leads to rotten trading. We must ensure that we get rid of that concept. In many respects, while I do not doubt my Government's intentions on those matters, the problem with an agreement such as this is that it leads not to free trade but to managed trade. That is the clear purpose of the agreement, not so much opening up and saying, "Let us take on the best you have. Let us work together to get a free and proper market" but rather, "Let us ensure that we take only the products that frankly we cannot make ourselves; or exclude your elements of trade that we do not like because they affect our vested self-interest."

I am intrigued as to how political input has been used to change all of that. Hon. Members have referred to the money for the PHARE programme. There is no question but that £115 million of that was diverted out of the budget at the end of the year, has been stuck into some form of structural fund and is now being used to support programmes directed from Germany in Silesia and Sudetenland. The purpose of that is clearly that it supports political positioning in Germany and other countries. Demand-led money, like our know-how fund, which I think is excellent, is the purpose of the PHARE programme and leads to better investment than anything dictated from one of the nations inside the European Community.

The key point is that we want a free market. I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to press the Commission and other member states not to fear what is out there but rather to see it as a challenge and to restructure the whole of the

Commission and our Community so that we meet the challenge as a free-trading group of countries rather than as a group of self-protected self-interest countries that would seek to close the market to those who would help us to compete.

There is no doubt that we need the trade and influence of those countries. If we stick exactly to what is in the agreements, we shall do no more than help those protected interests in the Community and we must ensure that we go further. If that means changing the Community, the common agricultural policy and our industrial policy, so be it: that is what we need to do. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said, if it means renegotiating the Maastricht treaty—as I believe that it does—that is what we must undertake.

4.49 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I followed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) with enormous interest—as, indeed, I followed his speech the other day. I find myself in complete agreement with the sentiments that he expressed today, and with those expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North said that monetary union was at the heart of the debate, which of course it is. Let me elaborate on that point by examining what the proposals for economic and monetary union actually mean, as applied to the countries mentioned in the motions.

The preamble and explanatory notes to the agreements, and the main text, refer to

"an appropriate framework for political dialogue"

and the improvement of democracy in the states involved. We all want the agreements to take effect—not with faint praise or faint application, but so that they can enhance the economic opportunities available and free trade and freedom of choice can exist together. What, in the medium to longer term, does economic and monetary union imply for those countries? Far from continuing to improve the prospects for democracy—of which I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North would approve—it will actually prevent democracy from burgeoning. It will mean eventually handing over the running of the countries' economies to unelected, unaccountable bankers; it will mean giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

A selfish streak run through the proposals—as my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford pointed out—in that they do not go far enough and, indeed, are positively exclusive of certain activities. Incidentally, those are frequently the most important activities in the countries concerned. In addition, the countries will be prevented from being able to develop their democratic and free-trading relationships with the rest of Europe.

I support the proposals, however, as I supported the European Economic Area Act 1993. I note—as I noted then—the absence of enthusiasm, shown by non-attendance in the Chamber, of some hon. Members who go around criticising those of us who would prefer to be described as Euro-realists. I recall that one of the notable absentees on a three-line Whip was my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who had the nerve to attack me on television yesterday—much to my amusement and pleasure, I may say. Whenever he attacks me, I regard my stock as having gone up by about 50 per cent. He did not vote on the European Economic Area Act, and I do not observe his presence today. That is a great pity. Those of us who are true Europeans, and who want the arrangements to work properly, wish to be present—as, indeed, my hon. Friends and I are today.

Having its own elections does not make a country a democracy. As I pointed out in a pamphlet that I wrote for the Bow Group in 1990, if we want to bring in those who have fought communism, have been at the sharp end and know what it is all about, we must give them the opportunity not only to have a free democracy but to engage in the kind of trading in their seminal industries that will enable them to match the theoretical democracy that they are being offered with a practical ability to deliver it, in terms of increased well-being for their people.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I agree with my hon. Friend about the poor attendance in the House. Is it not particularly notable that, while Conservative attendance is quite significant, the Opposition Benches are virtually bare?

Mr. Cash: That demonstrates the extent of the Opposition's enthusiasm. As we are in the close season for European elections, I am more than happy to add to the Government's firepower in attacking Labour Members and Liberal Democrats for their weak-kneed, third-rate, impoverished view of Europe's future. It is exemplified by the fact that, apart from Opposition Front Benchers and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), no one is present to speak up for those two parties. At least a reasonable number of Euro-realists, who are committed to Europe, are present on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Rogers: Whatever Opposition Members lack in numbers, we more than make up for in quality. Part of the reason for the lack of numbers is probably the fact that many of my comrades—comrades, indeed!—heard that the hon. Gentleman was going to make a speech.

Mr. Cash: I am always delighted to respond to the hon. Gentleman, but he cannot get away with cheap tricks like that. The fact is that no one is sitting behind him, probably because no one agrees with him.

There is another problem: the difficulty that we now face in regard to the kind of Europe that the agreements add up to, in conjunction with the European Economic Area Act, the Maastricht treaty, the Single European Act and the treaty of Paris. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North is right. During the debate on the confidence motion, in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I called for a renegotiation of the treaty. It is perfectly apparent that it is not working and it is clear that, when added to the agreements, the acquis communautaire—which lies at the heart of the treaty—will be a millstone around the necks of the newly emergent democracies, with incalculable consequences for peace and stability throughout Europe as a whole.

Scratch some of the recently fascist countries in western Europe, look at the civil disorder, at the mistakes that we have made in terms of our policy on the recognition of Croatia and Bosnia, at the extent of the commercial and political instability that is being generated and at the geopolitical landscape. Consider the present concern about what is happening in Kosovo and Macedonia, in relation to the Greeks and the Turks. Trace that through the Balkans, with today's critical problem over air strikes—which I

[Mr. Cash]

happen to think necessary, but that is another point—continue into the old Russias, with Mr. Zhirinovsky and the current uncertainty and tension.

Finally, consider the instability that will follow in the countries mentioned in the motions if the monetary union described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North collapses like the ERM and drops like a stone. What kind of Europe will that invoke? It will invoke civil disorder and all the uncertainties contained in the agreements. I am certain in my own mind, and from what I have picked up from friends in the countries involved, that they are by no means embraced enthusiastically by people there. They know that they constitute no more than a half-hearted and rather selfish measure. It is precisely because we have not been sufficiently forthcoming that we are tending to destabilise those countries.

Furthermore, if the EMU proposals indeed collapse, there will be chaos throughout Europe, which would only be worsened if the Parliaments of Europe have been emasculated by the reimposition of the totalitarianism from which those countries have only recently escaped. Hon. Members should please bear that in mind and consider the consequences of not allowing those countries to be let in. They have a great future if they are given an opportunity to enjoy proper free trade and proper democracy.

Confusion exists in the European Community, the so-called union, between nationalism and federalism. It will not be resolved by such half-hearted measures, welcome as they are for the time being. As Ian Davidson stated in the *Financial Times* on 16 February:

> "it seems unlikely that members will renegotiate the Maastricht treaty, and certainly not in the middle of negotiations with the Efta candidates."

The treaty will also not be renegotiated while the proposals involving other states adjacent to the European Community are under discussion.

To resolve the problems that remain, we must renegotiate the treaty of Rome and the treaty of Paris—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford referred. The difficulties over the treaty of Paris were revealed by the fining of British Steel and the sale of Rover. We must also renegotiate the Single European Act—which is not working properly and needs internal reform—the Maastricht treaty, the arrangements that are under discussion today and the European economic area. Unless we do that, we shall consign the future of Europe to deep uncertainty and potential chaos.

5.1 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I was interested in the ding-dong about the steel industry between my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). The hon. Member for Rhondda has forgotten that, in the early 1980s, the steel industry received £1 million of subsidy each day. There is no long-term future for employment if subsidy is given on that scale. It is much better to have a steel industry that is the most efficient in western Europe because that is the only guarantee of long-term employment.

In discussing the orders and the future, we should consider employment not only in the steel industry but in the steel-using industries, and the benefits for consumers. The benefits for employment in the steel and steel-using industries and the benefits for consumers will result from having an open market and by encouraging imports from countries in central Europe. We should remember that central Europe has received an appalling economic legacy from communism. Industry in central Europe was heavily overmanned, was greatly dependent on intra-COMECON trade and suffered from heavy under-investment and its production was environmentally most unfriendly. The economies of central Europe were distorted by unsustainable subsidies—*[Interruption.]* I should have thought that most hon. Members would agree that the German Government's subsidies were unwise and unsustainable. Their policy on the former East Germany has caused it and other countries in the European Community great economic difficulties. Even former Italian Governments found their subsidy levels were unsustainable. The Italian electorate decided that such Governments were unelectable, even if they were easily bribeable while in power.

The economic inheritance that was given to the democratic Governments of central Europe coincided with the belief that democracy would lead to an early and quick improvement in living standards. Those unfortunate countries have had to suffer a crisis of rising expectation, with their people expecting living standards to improve dramatically. The reality is that they have suffered substantial inflation, economic stagnation and heavy increases in unemployment. It was for those reasons that the former communists were able to win an election in Lithuania. That is why there is a danger that other former communists will regain power, admittedly under different names, in Hungary and Romania. That underlines the need for the European Community to do everything that it can to help those countries.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I agree with my hon. Friend. He probably saw the reports in today's newspapers that both the Czech Republic and Slovakia have had to reverse their demilitarisation policy and are trying to resuscitate their arms industries. Obviously, it is not in the interests of western Europe that that should happen. I hope that, by opening the door to proper non-military trade, we shall help both countries in their struggle to establish democracy and proper trading links with western Europe.

Mr. Marshall: My hon. Friend is right. The complaint that many of us have is that the European Community's trade with central Europe has not been open enough. The EC is all too eager to listen to the voice of the hon. Member for Rhondda when it deals with steel. It is unduly restrictive on fruit imports. It is more willing to export subsidised agricultural goods than to import from countries.

Mr. Rogers: They grow our own peaches in the Rhondda.

Mr. Marshall: They do lots of rotten things in the Rhondda, including electing the hon. Member. I apologise—we former Europeans should stick together.

The European Community forgets that it is in Europe's interests that democracy should continue to flourish in the countries of central Europe, otherwise there is a risk that they will return to dictatorship. The impact of that will extend far beyond those countries. We should have been more willing to show them the hand of friendship, to trade and invest with them. After the orders are implemented, I hope that we shall adopt a more positive role.

I welcome the fact that the know-how fund, which the hon. Member for Rhondda was willing to ridicule, has been warmly welcomed by the countries of central Europe. I also hope that our generosity will extend further and that soon we shall reach an agreement with the people of Albania, who have suffered more under communism than the people of any other country. The legacy handed down to the democrats of Albania has probably been the worst received by any democratic Government since the last war.

I commend the proposals and I shall have much pleasure in voting for them if the Opposition are foolish enough to press the motion to a Division.

5.7 pm

Mr. Rogers: With the leave of the House, I should like to make a few more remarks.

I did not refer to the know-how fund, so perhaps the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) should consult his hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) mentioned that there were only a few Opposition Members present. Conservative Members who have spoken sounded like a couple of ferrets in a sack as they squabbled among themselves and screeched away. The hon. Member for Stafford could only whine continually. We had a year of that during the Maastricht debate last year.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: I shall give way, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not whine any further.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman does not like much in the way of criticism. Many of us complimented him on the fact that he is now a member of the Labour Front-Bench team; I hope that he will improve on his performance today.

Mr. Rogers: I know that I have not made much of an impact, but I have been a member of the Labour Front-Bench team for many years, so the congratulations are a little slow. Two years ago, after a few years of shadowing Mr. Alan Clark, the former Minister of State for Defence Procurement, I was relieved of that job and joined the foreign affairs team. My brief does not cover Europe. The hon. Gentleman, with his single-minded obsession about that subject, probably did not notice that I have participated in debates on America, the far east, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but not particularly in those on the European Community. I am afraid that my sights are set a little broader than his very narrow vision of what the world ought to be.

In one way, that is what the agreements are all about —the fact that in Europe it is now necessary to bring into the general family of democracies the ex-communist countries of eastern Europe. It is not just a matter of simple trade, although I have sounded warnings in saying that we have to consider possible dumping. I do not know whether that has been covered in the agreements sufficiently or in the negotiation, or any restrictive legislation attached to it. We have to be aware of the problems of agricultural products coming in. We saw the problems with Spain and Portugal's entry; there was a distortion of the Mediterranean agricultural products and huge sums of money were required to buy their entry into Europe. We do not want to have to do that again with the agricultural products of eastern Europe.

Outside that, the main reason for the agreements—the preamble sets it out—is to bring these countries into our family of democracies to extend the hand of friendship, to start setting up political dialogues, to move towards political structures where we can be compatible and can work together. If that means more than simply renegotiating Maastricht and repeating it like some refugee from Hari Krishna, there is more to it than those simple phrases that are continually muttered by the hon. Member for Stafford. We are moving towards something that is large and politically significant.

I want to give the Minister as much time as possible, so I shall stop there. We shall not divide the House on the issue, because we believe that it is important that the orders are passed. I just wish that the Minister's hon. Friends would give it some type of welcome instead of continually whining.

5.11 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) drew attention to the fact that there were hardly any Labour Back Benchers present during the debate, and he was right to do so. The reason why he was right to draw attention to that fact was that the debate could have been taken upstairs, but the Labour party insisted that it be taken on the Floor of the House. It is, I think, a sign of the gravity that Labour Members attach to the matter that, on his own admission, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who spoke for the Opposition from the Front Bench, had picked up a brief but a few minutes prior to having spoken. The only Opposition Member who spoke in substance was the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and I will turn to his contribution in a moment. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), a Front-Bench spokesman, hopped up, trying to intervene in my speech. She then walked out and has not been here since.

What has happened is an abuse, because the matter could have been taken upstairs—the Labour party had no interest in it. There is, at the moment, but one Labour Back Bencher in the Chamber; the rest have played no part whatever in the debate. That is an abuse and the House needs to know that fact.

I now turn to what I understand to be the remarks of the hon. Member for Rhondda. *[Interruption.]* We have a second Labour Back Bencher here. I welcome the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden). He is going as well—no, he is not. He is sitting down. He is very welcome.

The hon. Member for Rhondda made two points—at least, I suppose that they were points. First, he grumbled about the dumping procedure. The hon. Gentleman would do well to look at the agreement. I commend article 30 with respect to dumping, because he will see that the general agreement on tariffs and trade-type safeguards prevail in those circumstances. The hon. Gentleman also embarked on a fairly extensive diatribe, criticising British industry and commerce in central and eastern Europe, wailing that we were not doing very well, to use the word that he likes to adopt.

Mr. Rogers: Whining.

Mr. Hogg: Whining is the word that the hon. Gentleman adopts. Whining certainly suits him. What a

[Mr. Hogg]

pity that on that occasion he was not correct. It is perfectly true that the French and the Germans have done better, but it is equally true that if one contrasts 1993 with 1992 in the case of the four countries with which we are concerned, he will find that British exports increased by 40 per cent. Instead of whining, he might do well to bring those matters to the attention of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) made an important contribution. I entirely agree with the substantive parts of what he had to say. I welcome, as he does, the process of enlargement. Yes, there are difficulties inherent in the economic fusion. Yes, it will transform the nature of the European Union. The point that, I suspect, Opposition Members who are present have not appreciated is that the enlargement of the European Union will work with the Government's, and not the Labour party's, perception of what the European Union should be like. Let us consider the identity of the countries that wish to join the European Union and bear in mind their history during the past 50 years. Countries that have had their sovereignty taken away from them by force are not likely willingly to surrender more of their sovereignty than they must to the centralising tendencies of the European Union. If one asks where the Labour party stands on the centralising tendencies of the European Union, one finds that the party is in favour of it, so I suspect that it will find that its new allies—our allies—will be of scant assistance to it.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow—I am sorry that he was shut in a church—made a very serious contribution, to which I do not have a complete answer, let me hasten to say. Essentially, what he described is a plague that we suffer from here. I regret to say that my local church in Lincolnshire was recently broken into and artefacts were stolen. That happens throughout the United Kingdom. It is especially worrying in the Czech Republic because of the great richness of artefacts there.

I can give one answer that is of some relevance. If the hon. Member for Linlithgow looks at article 97 of the agreement, he will see that it contains provisions for co-operation on the conservation of historical sites. That obviously could extend to addressing the type of problem about which he has spoken to the House.

The hon. Gentleman also raised several questions which, frankly, touch more on the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage and, indeed, of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department than on my Department. I hope that he will forgive me if I draw his remarks to their attention, because I feel sure that they will wish to respond to what he said.

Mr. Dalyell: Contact with Interpol may be the only practical way of making an impact on that problem.

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, the contact with Interpol is what caused me to refer to the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary might be the proper appropriate Minister to respond to the hon. Gentleman's comments.

My hon. Friends the Members for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) concentrated on the merits of free trade, and I entirely agree with them. I am bound to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford was wholly right when he commended the strategic requirement of restructuring of the industries, especially of the steel industry. I thought that again we heard the traditional and true voice of Labour from the hon. Member for Rhondda when he suggested that it was wrong to restructure British Steel in the early 1980s. Yet, as we were rightly reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South, the subsidies were running at £1 million a day. I heard the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) say, "It is peanuts." It is not peanuts. It is the type of thing that would bankrupt—

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hogg: I will not give way. I shall not give way because I have only one minute. I heard the hon. Gentleman say that it was peanuts. He may not have liked to be heard. I am not surprised at that because he was saying to the House that the whole policy of restructuring was wrong, and that the taxpayer should have continued to subsidise an industry that everyone else knew was bankrupt and inefficient, and is now one of the most—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [25 February].*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Bulgaria) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions necessary to dispose of the other motions to be decided at that hour.*

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Czech Republic) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and the Slovak Republic) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 7th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European Agreement establishing an Association between the European Communities and their Member States and Romania) Order 1994, which was laid before the House on 7th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Representation of the People

5.19 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move,

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motions:

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Mr. Lloyd: The first order increases the limits on candidates' election expenses at parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom and at local government elections in Great Britain to take account of inflation. The existing limits were set in March 1992. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has power to vary the maxima where, in his view, there has been a change in the value of money and it seems reasonable to increase these limits to take account of the change.

The main political parties and the local authority associations have been consulted about the proposal to increase the limits. The Conservative party, the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats have all indicated their support for an increase to take account of inflation. The aim is to have the increases in place in good time for the local government elections in May and also for the outstanding parliamentary by-elections.

The draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1994 perform two different functions. First, they increase the limits on candidates' election expenses at European parliamentary elections to take account of inflation. The existing limits have not changed since the previous European parliamentary general election in 1989.

Secondly, they apply for the purposes of European parliamentary elections in England and Wales an amendment made by the Education Act 1993 about the use of grant-maintained schools as polling stations. That amendment was made to ensure that returning officers continued to have the right to use, free of charge, rooms in grant-maintained schools once responsibility for funding such schools passed to new funding authorities.

The draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland)(Amendment) Regulations 1994 increase the limits on candidates' election expenses at European parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland, while the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 increases the limits at local elections in Northern Ireland. These increases correspond to the increases in Great Britain.

I hope that the House will approve all four orders.

5.22 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The four orders propose to raise the maximum limit of candidates' election expenses. They are very modest measures but, whatever our views on the precise level of the limit, I hope that the whole House will agree that the principle of limiting expenditure on elections is fundamental and central to our democracy. Without it, we could move rapidly towards the excesses of the system in the United States where it appears that one has almost to be a millionaire before one can afford to run for office. That is true not only nationally but locally and in state elections. My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) reminds me that, even in union elections, money talks.

In the United States, Ross Perot, a billionaire, entered the presidential contest because he felt that it was appropriate and, in Italy at the moment, there is a similar development with Berlusconi. I hope that this evening we are not encouraging such a phenomenon in British politics.

Of course, the principle of limits on expenditure applies only to local expenses. The local limits that we are debating contrast strongly with the free-for-all that exists at the national level. Local limits are, rightly, rigorously enforced and respected but national expenses are limitless and constitute a democratic deficit in the United Kingdom.

Political campaigning by individual candidates, as opposed to national party political machines, is an essential element in any healthy democratic system. Getting it right locally is all the more important today when the national political system is showing serious signs of ill health. There is undoubtedly, and rightly, a deep public cynicism about politics and politicians in general and of the House of Commons in particular.

The idea of democracy as a system of government by the people, for the people and of the people is an increasingly laughable characterisation of the over centralised, unaccountable and Executive-dominated system that passes for a democracy in this country. Labour has a wider democratic agenda to tackle the problem, but I shall not go into detail now because I know that you would bring me to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the orders highlight another issue.

All too often, contemporary political debate in this country is conducted through intermediaries, be they journalists, television reporters or assorted media pundits, but I do not blame them for that. We—in this place and at other political levels—are responsible for the fact that the importance of the relationship between candidates for office and their prospective electors has become an increasingly marginal relationship in the conduct of politics.

We believe that strengthening the local link and the local dialogue, as the orders do, is vital if we are to close the ever widening divide between politicians and the public. It is, therefore, more important than ever that those who are standing for public office as elected representatives have adequate resources during local election campaigns to project themselves locally as individuals and to publicise their own distinctive views and those of their party to the particular constituency electorates that they seek to represent. Candidates' election expenses at the parliamentary and European level are, in the main, geared entirely towards precisely that.

We believe, that in most respects, the current system of limiting a candidate's expenses is reasonable although hardly generous. In these days of direct mail, glossy literature and telephone canvassing, hon. Members may

[Mr. Graham Allen]

feel that keeping down their expenses is rather like a boxer trying to make the weight limit—something that you may appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 1992, my own limit was £6,900 or thereabouts. It draws gasps of astonishment from people who campaign in other circles, such as those in pressure groups trying to mount a local or national campaign, those running a business or marketing particular products, and especially those from abroad. My American acquaintances in particular are staggered when they hear that there are such low limits on the amount that individual candidates can expend locally.

We believe that the local limits on election expenses should be uprated annually in line with inflation. Had the March 1986 expenses been linked to inflation, an additional £700 at today's prices would have been available to a parliamentary candidate in a borough constituency. The Minister mentioned linking these limits to inflation or catching up with inflation and, if he is listening, I ask him to comment on the possibility of a permanent link with inflation so that orders such as this are not necessary on an occasional basis and the amount that we can spend locally ratchet up with the retail prices index.

The real danger not covered in the orders is the fact that the role of local campaigning on the basis of a rough parity of party funds is fatally flawed because of the huge differences allowed at national level. The Labour party's Plant committee on electoral systems recently examined the problem and concluded:

> "Whilst the principle that wealthy candidates should not have undue advantages by access to greater funds still, in the main, applies at local level, it has become meaningless in terms of national expenditure.
>
> Accompanied by a substantial increase by outside bodies in the promotion or rejection of a political party or its views, the concept of equality between parties is being steadily eroded."

As in so many things, the Conservatives are isolated on this matter. Of the parties present in the House this evening, only the Conservative party is opposed to national limits on expenditure. Surely the notion of political equality is absolutely fundamental to a democratic system.

More than 2,000 years ago, Aristotle noted:

> "The first and most truly so-called variety of democracy is that which is based on the principle of equality."

People may be unequal in the marketplace, much as some of us may regret that, but at the ballot box, they should be equal. We should do everything in the House to ensure that they stand as equals when they cast their vote.

The increase in expenditure at European elections is most welcome. I believe that every penny of that expenditure will be extremely helpful to Conservative candidates, who will need to explain the commitments in the European People's party manifesto. One commitment —I quote one of many possibilities—is

> "to move resolutely forward in furthering the process of European unification and integration."

No doubt many of the Conservative Members who have now vacated the Chamber will take great interest in that and in explaining to potential Conservative voters the possibility of a European defence force, a European immigration policy and a European constitution. No doubt the hon. Members who have left the Chamber are, at this very moment, rushing out to the electorate to notify them of those policy developments under the European People's party manifesto.

Perhaps we shall remember the orders going through the House this evening for the reason that this could be the last occasion on which the European parliamentary elections are fought on a first-past-the-post basis, which requires these limits. We shall have to consider new ways in which to devise expenditure limits for the next round of European elections after the elections in June.

Another concern about the orders is their failure to address the problems, again identified by the Labour party's Plant commission, of overspending the limits and their enforcement at local level. The commission said:

> "We consider it grossly unfair that an agent at constituency level, often a voluntary member of the party, is subject to legal control, and liable to a possible prison sentence for breaching the law, whilst a national party and outside bodies can freely spend and influence the electors, technically on a national basis, but in reality giving support for candidates of one political party."

That is wrong. There should be even-handedness in the way in which people are treated at national level, just as there is at local level. What is good for an individual, volunteer local party agent—the majority of us have such agents—should be good enough for a named person who should take responsibility for the legal implications of raising money and spending money at national level, if limits are breached. I state again for the record that Labour will legislate for national maximum spending limits, backed by legal sanctions, to ensure even-handedness.

We believe that the orders are a seriously missed opportunity to eliminate the anachronism of the differential in election expenses between candidates for borough constituencies and candidates for county constituencies. That, of course, applies to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland elections and not to the European elections. The orders make that disparity greater. There is an increase in the expenses per elector in county constituency elections of 6.1 per cent.—from 4.9p per elector to 5.2p per elector. There is an increase of only 5.4 per cent. in the amount allocated per head to the electors in a borough constituency—from 3.7p to 3.9p per elector. The arguments that might once have justified that disparity have long since passed and it would be sensible for that disparity now to be removed. Again, I should be grateful if the Minister would comment on whether he feels that that matter should now be the subject of a serious review so that we can equalise the amounts that are given to borough constituency elections and to county constituency elections.

The orders are also faulty in that they fail to take account of the many new developments in election techniques. Those techniques are familiar to most of us and may be more familiar to those who have fought marginal seats. None the less, should the exemption of various capital items from the definition of expenses be considered? Those items might include the election headquarters, computers, printing machinery and telephone equipment. That would ensure that the maximum permitted election expenses are limited to items that are specifically directed at the elector, such as literature, the direct promotion of candidates, canvassing, direct mail and, perhaps, poster and press advertising.

Perhaps the Minister can tell us whether he would be receptive to such a change in the definition of election expenses. Perhaps he will clarify and pinpoint the services for which the money pays.

It is important that we state that Labour has argued since 1929 that there should be a fundamental review of the whole way in which we fund political parties. The subject is currently being considered by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and, although it has a Conservative majority, I look forward to it proposing some radical reforms to party funding. I am pleased to welcome the Chairman of that Committee, the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), to our proceedings. He may care to comment at some point on the Committee's discussions on this important matter. I ask him to tell us, at the very least, whether the Committee may consider committing itself to the setting up of an independent electoral commission, along the lines of the Boundary Commission, to oversee the whole area of election expense regulation and to oblige all United Kingdom political parties to disclose in their annual accounts any donation from a single source above a particular limit, let us say £5,000 per calendar year. That is the minimum that we expect from the Select Committee and I should be pleased if the Chairman would comment on that or on any other point made so far if he can do so without giving away too many secrets.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The inquiry into the funding of political parties is in a state of activity at the moment. The Committee has not yet come to a conclusion and it is too early for me to say what conclusions we shall come to on the points that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

Mr. Allen: That is most helpful. I look forward to the report. No doubt I shall reciprocate with a slightly more elaborate set of comments when I see the report. I wish the hon. and learned Gentleman well in drafting it.

Another relevant point is the limit on local government expenses being extended from £192 per local government candidate plus 3.8p per head to £205 per candidate plus 4p per head. We certainly welcome and support that part of the order, but we also believe that there is now a very strong case indeed for examining the maximum and determining whether we are allowing sufficient resources to local authority candidates to fight their corners effectively.

It is little use the House sometimes rather complacently saying that our turnouts are a lot greater than local government turnouts, when it is within the power of the House to assist candidates of all parties to spend a little more money contacting their electorates through additional literature or whatever other means they seek to employ. Turnouts in local government elections are too low, and we should do our bit to ensure that they are increased. However, it is incumbent upon the House to examine seriously whether the amount to which we limit local government candidates is sufficient to help local government achieve the turnouts, involvement and local interest that we would all like to see. Perhaps the Minister will comment not on the specific amount but on the broad dimension of funding that we allow local government candidates to use.

Similarly, in the case of by-elections, there should be a higher maximum for parliamentary and local elections. Do we really expect the Eastleigh, Rotherham, Dagenham and Barking by-elections to be fought effectively on current limits? Those events are of national interest and they will generate immense activity. In such circumstances, we might need to consider once more whether the admittedly more generous amounts that are allowed to people who are fighting by-elections could be considered yet again in the light of modern circumstances.

The measures were drafted some time ago; certainly before the advent of widespread computerisation, widespread direct mail, and the press conference every hour, it seems, in local by-elections. Perhaps, with future measures, we should take a step back to assess the level of expenditure and come up with a more realistic limit for local and parliamentary by-elections.

I have sought to place today's modest increases in expenses for candidates within the broader context of the enormous disparities within the levels of national party political funding which seriously undermine our democratic system. Recent allegations about the behaviour of certain Conservative councils suggest that the incestuous relationship between money and political power is alive and well in modern Britain. The problem, however, is not primarily that of illegality, important though it is to root out corruption from whatever source. The insidious problem is posed by large-scale, frequently clandestine but nevertheless legal financing of the governing party by the small wealthy minority who benefit directly from its tax policies. As we know, a number of the more substantial contributors to Conservative party funds—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the scope of the debate is narrow. Although he has been in order until now, the hon. Gentleman is beginning to stray beyond the bounds of the debate.

Mr. Allen: The very important point that I am trying to make is that people in our respective constituencies, be they in a constituency Labour party, a Conservative association, and whatever it is that the Liberal Democrats have, work extremely hard to raise money. That is why we have the limits. Such people work very hard to raise money through socials, jumble sales, coffee mornings and so on. That hard graft of local party politics goes on in order to raise money, and we rightly put ceilings on expenditure.

However, that has to stand in stark contrast with those who, at national level, are without any limit whatsoever and who, because they happen to be a foreign shipping magnate or a business man in Hong Kong, can donate amounts of money far in excess of that which any constituency has raised in 10 or 20 years.

That element of fairness must be conveyed. Those individuals have a far greater and disproportionate effect, even though they might be citizens of a foreign country working on behalf of a foreign business, than the hundreds of people—I pay tribute to workers in party politics, be they Labour or Conservative—who work day in and day out, voluntarily and without payment to make local parties the engine of local democracy. Without those local parties we would not have politics; we would just have top-down financed political parties. Sources of Conservative party finance raise several questions that I will not go into.

Although we support the orders, Opposition Members have a more radical agenda. The future Labour Government will remove the manifest unfairness of the existing system of party funding. We will legislate for limits on national spending, just as we have today on local spending. We will introduce state aid. We will ensure that party accounts are published. We will ban the funding of political parties by foreign individuals and foreign businesses. As part of our wider democratic agenda, we will work to create a level playing field for all political parties and candidates at local and national level, and we

[Mr. Allen]

will create a democratic system in which elections cannot be bought by wealthy vested interests but are won by the party with practical and imaginative ideas. We alone require no loaded dice. We alone will welcome that fair fight.

5.46 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am not sure what the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) meant when he said, "We alone require no loaded dice." I do not know whether he sought to include or exclude the Liberal Democrats in that.

The hon. Gentleman laid out a wide canvas of reforms. I will not imitate that tonight, but suffice it to say that I hope that he will think it appropriate to seek cross-party agreement for any such reforms. Part of the essence of the hon. Gentleman's fair criticism of the Government is that they proceed in matters such as the reform of our electoral system with scant regard for the views of other parties on matters that are central to the efficacy of our democracy.

Mr. Allen: If I was not clear, let make it clear that the association of ideas on the national maximum is shared by the Liberal Democrats, the Labour party and, indeed, other parties, too. Only one party stands against a national maximum, and that is the one which needs a national maximum in order to make its own case, because it is incapable of making it on a level playing field.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that clarification. None the less, I would value the opportunity of a dialogue with him on this as on other matters, as, I am sure, would other parties represented in this House. I am prompted to say that because of what the hon. Gentleman said about the different expenditures in borough and county electorates.

I remember serving on the Speaker's Conference on electoral law some years ago, when this matter was considered very carefully. Clear evidence persuaded the conference that the expenditure necessarily incurred in campaigning in county elections was higher per head of the population than in borough constituencies.

In the view of the Speaker's Conference, that was sufficient to advocate the difference which these measures carry forward today. I do not have a dogmatic view on whether the difference is justified in contemporary circumstances, because I recognise that there have been substantial changes in the methods of campaigning at local level since the Speaker's Conference reported in the 1970s.

It would make sense to carry out a deep study of the actual costs of campaigning at parliamentary and European elections in the latter decade of this century in order to have some justification for the figures, which we normally uprate once in the lifetime of a Parliament, to see whether they are a proper reflection of the costs.

The figures are somewhat artificial. For example, they do not reflect the extent to which telephone canvassing may have become a core part of campaigning today. Nor do they reflect the difficulty in tracing expenditure on such campaigning.

From my experience of campaigning in a very scattered rural constituency, I must reflect that the nature of the expenditure incurred is very different from that incurred in a borough. The expenditure on petrol in driving from one public meeting to another is considerable, and expenditure on advertising as many as four or five dozen meetings in different local newspapers is considerable because of present printing costs.

I know that, at the current levels of expenditure permitted by Parliament, it is difficult in such a rural area to do more than publish two, or at the most three, leaflets locally during an election campaign. I am not sure that that makes total sense in present times.

Mr. Allen: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is coming towards the conclusion that, if the limits are too low—there is a case for saying that these limits are too low—we are in danger of introducing a possible element of corruption into the local electoral process, because the temptation that may exist to exceed the limits is great where they may be over-rigorous.

Mr. Maclennan: I think that that is a risk. Certainly it is one that we should be aware of in looking at the realism of these measures in uprating the limits. I think that the Government have tied the uprating simply to the increase in the cost of living, but I do not think that there has been any detailed analytical work on the components of electioneering in bringing forward these measures.

Campaigning has been much more sophisticated recently. There is much more targeted campaigning locally. There is much more printing of letters which are directed to particular members of the electorate, in an attempt to have a more sensitive campaign than perhaps in the old days of the soapbox, which the Prime Minister, in his effort to get back to basics, employed—it must be said, with some success—at the last election.

Nonetheless, as we must be concerned about the evident cyclical decline in the number of our electors participating in elections, it is extremely important that election expenses which can be incurred at the local level should properly and fully reflect what it costs to run an informative campaign which allows candidates fully to display what they are offering to the public.

As I said, there is a certain artificiality about the limits today. Of course, the biggest artificiality of all is that to which the hon. Member for Nottingham, North referred—the tight control of local expenditure and the absence of control of national expenditure, which has a distorting effect on campaigning.

Although I am not one of those who believe that what happens locally does not matter much—electoral battles are fought on television and won by the party leaders; and, provided that we control the amount of television time and cover of the principal advocates in a national election, what goes on below that does not matter greatly—the extraordinary disproportion of expenditure nationally is something we need to examine in a fair and modern democracy. However, we cannot look at that matter within the ambit of these measures, which deal with a limited part of our democratic process.

I put it to the Government that the time has come to set up a Speaker's Conference to look at the disproportion between the tight control of local expenditure, which we are seeking modestly to raise tonight, and the absence of control of national expenditure. Undoubtedly, the Labour party has a clear view about what evidence it might submit to a Speaker's Conference. The Liberal Democrats might submit slightly different evidence, because there are serious problems of control of national expenditure. We must take account of the practical difficulties of controlling national expenditure if we are to seek any change.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Is there not an urgent need also to look at the consequences of the incumbency? Today, with the growth of regional and local media, Members of Parliament, local councillors and others have an increasing advantage over challenging candidates—that matter needs to be looked at—and generally there is no starting date in terms of knowing when an election campaign begins.

Mr. Maclennan: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. There is an advantage for the sitting tenant, whose record and history are known.

Mr. Mackinlay: I certainly hope they are.

Mr. Maclennan: In some cases it is an advantage, but it cannot be said that it is a universal advantage. The changeovers that occur suggest that it is not a sure-fire recipe for success at the polls. The hon. Gentleman is right: it is something that we should examine.

The opportunity for a new candidate to come forward and sell himself at an election on the basis of two or three little bits of paper seems to be inadequate. I do not want to see a huge increase in spending on elections, which would also militate against the challenge of small parties, new parties and local parties which are not well heeled and which have little to do with the merits of the candidature.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) mentioned fixed-term Parliaments, which would have an interesting impact on local expenditure limits. If candidates were to know when an election was to take place, that might well affect the way that they plan their campaigns. Does the hon. Gentleman have a view on that?

Mr. Maclennan: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am in favour of fixed Parliaments. However, that goes far beyond the ambit of the measures. Although it may be interesting for me to go down those avenues, I must confine myself strictly to what we are considering today.

I put it to the Minister that the time has come for a new look at these matters in the round. There is plenty of time before his party will have to face the electorate and nemesis.

The Government are therefore in an ideal position to take that step. In my experience, Speaker's Conferences tend to be dominated by the partisan views of those who participate in them. Nonetheless, they have served a purpose in the past of enabling evidence to be accumulated which can then go into the public domain and lead to a public debate. Such a debate preceded the alteration in the voting age, for example. Incidentally, Parliament rejected the recommendation of the Speaker's Conference on the voting age.

It is an appropriate process for considering how the matters should be taken forward. We should seek to modernise the system of the control of expenditure, and we should take account of the realities of campaigning in this day and age.

6.1 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) made a number of complaints about the orders, and he wanted them to do a lot of things which they cannot do. That is not merely because the orders do not contain the requisite material, but because they cannot do those things under the governing legislation. However, there were two or three points in particular upon which he asked my opinion.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we could have increases automatically with inflation. I do not think that we can under the present law, because the Home Secretary is charged to come forward with regulations when he feels that it is appropriate to raise the expenses in line with the changing value of money. That must be his decision, and he has done that by consulting through his officials with the political parties. When there is a consensus—as there is on this occasion—he will introduce an order.

The hon. Gentleman also remarked on the disparity, as he saw it, between borough and county, with the latter having higher expenses. He thought that the differences were now out of date. That was an odd way of putting it, because the reason for the differences is geography, and that remains as it was. The distances in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as compared with the constituency of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), are as they were previously.

There is no doubt that a large constituency, with long distances to travel and a spread population, involves greater expenses than a smaller, urban constituency. There is no reason why the differentials should be wrong now if they were right some years ago. They could be looked at, but they could be changed only if the Home Secretary introduced orders which did not raise the ceilings in county constituencies with inflation, as he was recommending the House did in borough constituencies.

Mr. Allen: The point that I was making in terms of the balance between counties and boroughs being slightly different now was based on the new campaigning techniques. There is greater emphasis on telephone calling and direct mail shots, and the physical moving of people and goods to different places around a constituency during a campaign has been somewhat diminished. The balance has shifted a little to more technological means of campaigning.

Will the Minister comment on the point about research, raised by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland? Would it not be helpful to look into a lot of those things and for the Home Office to undertake some serious research into whether we have it right at the moment? That research could be even more serious than that which is undertaken already.

Mr. Lloyd: I will come to that point in a moment.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North suggested that the ceilings on candidates' expenses were too low generally, and that he would like them raised. That would need legislation. I am not convinced that higher ceilings are needed. It is interesting that some 40 per cent. of Labour party candidates spend about 80 per cent. of what they could spend in elections. It does not appear that they are pressing on those ceilings.

There may be a need to look at the matter again. We last looked at it in conjunction with the other parties in 1987, when I did not have responsibility for these matters. The

[Mr. Lloyd]

hon. Gentleman knows that a series of study groups is dealing with aspects of voting and electioneering. There are six groups, which are drawing lessons from the general election. They have presented their draft reports, and those have either been sent to the political parties for comment in the past few days or are about to go out.

We do not ask that the matter of candidates' expenses should be looked at again. There are a large number of other issues which impinge upon those matters, and we will be interested to hear of any other issues when we meet with the political parties. It is sensible to take the matters forward by consensus because, at the very least, there needs to be agreement that certain aspects need to be looked at, rather than because of pressure from one party or another to make changes.

I am not sure that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland is right when he says that we need a Speaker's Conference. I would much rather have meetings with the political parties on the basis of the wide-ranging reports which we are already putting forward. If additional issues arose, they could be examined to see whether it was agreed that certain aspects should be examined further—research, to use the hon. Gentleman's term.

The examinations could determine whether other discussions were needed, or whether there was not enough of a consensus to find a way forward. It would be much better to have meetings and discussions first. I do not want to rule anything out, but I would not like the hon. Gentleman to think that I was ruling anything in before the discussions.

Mr. Allen: While a Speaker's Conference may be going too far, and while many of us welcome the study groups and working groups which were established under the auspices of the Home Office, perhaps a middle way could be for an independent electoral commission, as I suggested. There may be matters which are to the benefit of the electors which may not necessarily be for the benefit of individual political parties, despite the fact that we always try to represent all our electors.

Mr. Lloyd: The outcome of the discussions between the political parties will be for wider debate. For example, we are consulting local authority associations, and other interested groups will want to comment. I do not believe that general, non-partisan interested groupings will be excluded in any way, but it would be sensible to take things stage by stage.

A great deal of work has been done by the study groups which have already reported. We should take that work forward and add any other matters that the political parties combined want to study further as well.

I will finish on the funding of parties nationally. That matter is outside the substance of this debate, but has been mentioned several times. The matter is being looked at by the Select Committee, and observations have been made by both hon. Members who took part in the debate. I am tempted to make some counter-observations of my own, but it is better if hon. Members keep within the rules of the debate. It would be sensible to wait until we knew the recommendations of the Select Committee.

I hope and expect from what has been said in this short debate that the House will give approval to the four statutory instruments.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Resolved,

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Local Elections (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved. —*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Local Government Finance (Scotland)

6.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I beg to move,

That the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this it will be convenient to discuss the following motion:

That the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

This is the annual opportunity for the House to debate the Scottish local government finance settlement for the year ahead. It is common ground across the Chamber that it is an important debate for several reasons. Local authority services are clearly crucial to all those who receive them, be they the youngest or the oldest in our community.

The debate is also important because of the huge amount of money that is distributed under the orders that we are considering. The total sum involved is £5.3 billion. That represents about 40 per cent. of the total Scottish Office budget or, to put it another way, £1,034 for every man, woman and child in Scotland from the United Kingdom and business taxpayers. The figure of £1,034 compares to the English figure of £709 and the Welsh figure of £835. So the figure in Scotland is 46 per cent. higher than that in England and 24 per cent. higher than that in Wales.

The background to the two orders is provided in the reports on them, but I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I briefly summarise the position. I shall deal first with the main order, the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994. It represents the final stage of the 1994-95 settlement, details of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State first announced to the House on 30 November. He said that Government-supported expenditure—the total of grant-aided expenditure and the provision for loan and leasing charges—had been set at just less than £6,014 million and that aggregate external finance had been set at £5,272 million for next year. Those figures represent increases of 3.52 per cent. and 2.41 per cent. respectively on the 1993-94 figures, inclusive in both cases of the amounts being transferred to local authorities for the second year of their community care responsibilities.

The Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994 deals with the distribution of aggregate external finance —AEF—for next year. As the report to the order explains, AEF has three components. The first is the provision for specific grants. For 1994-95, that provision is estimated at £421.5 million, and a breakdown of that estimate among the various specific grants is given in appendix B to the report.

The second component of AEF is the distributable amount of non-domestic rate income, which for next year has been set at £1,109 million. That estimate takes account of the 1994-95 rate poundages which my right hon. Friend also announced on 30 November. Those poundages, in turn, took into account a further reduction of £60 million as part of the Government's policy of harmonising business rate poundages north and south of the border.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Do the figures take into account the costs already incurred of setting local government reform in motion?

Mr. Stewart: Yes. The order provides an additional £5 million for local government reorganisation. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the major costs and savings will come in years subsequent to the order.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): It would be helpful if the Minister could elaborate on the exact basis on which the £5 million was calculated. It is important to know how much of the expenditure he envisages would take place in the next financial year. It would be helpful if he could set out briefly—I think that we have plenty of time—the types of expenditure that he expects to be incurred in the coming financial year.

Mr. Stewart: Certainly. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we sent out a circular to Scottish local authorities asking for an estimate of the costs of local government reorganisation in the forthcoming year. The costs mainly relate to information technology. As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), the main costs and savings will come in future years. We thought it right to allow a small increase in expenditure for costs in 1994-95. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, most costs will come in years thereafter.

Mr. Foulkes: We are talking about 1994-95, which goes on, as I understand it, right until the end of March 1995. It seems to me that £5 million is a small amount. From the discussions in which the Minister has been involved in the Standing Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, it seems likely that by the beginning of 1995, local authorities—whatever structure we ultimately decide—will be involved in fairly substantial expenditure around February and March 1995. I wonder whether information has been made available to the local authorities on which they can make reasonable judgments about what the expenditure is likely to be.

Mr. Stewart: Of course there will be substantial extra expenditure in the financial year 1995-96. The expenditure in 1994-95—the financial year that we are dealing with this evening—is likely to be very limited. No local authority suggests that it will incur other than preparatory expenditure. The hon. Gentleman is correct that, in 1995-96 and 1996-97, the picture will be different.

I informed the House last year that, with the agreement of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, it was proposed to distribute non-domestic rate income to regional and islands authorities only. That meant that district councils would receive their AEF support solely in the form of revenue support grant and specific grants. I am happy to say that those arrangements have been accepted by all involved and it is proposed to continue them for next year.

The third component of AEF is revenue support grant, which for 1994-95 totals £3,741.5 million. A detailed explanation of how AEF for next year has been distributed to individual local authorities is contained in the report to the order. It may be helpful to the House if I briefly summarise the procedure, the object of which is to equalise both for variations in authorities' assessed need to incur expenditure and for their tax base. There are broadly two stages in the process.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): Broadly?

Mr. Stewart: There are exactly two stages in the process. The first stage is to equalise differences in authorities' grant-aided expenditure assessments—GAEs—as determined by the client group methodology. That methodology, which is reviewed regularly, is agreed with COSLA in the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance. A little more than £1,303 million of the AEF total is used to equalise differences in GAE assessments.

The second stage of the procedure is to equalise for differences in each authority's tax base—in other words, their ability to raise revenue locally. The balance of AEF remaining after equalising for differences in the GAE assessments is allocated to authorities in proportion to the number of council tax band D equivalent properties in each authority area. The sum of £3,927 million is distributed in that way.

The principle underlying the distribution procedure is that if all authorities spent at the level of GAE assessment, they should all be able to set the same level of council tax. In practice, there is often a significant variation in the levels of tax because some authorities decide to spend above GAE and others below. Variations in tax levels, however, are not the result of the aggregate external finance distribution system being used to reward or to penalise certain authorities. Any claims of that sort made in previous debates—I am sure that they will not be made today—betray a lack of understanding of the system and the extent to which COSLA is fully consulted about the mechanisms that I have summarised.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Is not taking the council band alone into account a rather crude way to assess the tax base of an area and the impact on local authority expenditure? That crude formula alone will not take into account the fact that an area with many houses in the council band might also have been affected by unemployment or have a high level of poverty.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman's argument is incorrect because of the two-stage process. Unemployment is an indicator in relation to the provision of a number of services and that is set out in detail in the distribution formula. If there were only one stage, the hon. Gentleman would be correct, but, because of the needs part of the procedure, indicators such as unemployment and deprivation are fully taken into account in the distribution of the grant.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Can my hon. Friend advise me whether COSLA has offered any constructive arguments on a change to the formula which would improve it, if that were possible?

Mr. Stewart: The formula is constantly reviewed with COSLA. It is perhaps inevitable that authorities do not always wholly agree with the consequences of the formula because they are affected in different ways.

I certainly pay tribute to the very professional expertise commanded by the distribution committee of COSLA and the Scottish Office, as hon. Members who have studied the client group methodology in detail will be the first to attest. I see that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is agreeing with me and I am sure that he studied it year in and year out when he was the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. The methodology is extremely technical and sophisticated and I pay tribute to those who work very hard to improve it in the light of continuing representations.

Mr. Dalyell: Before we leave the subject of the professional expertise of COSLA, to which the Minister rightly pays tribute, if it has so much professional expertise, why does the Scottish Office challenge its estimates for costs of up to £720 million for local government reform? Does he accept that that COSLA figure was put together not by a group of Opposition politicians, but by precisely the type of experts to whom he is paying tribute; for example, David Chynoweth, who was president of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Administration last year? Is it not dangerous to give such fulsome praise to COSLA's expertise—praise which is justified, in my opinion—but to say that it has its sums all wrong on another aspect of local government reform? The Government cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Stewart: I do not accept that figure. When I paid tribute to the convention's technical expertise in one area, I do not think that anyone would imply that I necessarily meant that we accepted every figure that it produced on every subject under the sun. I merely said that the distribution formula is extremely complex and sophisticated and I paid due and proper tribute to those who worked very hard to ensure that the formula reflects changing circumstances; it changes from year to year.

Mr. Gallie: I apologise to my hon. Friend for intervening again. If I heard him aright, he not only complimented those who were technically involved from COSLA, but also people from the Scottish Office. That office has come up with different figures for local government reform to COSLA, so the argument is balanced. Perhaps my hon. Friend should acknowledge that and advise Opposition Members of that fact.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right, as always.

We are considering the distribution of the grant, which is done according to a formula agreed by the distribution committee. Both Scottish Office and COSLA officials do much extremely technical work. That does not mean that COSLA, by agreeing the distribution, necessarily agrees with the total, which is a different matter. COSLA is entitled to its view on that.

I do not think for a moment that the second order is controversial. The Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994 redetermines the amount of revenue support grant payable to each Scottish authority for each of the years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93. Those are the three years covered by an agreement with COSLA to adjust, either up or down, the level of RSG payable to each authority in the light of any variations between the estimate of non-domestic rate income and the amount collected.

Hon. Members will appreciate, I am sure, that the amount can vary from the estimate because of changes in buildings, empty buildings and so forth. The introduction of pooling of non-domestic rate income—NDRI—from 1 April 1993 removed the need for the agreement to continue beyond 1992-93. With pooling, adjustments to the level of NDRI are made administratively.

The order provides for the level of RSG for 1990-91 to be increased by £26.6 million; for the level of grant for 1991-92 to be increased by £39.7 million; and for the level of grant for 1992-93 to be reduced by £34.5 million. All those adjustments are necessary in the light of the latest returns of non-domestic rate income collected by authorities for the three years in question. Overall, as hon. Members will doubtless be delighted to hear, the order provides for a net additional payment of £31.8 million to authorities. Clearly, there are swings and roundabouts as far as individual authorities are concerned.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): And if the hon. Member has anything to do with it, Eastwood will always be on the roundabout.

Mr. Stewart: I do not think that it is.

I do not believe that the second order is controversial in any way. It has been fully discussed with COSLA. The settlement to Scottish local authorities provided for in the main order is entirely realistic, given the present low level of inflation, the Government's approach to public sector pay and the public expenditure situation and I commend both orders to the House.

6.29 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): This will be an interesting evening, because we have started the debate earlier than anticipated. Hon. Members will therefore have a good opportunity to discuss the orders.

We can also reflect on the fact that, although the Secretary of State has come to join us, he still manages to duck out of dealing with local government issues, as he did during Scottish Question Time last week. At the weekend, it was noticeable, however, that when he was debating with, or should I say when he was being attacked by, Conservative councillors, at a conference he managed a few remarks about the conduct of the Standing Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, although he has not even popped his head around the door of the Committee. He is, presumably, receiving detailed reports from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). Great debate and dissent are undoubtedly caused by them.

Mr. Gallie *rose—*

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) has occasionally bumped into the Secretary of State in the Corridor and has put down a few amendments as a result.

Mr. Gallie: Given the hon. Member's words of welcome to the Secretary of State, it would be churlish if Conservative Members did not mention the presence of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on the Opposition Front Bench. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will benefit greatly from his hon. Friend's advice on, and sound knowledge of, local government.

Mr. Robertson: I have no doubt that if the hon. Member for Ayr turned his mind to it, he could turn that intervention into an amendment for the Committee tomorrow, because his ingenuity seems to have absolutely no limit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is, of course, welcome to join us. A trip down memory lane is never bad for people. I am sure that he will enjoy the debate, just as he always enjoyed the previous ones. In fact, he is probably one of the few people who enjoy such debates.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): He is the only person.

Mr. Robertson: Yes, that may well be true.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden is certainly welcome, because he never shirked or dodged the column in dealing with important issues, especially those concerned with local government.

I must admit that many a heart dropped when a study of the Order Paper revealed that the House intended to discuss the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994 and the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994. Frankly, the Minister with responsibility for local government has just revealed the deathlessness of the prose and the complexity of the concepts as he explained different components of the aggregate external finance levels compared with the Government's supported expenditure levels.

That explanation left the House of Commons more than cold in its appreciation. It also has the unfortunate effect of leaving the Government in the advantageous position of putting their figures forward as the truth—something which anyone with half a mind on the past would automatically dismiss.

The Minister told us that this is a good settlement, but he has said that every single year, just as his predecessors have in the past 15 years. It is no more true this year than it was in the previous ones. Why should the Minister change the script; after all it is recycled year on year? A few different civil servants may be involved and Ministers may go round in circles, but, each year, we are given the same speech about more cash being available for local councils and that, as a result, council tax, poll tax bills and rate levels should fall across Scotland. As the Opposition know only too well, Ministers are not telling the whole truth.

The truth, buried deep in the figures, is not just a matter of interpreting dry, obscure statistical complexities, but means money, which comes from the pockets of the people of Scotland. They are expected to shell out more money and more taxes. All those taxes are new ones, which are a direct result of this incompetent Government. Whatever Ministers say tonight—they have sold us this stale, unconvincing justification year on year—the minimum estimated effect of the orders will be an extra 10 per cent. on council tax bills across Scotland. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has authoritatively estimated that that is equivalent to £1.20 a week on average council tax bills.

Mr. Stewart: Can the hon. Member therefore explain why the biggest Labour district council in Scotland, Glasgow, has just announced that it will reduce its council tax by 3.8 per cent?

Mr. Robertson: As the Minister has said, there will obviously be swings and roundabouts. Because of the differentials involved and a number of other factors that apply, there will be differences of view about the figures. But the estimate, published this morning by the same professional officials whom the Minister has praised up to now, means an extra £1.20 a week on every council tax bills. That is equivalent to an additional 10 per cent. on top of all the other added expenditure which results from the Government's policies.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Would the hon. Member care to ponder on the fact that another Labour-controlled regional council, Grampian, has said that it intends to freeze its council tax levels? I wonder whether he attaches a lot of credibility to COSLA's figures.

Mr. Robertson: There are not many Conservative Members present, but I hope that they will come up with examples of the good housekeeping of individual Labour local authorities, which have been able to act in that manner in the face of the settlement and the circumstances dictated by Ministers. Those Labour local authorities have been able to do that because of the sheer professionalism of their approach. I shall explain, however, that the figures mean that it will be difficult for those authorities to uphold that behaviour.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): May I take the hon. Member's remarks as something of a compliment to the Scottish National party's financial convenor of Grampian region?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman can take it any way he wants.

The Government say that the aggregate external finance level will be up 2 per cent. this year, but when one takes away transferred moneys from the other purses of Government—from the careers service, which has been transferred, and the care in the community cash, which has been transferred to local authorities from the Department of Social Security—that level is down to 0.97 per cent., on the Government's own estimates. That is an increase of less than 1 per cent. in the aggregate external finance, the totality of Government support to local authorities.

That is the estimate before one takes into account inflation. If one takes away the Government's own estimate for inflation, which is published each year in the Red Book, as it was in the unified Budget, Scottish local councils budgets will be down this year by 2.91 per cent. That is almost 3 per cent. down not just on their current budgets but on those for last year. That means that, based on the figures for last year and not even on those on which the budgets that they reasonably proposed for the following year were based, a total of £148.8 million will be taken out of local authority budgets. In other words, almost £150 million will be taken out of local government budgets which are already stretched to breaking point. The consequence will be simple, brutal and unavoidable.

Mr. Kynoch *rose—*

Mr. Robertson: I should like to make more progress, as Ministers would say, before I give way again.

The consequences of that reduction will be job losses, service reductions and an increase in council tax. All that is due to a direct, dictated, ordered, forced and even desired consequence of the Government's direction from the centre. At least £1.20, on average, will be added to council tax bills.

That will be on top of an extra £10 a week which, from April, every family will have to pay for the broken promises on national taxation for which the Government are responsible, and on top of the cost of VAT on fuel, which will come into effect on 1 April. More taxes will be set on more taxes. All of them are the price to be paid by taxpayers as a penalty for the incompetence and the deceit of the Conservative party, which told the people two years ago at the election that it would reduce taxes year on year.

The simple message behind those complicated figures is, "The Tories pick your pockets and then waste the money that they have taken". I wondered whether I could draw an analogy with Robin Hood, who stole from the rich to give to the poor, or with the sheriff of Nottingham, who stole from the poor to give to the rich. But the Government are acting like "East End Hood", who steals money from everybody and then loses it. That is the reality of the additional taxes which the Government are now imposing. They are picking the pockets of the Scottish people with extra taxes all the time. In return, we get less: fewer services and jobs, and longer dole queues.

The bulk of the 300,000 people employed in local government in Scotland face a year in which the Government estimate that inflation will run at 3 per cent. The Chancellor has published that estimate in the Red Book. Where is the justice in saying that people face 3 per cent. inflation plus all the tax increases that will be heaped on them, but no increase in pay? It is yet another gift from this high-promising Government.

The Government say that all that is fiction and exaggeration. They say that they have provided local councils with a pot of gold and that tax increases, service cuts and job losses are down to individual local council decisions. I say that that is hogwash.

There are few Tory local authorities, but Stirling and Kyle and Carrick district councils are flagship Tory authorities which perform the role of shop windows for the Tory councils of tomorrow. Two weeks ago, Stirling district council fixed its council tax level, reducing it by between £34 and £100. In its headline making that announcement, the local newspaper, the *Stirling Observer*, made it clear what the price was. It said:

> "Jobs are lost to pay for tax cuts".

The loss of at least 18 jobs and huge increases in charges will be the price paid by those in Stirling district who will enjoy a reduction in council tax.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) does not participate in many Scottish debates. He does not enjoy a walk down memory lane and, as a begetter of the poll tax, there are few highways and byways in Scottish debates which he would like to visit. But the same edition of the *Stirling Observer* quoted him as saying:

> "The councillors and officials of Stirling district must be the toast of my constituents tonight".

Some celebration for the 18 people who were to lose their jobs as a consequence of that decision, those who would pay up to 200 per cent. more to let a hall in Stirling district, or those who would have to pay more to bury their dead in the area because of the rise in burial charges.

The *Stirling Observer* has not taken a partisan view. Indeed, the hon. Member for Stirling has received much favourable publicity from it over the years. But in its editorial opinion that week, Mr. Alan Rennie said:

> "Perhaps the district council should line up the 18 people whose jobs are to be axed and explain to us and them why they are surplus to requirements. Then line up the people who are expected to assume many of their functions overnight.
>
> I'm fed up with those who treat ordinary people as pawns in a political game or as mere figures in an accountancy exercise. There may be champagne corks popping in Conservative party HQ but elsewhere this budget is like a glass of flat beer."

Interestingly, the story did not end there. The following week, the saga continued in the editorial opinion. Mr. Rennie told his readers:

> "One of the first calls to my office on Wednesday morning came from MP Michael Forsyth, who felt that I had been unclear in my criticism."

How touchy of the Minister of State, Department of Employment. Anyway, Mr. Rennie analysed the comments and other points put to him and concluded:

> "So I am going to stick to my guns. It's not the Observer that is playing politics. That charge lies at the door of the ruling Conservative group on Stirling District Council. And it is my readers who will suffer the consequences. Just wait and see."

Mr. Rennie adequately makes the point about a council that has contracted out its legal services and handed them over to Professor Ross Harper in Glasgow, with a loss of jobs in the district and a legal challenge for unfair dismissal; contracted out its grass-cutting service with disastrous consequences; and spent £60,000 on designing a new logo and corporate identity for the district council. I heard it described as:

> "a Lego man for a loco council".

The council has made itself a national laughing stock as a consequence.

Given that grimy, unattractive shop window for Tory councils, it is small wonder that there are so few Tory councils around to talk about. But there is one more—the district council based on Ayr: Kyle and Carrick. It is still strong and is run on the Stirling model of champagne-popping, job-slashing, charge-increasing and standard-dropping councils. But Kyle and Carrick council is slightly more sinister at the edge because it now flouts the law as it seeks to break agreements that were freely entered into and contracts that were legally adopted. It seeks to dump existing contracts and the people who were party to them, and to sack loyal local workers and bring in contractors from Spain to handle the cleansing contract for the area. Loyal, decent, hard-working human beings will be dumped by those Tory fanatics—the loony right of Scottish politics—as they try to squeeze through some European loophole and illegally break signed contracts.

That example, not the statistics of the aggregate external finance, is the true face of the Tory party in dealing with local government.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman advise the House how Kyle and Carrick district council has flouted any law, contractual or other? Is he aware that an announcement has only just been placed in the *Journal of the European Communities* and that no contracts have been placed? Certainly, no contract has been placed with a Spanish company, yet the hon. Gentleman seems to have the inside story. Can he put up the evidence? If not, he should come off that track.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman has been involved in all those shenanigans and probably knows more than anyone else. Instead of posing questions, he would be well advised to provide answers. The House and the electors of Kyle and Carrick need to know whether those contracts, which were freely entered into, will be broken.

Mr. Foulkes: Is my hon. Friend aware that Kyle and Carrick district council announced that it would cancel a contract that had one to two years to run with the in-house tenderer for cleansing and refuse? Once that was announced, it was revealed that, prior to the announcement, five separate meetings had taken place between Provost Gibson Macdonald and its officials and the Spanish company, FOCSA. Does that not smell of a rat and some kind of collusion or corruption?

Mr. Robertson: The words "rat" and "smell" certainly come to mind. There is little doubt that something funny is going on in Kyle and Carrick district council. There is certainly an intention to break a contract freely entered into with local workers. No doubt the law courts will ultimately adjudicate on whether the law has been broken or whether the council has found a loophole that will allow it to break the law. What is clear, however, is that there has been a breach of faith with local people who are adequately providing a service but are going to be mercilessly dumped because of blind ideology.

Mr. Gallie: It is courteous of the hon. Gentleman to allow me to intervene again. He has suggested that something funny is going on in Kyle and Carrick district council. I read a newspaper article at the weekend which, under the headline "Spend, Spend, Spend", said that the council tax was being frozen. There is certainly something going on—it is very good news for the people of Kyle and Carrick.

Mr. Robertson: It is difficult to know what to make of that. If the hon. Gentleman is adopting "Spend, Spend, Spend" as his slogan—

Mr. Gallie: It is not my slogan.

Mr. Robertson: All I can tell the hon. Gentleman is what we know about the council's attitude to agreements and contracts, and to its local people, who will draw their own conclusions. There is little doubt that the Conservative party is setting out its stall in the area, and it is a wholly unattractive one.

The Tory principles—higher taxes, broken promises, fewer jobs and bargain basement services—adopted by the Stalinists of the Scottish Conservative party—

Mr. Stewart: Ha, ha!

Mr. Robertson: The Tory Stalinists are not going to stop there. Those who dissent from the one nation, one party idea get the chop. The hon. Member for Eastwood may roar with laughter, but I should like to draw his attention once again to the case of Colonel Frank Saunders. That should wipe the smile off even his face.

Mr. Stewart: I have heard the story before. I have great respect for Colonel Saunders, whom I have known for a long time. The hon. Gentleman talks of the Stalinist tendency. Who does he have in mind as Stalin?

Mr. Robertson: That is an open question—which could be answered by anyone who cares to fill in a postcard and send it to St. Andrew's house. [HON. MEMBERS: "The Minister is Stalin."] Well, it is certainly not the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). I cannot imagine him leading that tendency, although he might be playing the part of a quiet Beria. If so, he has not yet disclosed the fact.

As we all know, Colonel Frank Saunders has nothing to do with chickens of either the fried or the cowardly variety. He serves as leader of the Tories on Central regional council. He is therefore a man of no small distinction. He lives in Stirling district and is a constituent of the hon. Member for Stirling. He has been an active Tory for more than 52 years, and a councillor in Stirling for more than 30 years. Yet the colonel said, when the tap on the shoulder came in the night, in words evocative of eastern Europe:

> "After being told of the decision I asked if I was being dismissed because I had failed as a councillor. But I was told that

[Mr. Robertson]

> it was because I didn't support the local authority reform proposal."

So he bit the dust, because he did not agree with the new architecture.

I took a self-denying ordinance to the effect that I would not quote Councillor Brian Meek again. In a recent article he said that he wanted to be paid lineage if he was to continue to be quoted endlessly in the House. I fear that I must quote him again, however. Councillor Meek of Edinburgh district council had this to say about Colonel Saunders:

> "He was deselected. Because, it seems, Frank Saunders disagrees with the Government's plan to reform local councils, particularly as they affect Central region, he has been booted out. I support the move to one-tier authorities. Nevertheless I am concerned that the price of speaking one's mind"—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. According to my information, we are discussing financial matters tonight, not the reform of local government.

Mr. Robertson: Of course you are right, Madam Deputy Speaker. Colonel Saunders would agree with you: he agrees with most of what the Conservative party is doing. He would probably agree with the orders that we are debating. We are talking about the financial base for local government in Scotland—a huge figure which the Minister outlined in his speech. It is extremely pertinent to this debate to know the policies of the councillors who will spend the money that Parliament, presumably, will vote through at the end of this debate. I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Colonel Saunders' fate is of immediate relevance to these orders.

Councillor Brian Meek went on to say—

Mr. Stewart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: First, it is worth quoting Councillor Meek, a close friend and buddy of the Minister. *[Interruption.]* I use the word "buddy" in its broadest possible sense. He said:

> "Are we not big enough, not magnanimous enough to recognise the sincerity and integrity of Frank Saunders, an active member for 52 years? Are we supposed to be speaking puppets?"

Perhaps the Minister would like to answer that question.

Mr. Stewart: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is just about to go on to the case of the four Labour councillors who have been suspended from the party in Monklands.

Mr. Robertson: They have not been deselected as candidates. The party is entitled to its own disciplinary procedures, but we are talking about a man with 52 years' service to the Tory party, 30 of them as a councillor. He is a man of enormous distinction in Scottish local government and he has been deselected. I am quoting here the views of another Conservative, not my own views.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now well off the point. He has made his point, and we must move on.

Mr. Robertson: I bow to your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should add that Colonel Saunders, from whom I am about to depart, is not alone in his disenchantment with this butchery.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I trust that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to trespass against what Madam Deputy Speaker has just said.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Far from it. The hon. Gentleman has championed the cause of deselected councillors. Will he come to my constituency and champion the cause of Labour councillor David Falconer, who has just been deselected for not toeing the party policy line?

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman will have to tell us what party policy was involved—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not wish to know. Please continue.

Mr. Robertson: I think that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have saved the hon. Gentleman from the embarrassment of the irrelevance of his comparison. I notice that even he did not try to defend the decision to boot out Colonel Saunders.

The disenchantment with the butchery of Scottish local government all across Scotland is not confined to the leader of the Tory group on Central regional council. Many people are now realising that this gerrymandered upheaval, done without the consensus of, or demand by, the people, without a review and on a crazy and impractical timetable, will cost them a packet. The new gerrymander tax is going to be substantial—yet another tax on the people of Scotland for Tory convenience. We do not have to take my word for that; it might be thought slightly partisan, despite the fact that it is accurate and dispassionate. Let us look at the report in yesterday's *Scotland on Sunday* about the Association of Scottish Conservative Councillors. Kenny Farquharson's article begins:

> "Scotland's Tory councillors yesterday sent a warning to Scottish Secretary Ian Lang that he has badly underestimated the price to be paid for the reorganisation of local government."

It is not the Labour party, or even the suspect professionals of COSLA, who are telling the Government that they have underestimated the costs, but Tory councillors themselves. That is extremely relevant and pertinent. The Secretary of State for Scotland is quoted as saying:

> "The Labour leadership has lost the argument on the costs of reform".

He went on to describe our claims as "extraordinary and wild". The Secretary of State was told by the Tory councillors—

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We seem now to be discussing the cost of the reform of local government in Scotland rather than the revenue support grant. Could you give me guidance on that?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am making the presumption that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is connecting the two.

Mr. Robertson: Absolutely. If the hon. Member for Ayr had bothered to listen to the speech of the Minister, he would realise that there is specific inclusion in the orders for the transition costs to move into the new local authority structure. What I am saying is not only relevant but highly inconvenient for the hon. Gentleman if he chooses to believe the sort of nonsense that is peddled by his Front Bench.

It is interesting that the councillors are being quite specific. They said in *Scotland on Sunday*:

> "Yesterday's meeting of Tory councillors said Lang was deceiving himself over the true cost."

The article then quotes Jim Evans, the chairman of Berwickshire district council and the association's new chairman, as saying:

> "We are a little bit more cynical than the Government about these things."

The Government's centrepiece—their plan for reorganising local government based on saving public money —was torn into tatters by a Conservative councillor speaking at the weekend, but speaking the truth. All he is telling Ministers is what everybody else in Scotland knows and what we have been telling the Minister for weeks since the White Paper was published; it will cost more than the Government says, and substantially more at that.

I can remember the words of Mr. Arthur Bell—another bosom buddy of the Minister—

Mr. Stewart: A party colleague.

Mr. Robertson: A party colleague of the Minister. He is a senior Conservative and has carried the blue flag of the Conservative party in Lanarkshire—no mean feat—for many years. Last November, addressing a seminar at Strathclyde university's business school and speaking in relation to the claims made by Ministers on savings at that time, which they put in the range of £120 million to £196 million, Mr. Bell said:

> "If anyone came to me with a gap as wide as this I would be amazed. I would not wish to make major changes in my business without being more accurate."

Mr. Bell and the Association of Scottish Conservative Councillors are all saying it, and are saying it loud and clear.

I look around me for Conservatives who are willing to speak the inconvenient truth, who are willing to run the same risks as Colonel Frank Saunders and spell out to the country precisely the consequences of what the Government are doing. I have yet another example. I think that it would be exhibit C in this case. It is an article by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), published in *The Guardian*—of all newspapers—on Saturday, and entitled

> "Colonel Blimp and the rural revolt".

I do not know who that could be describing, but the article is about local government reorganisation south of the border, which is different from that north of the border, because the south was at least given a review and people there are arguing publicly about it. The timetable has gone completely haywire and very little is happening as a consequence. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, who, after all, was a Cabinet Minister—Chief Secretary to the Treasury and, later, Leader of the House —before departing office, said:

> "In the first instance there is no popular demand for such changes, and much cynicism about the supposed benefits and certain increase in costs."

There we have it, authoritatively from the words of the Tory's themselves, the real insiders, a former Chief Secretary to the Treasury; a prominent Lanarkshire Conservative supporter; and from the Association of Scottish Conservative Councillors. All said that the Government have got it wrong and that the savings that they are projecting are implausible, contrived, hopelessly optimistic and, indeed, plain fantasy. So, too, are the figures that are supposedly included in the orders for the transition costs of reorganisation. This year, £5 million is allowed, with £25 million next year and a final £15 million in 1996-97.

Those figures are unrealistic and wholly inadequate for what is being asked of councils today. After a month in Committee—I know that we are not allowed to debate in the Chamber what is happening in Committee—we still do not know what the boundaries will be for the new councils that the Government intend to set up, because a deliberate Government decision has been taken to leave as many of those issues as possible wide open for the future. We are only 13 months away from the first elections to these authorities, yet nobody in Scotland definitely knows what all the boundaries will be or even how many councils will actually—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a boundary in here of what is relevant, and the hon. Gentleman is trespassing over it.

Mr. Robertson: I fear that the figures for the transition costs of local government reorganisation are pretty fundamental to the orders, because if they are as seriously underestimated as we believe that they are—as all the documentary evidence shows that they are—the settlement that has been made to Scottish local authorities this year will seriously embarrass them, cause a loss of jobs, increase council tax levels and mean a reduction in services.

It is extremely important that we try to establish here and now precisely what the Government are playing at and how they can pretend to have finalised the details of local government reorganisation to the extent that councils are told that they must live within £5 million this year for transition costs in a reorganisation that is now hopelessly ambitious—although ambitious is the wrong word to use —in its timetable and construction. There is only one way in which the Government can be right: if they are to start dismissing large numbers of people in local authorities. The Secretary of State was quoted as saying at the weekend, again in *Scotland on Sunday*:

> "Of course, there will be transitional costs. But by far the larger part of those costs will result from the rationalisation of staff. So the greater the short term transitional costs, the greater the long-term savings from single-tier councils."

What he is saying is that the more employees that councils sack, the greater will be the longer-term benefits. That is the only way in which the circle can be squared. But to do so, he will have deliberately to challenge the assurance that was given by the Prime Minister last October to Councillor Charles Gray, when he said:

> "We do not anticipate that local government reform will result in widespread job losses and redundancies."

The Government now have a serious obligation to people in Scotland to explain how these fantastic savings will be made in the existing structure without the kind of job losses that the Secretary of State appeared to be signalling at a conference at the weekend. The COSLA figures that were produced quite clearly demonstrate—

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No, I wish to end my speech so that other hon. Members may contribute. It would be unfair if I went on for too much longer.

[Mr. Robertson]

The COSLA study on costs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, is compiled by the same experts, who, it would appear, are the only ones apart from the Minister's advisers who understand the detail of what he was talking about this evening. Those people, who received his plaudits and congratulations, are the same people who have put together this authoritative study on the cost of local government reorganisation. It cannot be applauded on the one hand and dismissed whole-heartedly on the other. Their estimates are based on experience. They are based on hard-headed experience of what has happened in previous reorganisations. Their analysis is based on reality, not on what is convenient for the present Government. People will listen to them before they will listen to any Minister saying anything. Even the mid-point of their analysis reveals half a billion pounds of transition costs, and precious little in the way of long-term savings.

This whole exercise in butchering local government means a bad bargain for the Scottish taxpayer, which, moreover, is completely unnecessary—all for a local government structure that no one believes will last. It has neither the durability nor the stability to survive the test of time.

Mr. Dalyell: Did my hon. Friend observe that, when he made assertions that many of us consider to be correct, the Minister just shook his head? Will my hon. Friend invite the Minister to explain the methodology of the Scottish Office, and why he thinks that my hon. Friend is wrong about this important matter?

Mr. Robertson: The Minister's silence is due to the irrefutability of the arguments that have been advanced. If Ministers were expected actually to tell the truth about the methodology involved in transition costs—thinking of a figure and halving it—and in savings—thinking of an even more implausible figure and doubling it—I do not think that their credibility would be very great. I rest my case, as I know that my hon. Friend does, on the words of the new chairman of the Association of Scottish Conservative Councillors: he said that even he, one of the faithful, felt cynical about what the Government were doing.

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: I am bringing my remarks to a conclusion. The hon. Gentleman should wait his turn.

The orders are hopelessly inadequate for Scottish local councils. They will lead to cuts in services, the destruction of jobs, the lowering of standards and increases in council tax bills across the country. At the end of the debate, what Councillor Brian Meek so prosaically called the "speaking puppets" may well deliver a majority: that is a reasonable assumption and forecast—much more accurate than some of the Government's forecasts. I suggest, however, that in the Scottish regional elections on 5 May, when the people have a chance to make their voices heard in ballot boxes across the country, the Government will receive a profoundly different message.

7.12 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): We have just heard the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) allegedly addressing the order. In truth, he did everything but that. First, he tried to deal with the situation on the basis of personalities in Scottish politics. That was all right, as long as he was dealing with personalities who, in his eyes, wore Conservative colours; but, as soon as he began to discuss personalities who sailed under the Labour flag, he did not want to know anything about it.

For instance, the hon. Gentleman did not believe that people could be expelled, or simply taken off the list of candidates, because they did not conform to policy. He says that that has happened to one Conservative candidate. As he and I know—as everyone in political life knows—it is possible to fall foul of the establishment from time to time; hon. Members sitting behind him have experienced that problem, and it has been experienced by at least one Conservative Member, whom I know very well. There is nothing new about that.

Why did the hon. Gentleman use that point in evidence this evening, of all evenings? We are discussing a revenue support grant figure that is far in excess of inflation, but the hon. Gentleman failed to mention that; all he did was talk about people and personalities. Rather than dealing with the issue before the House, he spent his time trying to become the darling of the Scottish media by naming names, among other things. It is called tactical and strategic thinking.

The man is an amateur. We very much miss the real contribution made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who would have done tonight what he has always done—analyse the content of the order, and explain why he did not agree with it. His speeches down the years have always been worth listening to, because we could always be sure that he had done his homework thoroughly, and he would always unearth aspects that required consideration. That was not the case tonight; the hon. Member for Hamilton has done a sad disservice to both his party and the people of Scotland.

It is about time we began to think about this impostor—for that is what the hon. Gentleman is. He is no longer wearing the mantle of the Labour party, and carrying on its crusade; he is now conducting a personal campaign that he hopes will give him publicity and media attention. He hopes that we will call him the great saviour of the Labour party in Scotland.

I have news for him: I think that exactly the opposite will happen. I think that both those sitting behind him and the Scottish media will realise that there is nothing there. The hon. Gentleman has not done his homework on the revenue support grant order; if he had, he would recognise—as I have—the massive increase for three authorities in my constituency—Perth and Kinross, Angus district and Tayside region.

I accept that authorities are never given enough money, but we have a very low real inflation rate at present. Moreover, Tayside region has received a substantial increase, from £171,379,938 in 1990-91 to £245,157,226 in 1992-93.

Mr. Kynoch: Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) would not let me intervene earlier; I suspect that he would not have liked my intervention, because it was not very convenient. I believe that 60 per cent. of local government expenditure is on labour. If the Government's guidelines on self-financing wage increases are adhered to, significantly more will be available in the revenue support grant than the hon. Gentleman has suggested.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that telling intervention.

I am always interested and amused by Labour's claim to be the party that will somehow give the people of Scotland better value for money. Labour does not address the key issue: can services be provided more cost-effectively so that people receive a better service having paid less?

As has been clearly demonstrated in many other contexts—especially as a result of privatisation—when attitudes are changed, it is possible to achieve substantial reductions in manpower, for example. I hope that the objective of all employers is to secure the best possible value for customers—in this instance, for electors and council tax payers.

I do not apologise for hoping that employers will do that, and will achieve better results. Unquestionably, when there is a move from labour-intensive to more capital-intensive activities, we expect a reduction in revenue costs. That is the real objective of heavy investment in new, modern capital equipment, which is taking place throughout the western world so that it can be competitive. I have never understood why people should think that local government is any different in that regard.

As for the benefits received by Angus district and by Perth and Kinross, the 1990-91 figure for Angus was £3,995,821; it has risen to £8,282,606. The figure for Perth and Kinross has risen from £5,301,063 to £10,459,773. Of course I acknowledge that that contains an element of inflation, along with additional duties and responsibilities.

Having taken all that into account, I believe that central taxation, which is paid for anyway by the taxpayer, contributes in real terms more than the rate of inflation towards the running of the three authorities in which I am interested. Consequently, I have no problem in supporting the order, and I hope that the Labour Members who will speak will address it.

7.19 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate, although fellow members of the Committee that is considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill might think that it is taking masochism a little too far. We sit all day until late at night on Tuesday and Thursday, and I see some familiar faces in the Chamber today, including that of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). We are taking masochism to a new form of supermasochism. Those of us who have been involved in local government, who are concerned about it and committed to it, and are anxious to ensure that services continue, believe that it is important to participate in today's important debate.

I want to advance a serious and, I hope, non-partisan argument before I make some of my more partisan comments. I am sure that the Minister, having received representations from local government, will appreciate that there is a feeling that dealing with local government expenditure on a year-to-year basis does not allow for proper planning. I know that it may be understood that the sum that a local authority receives for the following year will be similar to that of the previous year, plus allowances for inflation. There is a growing feeling, which I hope has got through to the Minister and the Department of the Environment, that a rolling programme for capital and revenue expenditure would be sensible. A rolling programme exists, to some extent, for capital expenditure. It would be helpful and useful if such a programme were considered for revenue expenditure, although I understand that that would always be provisional and subject to all sorts of qualifications. I hope that the Minister will consider that and ensure that there is more long-term planning in local government. That was my non-partisan argument, to which I hope that the Minister will respond.

Some services will be under tremendous pressure as a result of the revenue support grant settlement and the other related order. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) here today. He knows that I used to be the chairman of the Lothian regional education committee. He was one of our excellent teachers before he came to Parliament to waste his time.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—like the rest of us.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): My hon. Friend has inadvertently given the impression that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) is wasting his time here. That is not the case. He is doing an excellent job and his constituents should be aware of that.

Mr. Foulkes: I am sorry—I chose my words incorrectly. I am doubly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). All three of us are experiencing the frustrations of Opposition. My hon. Friend the Member for Leith will find it much more satisfactory after we have won the next general election and we are in power and pressing forward with new developments. I know that he experiences the frustration that I feel.

It worries me that our expectations of the education system and its provisions, not only in Lothian but across Scotland, have been depressed in the past 15 years by the Government. When I was chairman of the education committee, we were expanding education, reducing the staff-pupil ratio and developing community schools. We had just developed Wester Hailes school, the Wester Hailes education centre and Deans community school. We were talking about increasing resources and keeping schools across the region open for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We wanted the improvements to be spread throughout the region and community and we had a great vision for education.

Mr. Gallie: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the late 1970s. Was not the rate support grant considerably cut in 1978 and 1979 by the then Government?

Mr. Foulkes: I can recall that period very well: we were in the process of expanding community schools in Lothian region. The resources were made available and, compared with today, those were rosy days. I have noticed that my former right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East, now Lord Healey, is appearing on posters. We think back on his days as Chancellor as the golden days. What is happening today, particularly in education, causes great concern.

I do not know whether it is happening in other constituencies, but school buildings in my constituency are being maintained and painted less and less frequently. Their maintenance has been substantially reduced—that is poor long-term planning. The planning is being done on a short-term basis, which creates tremendous problems for school buildings. Regional councils are under pressure to

[Mr. Foulkes]

close schools. That pressure comes from the Minister and the Scottish Office Education Department, the name of which has been changed for reasons that I do not understand—I used to call it the Scottish Education Department. I live and work in Strathclyde region. The pressure is on that local authority to close schools, to save money and to cut its revenue.

Let me take a random example from the south side of Ayr. When three or four primary schools in the region were half empty and, under pressure from central Government, Strathclyde regional authority attempted to rationalise its procedures and proposed to close Castlehill primary school, everyone, including the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), was up in arms. When that happened I also complained that the concerns of the parents should be met. Strathclyde region is being put under pressure by the Government to make savings—that subject relates to today's debate. We need to realise the consequences. Sometimes I feel that, when we consider the orders, the documents of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the figures, we do not understand what they mean on the ground. They mean fewer and less well-maintained schools. Pressure is being put on half empty schools to close.

I want to deal with the subject of the staff levels, which will cause my hon. Friend the Member for Leith to think back. The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), in a well-timed intervention, said that he welcomed the concept of self-financing wage increases. What does that mean? It means that if, for example, teachers claim for and receive a wage increase above the level of inflation, which they richly deserve—I hope that they receive a sensible and reasonable increase—the regional council will have to find the money elsewhere. Inevitably, that means either saving money on school buildings and maintenance, which means cuts and closing more schools, or sacking and cutting the number of teachers. That will result in an increase in the staff-pupil ratio or a reduction in the number of specialist teachers. The Government cannot have it both ways. If we have self-financing wage increases, it will mean that people will be sacked or that buildings will not be properly maintained.

Mr. Kynoch: Has the hon. Gentleman heard of increasing efficiencies in other sectors where there may be scope for savings? Cuts need not be made in productive sectors.

Mr. Foulkes: We considered that matter. I spent some time pressing the staff of Lothian regional council to find efficiencies. If the hon. Gentleman understands the education budget, he will know that more than half of it goes on teacher salaries. A substantial amount goes on other important staff such as janitors, who are responsible for the security of the buildings—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want to do away with them—school cleaners, and a range of jobs. All efficiency savings that could have been made have been made.

In my experience in the education service, no further savings can be made without cutting back the direct provision of services.

Mr. Bill Walker: With the hon. Gentleman's extensive knowledge—it certainly occurred during his period when he was in charge of those matters at Lothian region—he will know that one way to make changes and savings is to close schools in which the numbers of pupils fall below economic levels. The other way, which is often the result of that, is not to replace teachers who retire or who give up for whatever reason, and often that can be linked to the changes in school numbers and so on. The hon. Gentleman must know that there are always ways to do such things.

Mr. Foulkes: Let us take the two examples that hon. Gentleman mentions, because he is helpfully participating in the debate. Let us take closing schools. Of course that is one way to do it, but those who are most vociferous about proposals to close schools are Conservative Members of Parliament. No one could have shouted louder than the hon. Member for Ayr about the closure of Castlehill school, yet it happened as the direct result of the policies of the Conservative Government. That is the hypocrisy that we see——

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Two-faced.

Mr. Foulkes: I am not sure whether I am allowed to say that. That is the two-faced attitude that we see from Conservative Members.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: I am already dealing with one intervention.

Let us take the second point, about retirement. If one has a single-stream primary school with seven classes of about 30 pupils and one teacher retires at the age of 60, one has to replace that teacher. One cannot have composite classes all the way up of 35 or 36 pupils. In secondary schools, if one gets rid of specialist teachers one reduces the quality of education. There is a limit, therefore, and that limit on savings has not just been reached, but passed.

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman must realise that my main objection to the way in which Castlehill school was closed was that it was not half-empty—it had about 70 per cent. occupancy of pupils. Strathclyde region took an overnight decision. One moment it promised new build, the next minute it came up with a closure. That is not sound management. On another point, the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I said in Committee that I find it difficult to deal with the hon. Gentleman because he makes so many misstatements. He says things that just are not true and it is very difficult to deal with people who do that. Strathclyde went through a long consultative process because there are a number of——

Mr. Gallie: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I certainly did not make a statement that was not true, in spite of the words of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair because the Chair is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of speeches or remarks made.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. McAllion: Perhaps it is just as well.

Mr. Foulkes: It is just as well, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) rightly said.

A number of schools were half-empty. Forehill was half-empty, Castlehill was substantially empty and

Kincadeston was substantially empty. Kincadeston is a modern school, built only a few years ago. It was suggested that Castlehill, which has old buildings, should be closed down because its facilities are totally inadequate. That was proposed and there was full consultation. I opposed the closure, but there was full consultation. I opposed it because I am in favour of spending more money on education and therefore there was not anything contradictory in opposing it, but the hon. Member for Ayr, who also opposed it, wants to cut the money for education but at the same time to keep all those schools open. As the Member for Tayside, North rightly said, one cannot have it both ways.

Mr. McMaster: The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) gave us a couple of what my hon. Friend described as "useful examples" of ways in which savings could be made—closing down schools and not replacing teachers who had retired. Is not it the case that if those self-same arguments that there is always room for efficiency and closure were applied to the national health service, he might find that one of the results is the closure of Meigle hospital?

Mr. Foulkes: That is absolutely right. I am grateful to my hon. Friend because his logic is impeccable.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Foulkes: I give way to the hon. Member for Tayside, North for the last time.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman examined carefully my record on school closures in north Tayside, he would find that I have supported schools that had to be closed. Equally, I have not supported the closure of hospitals that should not be closed. Those are entirely different things. My record shows that, equally, I have supported hospitals that had to be closed. I have supported closures. The hon. Gentleman should do his homework more carefully.

Mr. Foulkes: There seems to be a dispute there but, looking at it completely impartially, the logic seems to be on the side of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster).

I shall now move off the subject of education and deal with two other sectors in which the settlement about which we are speaking today is actually reduced. The Minister said that there will be no quarrel about the settlement. I have a quarrel about two sectors, the first of which is roads and transportation, funding for which decreases by 5·8 per cent.

Mr. Stewart: What I said was that I did not think that there would be any quarrel about the second order. I of course accept that hon. Members can take different views on the overall settlement.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful.

Roads and transport decrease by 5·8 per cent. The Minister must know that there is a huge pressure on from Strathclyde region, and from Ayrshire especially, with regard—the hon. Member for Ayr actually wants it as well —to the building of the M77, the Ayr road link between the top of the A77 at the moment and the M77, the spur that is missing. Most of that is capital expenditure and must be taken into the capital account, but some of it is revenue expenditure that needs to be provided to get design work done in Strathclyde region, or by outside contractors if the Government press it that way. My fear is that if funding for the roads department of Strathclyde is cut substantially, the much-needed design work on vital projects such as the Ayr link road, the Girvan bypass and the new Cumnock bypass will be delayed and the projects will be delayed.

When we look at the figures we need, time and time again, to translate them into reality on the ground. That is what Conservative Members do not do. They go along with the Government. They vote blindly, like sheep, with the Government, day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, mouth out, year in, year out, without realising the consequences of what they are doing. Then they go to their constituencies and say, "Of course we want those roads to be built, of course we want those schools to stay open" when they are the very people who voted for settlements that inevitably mean that that will not happen.

My next subject is domestic sewage. That does not sound like the most exciting subject to talk about at any time, but it is vital, as you know and as we all know, Madam Deputy Speaker. The domestic sewage settlement is decreasing by 6 per cent. Let us, once again, think of the consequences of our action. Every year, the European Community tells us that many beaches are no longer usable, do not satisfy the standards, are filthy and polluted. In Ayrshire we were told that beaches at Maidens, Turnberry, Girvan in my constituency, Troon, Ayr and Prestwick do not satisfy the required standards. We all jump up and down and say that it is disgraceful—and it is absolutely disgraceful. In some cases, raw sewage is being pumped out into the sea and in others housing and other much-needed developments cannot take place because there are not adequate sewerage facilities.

Yet again, all the Conservative Members who complain——

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman has intervened far too often. He can try to make his own speech later.

All the Conservative Members who complain about those dirty, polluted beaches come to the House and are unwilling to vote the money and agree the settlement that is necessary to do something about those beaches. Again, their two-faced attitude becomes apparent.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has made representations about the additional burdens imposed by central Government. Central Government always say that local government is required to do this or that because a new Act has been passed. Central Government willed the ends but would not will the means, and that is especially true now with care in the community.

Care in the community has resulted in a substantial extra burden being placed on local authorities, which are the lead bodies in this respect. A certain amount of money has been transferred but nowhere near enough. I shall not give any details but I shall mention a case that was drawn to my attention at the weekend. Strathclyde region was unable to provide the money necessary for a severely disabled person in my constituency. As a result, the extra money that would have come from the independent living fund, a subject raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) during Prime Minister's Question Time only week, is not available because Strathclyde region does not have the resources to trigger the money from the ILF. It means that millions of pounds that could be coming from the ILF will not be available

[Mr. Foulkes]

because of a lack of resources. Care in the community is just one sphere where an additional burden has been imposed by central Government because the necessary money is not being made available.

I have dealt with regional council matters but now wish to mention two district councils in my area. I know that the Minister believes that Cumnock and Doon Valley district council has done an excellent job with industrial development, a sphere in which few local authorities become greatly involved. However, unemployment in the Cumnock and Sanquhar travel-to-work area is now the highest in mainland Britain—it stands at 19·1 per cent. —so Cumnock and Doon Valley district council has made it its business to become involved in industrial development. I am concerned that no special attention is being given to Cumnock and Doon Valley's efforts.

The Minister visited Cumnock and Doon Valley and, I concede, made some sympathetic noises but, when it comes to the settlement at the end of the year, those sympathetic noises are not translated into money to enable the local authority to do all that it wishes. The authority has a substantial industrial development programme, which it wishes to continue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred to Kyle and Carrick district council. He mentioned what one of our colleagues in Committee called the competition for the gold medal in the loony olympics between Stirling and Kyle and Carrick to see which authority could come up with the craziest right-wing idea. I have heard a bit about what is happening in Stirling, but I believe that Kyle and Carrick is in the lead.

I shall not spell out in great detail the case to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton referred but it has created tremendous concern locally, and not only among Labour Members and supporters or people who might be natural Labour sympathisers. There is deep concern throughout the community, including the business community, about the fact that a legal contract for cleansing and refuse disposal into which Kyle and Carrick entered, and which still has between one and two years to run—it was an in-house tender—is about to be torn up by the district council.

The authority has advertised in European journals and elsewhere but we then found that there have been secret meetings with representatives of a Spanish cleansing company. That is sinister. Why did the meetings take place? Why was Provost Gibson Macdonald privately meeting representatives of FOCSA if not to start talking about tearing up the in-house contract and putting the job out to tender? I see no other reason why the provost and, on at least one occasion, the chief executive, should meet a Spanish-based company unless it was to put pressure on the district council, or come to an agreement with it, to tear up the contract. There is to be a demonstration in Ayr on 19 March and I shall certainly be there, supporting the unions in their legitimate legal challenge to Kyle and Carrick.

The hon. Member for Ayr referred to the headline "Spend, Spend, Spend", which appeared in one of the local newspapers. It certainly describes what Kyle and Carrick Tories have decided to do. There are legitimate reasons for some of the authority's expenditure but, at a time when people are being asked to accept reductions—or, at the very best, a standstill—in their wages, would not it have been far better for Kyle and Carrick district council to do what the Labour group suggested and reduce the council tax and the burden on ordinary council tax payers rather than proceeding with some of its more extravagant proposals? I hope that the Minister will examine the issue seriously because I do not believe that he would wish Kyle and Carrick to go ahead with some of its more outrageous proposals if the alternative is a reduction in council tax. After all, he has been recommending that other local authorities consider every possible way of reducing the council tax, so why would not he do the same to Kyle and Carrick?

I am deeply worried about the two orders. They would cause a further reduction in services, a further deterioration in local government building stock, more job losses and a deterioration in the services that are so important to many people. I hope that my hon. Friends will vote against them for those reasons.

7.46 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): My contribution will be brief. Listening to Labour Members, one would imagine that the Government were cutting their support to local government rather than providing a significant increase.

We must remember that inflation is very low. As I said in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), 60 per cent. of local government expenditure goes on employees' wages; so if we could hold wage costs level by whatever means—through efficiency and improvements or by making savings elsewhere—the whole revenue support grant contribution could be spread over 40 per cent. of the expenditure. If we take the current rate of inflation to be the full 2·5 per cent., we would need an increase of only 1 per cent. to cover the total. In other words, there has been a significant increase in the contribution to local government expenditure.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North that in Kincardine and Deeside——

Mr. George Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Kynoch: I shall give way in a minute; the hon. Gentleman kept me waiting.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North that there had been an increase of almost 6 per cent. in the revenue support grant settlement for Kincardine and Deeside. The same is true for Grampian region, which has also received a significant increase. Both councils have said that they intend to maintain the present council tax level.

Mr. George Robertson: Why does the hon. Gentleman not believe the Chancellor's estimate of inflation, as stated in the Red Book, at 3·5 per cent.?

Mr. Kynoch: I base what I am saying about expenditure on the current rate of inflation. I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, quite rightly, has been prudent and sensible in his projections. It may well be that inflation is a little higher; hon. Members will appreciate the fact that if it applies to only 40 per cent. of local government expenditure, it accounts for only 40 per cent. of the increase. Mathematically, it does not make a lot of difference.

Local councillors must play a significant part in ensuring that their local taxpayers get value for money. I give the example of Kincardine and Deeside district council which faced a 4·2 per cent. increase in the draft budget for next year. The councillors simply said to the executives of the council, "This will not do. We have to get the budget level. We cannot stand a council tax increase at this time." Surprise, surprise, the second draft budget came in significantly less, to the extent that council tax will be held level. Whether it is to the credit of the Scottish National party, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) claims, or whether it has rather more to do with the fact that we face regional council elections this year, Grampian regional council, miraculously in election year, has managed to come in with a level council tax.

I now turn to the move towards the unified business rate. Non-domestic rates play a part in the equation about which we are talking tonight. I very much welcome the fact that the variance between Scotland and England, which was 64·6 per cent. in 1990-91, will go down to 14·7 per cent. in 1994-95. Even that percentage does not tell the whole story because it is an average. Kincardine and Deeside, Gordon, Moray, Berwickshire, Tweeddale, Orkney and Shetland are all level with England. Their rates cushion the fact that the rate in Glasgow is still significantly higher than the average, with a rate poundage of 52·9p, which compares with the average in England of 42·3p. The message is loud and clear. The trend continues throughout Strathclyde, where the variances are between 19 per cent. and 20 per cent. from the English average. The clear message is, therefore, that Labour councils are not as good at getting their business rates down.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the hon. Gentleman live in such a fantasy world that he seriously believes that there are comparable social and economic problems in Glasgow and in the other authorities to which he alludes?

Mr. Kynoch: I certainly believe that the affairs of that council can be managed as efficiently as those of other councils. In other cities that have problems similar to those of Glasgow, there is a lower rate poundage. That proves the point.

Mr. McMaster: In an intervention, I asked the Minister about the way in which aggregate finance was calculated. He told me that indicators such as poverty, deprivation and poor housing were taken into account. As the Government are responsible for about 88 per cent. of the money that local authorities receive, why will the hon. Gentleman not allow local authorities to apply the same logic?

Mr. Kynoch: I believe that I correctly heard my hon. Friend the Minister say that the formula for the revenue support grant split was discussed jointly by the Scottish Office and COSLA. COSLA must, therefore, shoulder its responsibility for the way in which the split has come about.

I summarise by saying that I believe that the level of revenue support grant that has been applied in the order is more than adequate if councils use their best initiative to ensure that, on the labour side, they keep settlements this year to a level that can be self-financing. They therefore have plenty left with the remaining 40 per cent. to fund services so that there are no cuts whatever.

7.53 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), to whom I listened with interest, is totally unrealistic if he expects local authorities in Scotland to be able to cope with the wage demands that they will receive this year and to make the savings that he suggested were possible. The evidence coming from south of the border, where some of the settlements are a little further on than they are in Scotland, suggests that that is hope above expectation. The hon. Gentleman also forgets that the local government settlements are nationally negotiated; they are not in the hands of individual councils because the rates are set nationally, as the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do. It is, therefore, a bit ridiculous realistically to expect such savings.

I should like to make one or two general observations before turning to some of the detail of the orders. Over many years, I have become convinced of the need to look a bit more closely at the way in which we finance local government. The existing system is not transparent. It is very difficult—I say this neutrally—for ordinary council tax payers to determine for their own purposes exactly where the responsibility for some of the increases that they have to pay lies. If that is true, the system needs to be looked at again. It is now descending into a war of attrition between local government and central Government, in which each side tries to be the first to get in its retaliation and public relations so that it can attribute the blame for the increased cost of local government to the other side.

The system is so complicated that the only person in the world who understands it, outside the Scottish Office, is Mr. Albert Tait, who does wonderful work for COSLA. The Minister was right to pay tribute to him and colleagues, who supply us with the information that we require to inform these debates. We must get a system that is more transparent and with which people can cope. We need a system that people can comprehend and about which they can make sensible judgments. That is not possible with the current system.

It is not sensible to have a system, which we all now accept as a matter of course, that requires central Government to fund 88 per cent. of local authority spending. It is time that we stood back and looked at exactly what that means for the autonomy of local government and how local councillors can best discharge their duties. An important factor in the debate, which has been mentioned earlier, is that 66 per cent. of all local authority spending goes on staff-related costs. For the Government simply to say, as a matter of course, that they are giving increases that take account of inflation does not begin to meet the true increases that local authorities will face. We all know that, year on year, earnings invariably rise faster than prices. In Committee, we are now contemplating our system of reform for local authority organisation in Scotland, yet we are not looking in any detail at the system of finance. That is stupid. It is not possible to reform the system of local government north of the border without looking carefully at a more sensitive, coherent and transparent system of finance.

The relationship between central Government and local government is appallingly bad. We should try to repair that relationship to achieve a greater feeling of partnership and a far lesser sense that there is a constant war of attrition between St. Andrew's house and the local authorities

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

collectively north of the border. I am very concerned that the results appear to be that no one is listening to the other side of the argument and that power is being gradually and inexorably drained away from the local authorities, which is a bad thing in principle.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be wise to inquire into the number of people who are employed by local authorities? General extravagance and over-employment are the real cause of the burden on the citizen.

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. and learned Gentleman, as usual, anticipates my next point. I agree with him to an extent, but there is a factual increase which is difficult to justify unless one considers the additional duties, responsibilities and liabilities that the House is placing on local government. I need to use only one example to demonstrate my point. The community charge legislation, which was succeeded by the council tax legislation, required even local authorities in south-east Scotland and other non-profligate authorities to hire extra hands and computers to deal with the work that we as a legislature perforce required them to undertake. The hon. and learned Gentleman is right. We as legislators should be much more careful before we willy-nilly overlay new layers of duties on local authorities, as we often do. His point is valid to that extent.

My next point in general terms is that I am suspicious of the client group approach, as it is currently implemented and introduced into the method of calculation of the relative amount that each authority receives. It is flawed. In my experience, it is certainly flawed in the way in which it calculates the share-out of local authority revenue in rural areas.

Primary indicators basically count heads. For example, if money is to be paid to local authorities for primary education, one considers the first primary indicator, which is the number of children in schools. That is a common-sense approach. However, secondary indicators do not take nearly enough account of the factors that apply in rural areas which have disparate populations and a series of problems. Their problems might not be as great as those of urban areas but, in their own way, they are just as important to local areas in rural landward parts of Scotland. I do not believe that the client group approach, as currently drafted and implemented, takes those problems properly into account. I hope that the Minister will give the House some comfort by saying that he is prepared to consider developing and refining the way in which the client group method is calculated in practice.

I had a slight difference of opinion with the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside about the ability of councils to accommodate wage costs and then redistribute savings. Of course I am in favour, as everybody is, of local councillors achieving efficiency, but that is a bridge too far. It is totally impossible for local authorities to make savings of the kind to which he referred; indeed, the reverse will occur.

There is evidence that there will be job losses if central Government limits and capping rates are implemented in the way we expect. There are some problems. It is stupidity itself that we have a local government settlement that takes no account of the realistic increases that are bound to be in the pipeline in the way of public sector wage settlements which, again, are negotiated nationally, not locally.

I have concluded that there will inevitably be job losses or reductions in services. In my own regional authority, which is not a profligate authority, we have to find savings of about £400,000 in social work and about £200,000 in education. That means that all sorts of sensible, planned, service delivery projects will have to go by the board. Throughout Scotland, there is great need for nursery education—there certainly is in the borders. There is a great need in the border towns that I represent to develop, extensively, better facilities for young people. The social work and community education authorities have worked out plans and are doing their best to develop those services, but they are being hampered by a shortage of finance.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) mentioned the maintenance of school buildings. I agree. One price that we will have to pay for the orders is that maintenance schedules will be delayed and delayed again. As he mentioned, that is a short-sighted, short-term policy. Another consequence of the orders will be further delays in making improvements in the safety of school transportation which, as hon. Members know, is a matter of great concern to community councils and school boards in rural areas after the recent terrible accident in Biggar.

As for social work, in the near future we will be able to determine the consequences of the orders. Already, in my authority, the charges for home helps and meals on wheels and other charges have been increased. People are already in severe financial circumstances, which will be exacerbated by the imposition of VAT on fuel on 1 April. They are being hit twice. It is a double whammy in terms of the effects of some social work cuts, not to mention the closure of the old part IV accommodation and residential homes, many of which are institutions in their localities. That accommodation will have to go by the board.

Another example—it is not an exhaustive list—is that the ability to develop future industrial sites and engage in an industrial strategy at regional authority level will be severely hindered and hampered by the orders. Another point that is directly relevant to the non-domestic rate aspects of the orders is the effect on local authority finance in relation to the uniform business rate. The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside mentioned that point. I am also concerned about some of the issues about which he talked.

What worries me more than anything else is that, using the evidence of my own eyes and ears, high streets in market towns throughout Scotland are being decimated by a combination of factors, not just the non-domestic rate imposed on them. Our high streets are under tremendous pressure. The amount of rates that businesses now pay in place such as Kelso and Jedburgh is worrying. The effect is available for all to see. Many of our high streets are suffering and paying the price. The orders take out an extra £12·5 million, according to the COSLA figures, from what local authorities would otherwise have expected had the old non-domestic rating system applied. That money would have helped them to address the problem.

I wonder, too, whether the allowance for loan and leasing charges of £750 million or thereabouts for 1994 is enough. With a bit more leeway, local authorities would be able to develop capital projects. I can list several capital projects in my constituency—for example, the new school that is needed in Jedburgh, the new bridge that is urgently needed as a matter of safety in Kelso, the redevelopment scheme at Gallalaw in Hawick and the Eyemouth harbour development project. They are examples—again, it is not an exhaustive list—of projects that could be brought on stream by local authorities in a way that would put local people back into work and assist the national finances very positively.

Finally, I shall refer to something that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). The allowance for transitional costs to the new local government system is severely understated, at £5 million for this year, £25 million for next year and £50 million for the year after that. I ask the Secretary of State—he is the Treasury Bench note-taker while everyone else is out having his tea, and we are not complaining about that—whether, if we bring evidence in the coming weeks and months that shows that the figures are inadequate for 1994-95 and subsequent years, he will give an assurance that he is willing to look at that evidence and bring back more realistic estimates. The whole of the local government establishment north of the border is severely exercised and worried about that question.

A whole series of worries relate to the orders. I do not think that it is anything like good enough for the Government simply to say that there is price protection and a bit more, so why is anyone worrying? That is a superficial and disingenuous approach. When the detail of the orders is studied with care by people north of the border, and if they get to the stage where they can understand the full consequences of the orders, they will be very unhappy that the settlement reached for next year is unfair to local authorities north of the border.

8.10 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I did not come here armed to speak today. Having heard the rate support grant settlement, I honestly thought that all hon. Members would be amazed that the Secretary of State has been able once again to increase the levels of rate support grant beyond the level of inflation. That is a remarkable achievement which goes back year by year throughout the 1980s. Bearing in mind the comments by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on education, I must repeat that if we go back to 1978 and 1979, there were no rose-coloured spectacles; the fact is that at that time the rate support grant was cut in real terms. It beats me why hon. Members hark back to those times. The reason why they criticise the settlement announced by the Secretary of State is beyond my comprehension.

More than £6 billion has been allocated through Government supported expenditure this year. That is a remarkable sop. If we analyse it further, we find that that accounts for some £20 per week for everyone in Scotland in 1994-95. Scotland receives greater central Government support for local spending than the rest of the United Kingdom. That means that we have higher expenditure of about 34 per cent. per head in Scotland than in England. That tells a story.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) suggested that the people of Scotland will have to pay more because of the generous rate support grant settlement. Of course, they will have to pay more. If the Government spend more, taxpayers must take more out of their pockets, whether through council tax or general taxation.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Gallie: If the hon. Gentleman lets me finish my point, I shall give way. The charge today from Opposition Members is that the Government are not putting enough into the kitty through revenue support. If the Government put more in through revenue support, their only option will be to raise taxes, although Opposition Members continually condemn them for taxing at the current levels. What I have not heard in this debate is how on earth Opposition Members would bring in more money through the general taxation system and where they would put that money with regard to local authority expenditure.

Mr. Salmond: In the hon. Gentleman's comparison of Scottish and English local government figures, has he allowed for a different range of responsibilities? Obviously, in the current circumstances English local authorities do not control water and therefore do not spend anything on it, although there were substantial green dowries when English water was privatised. Allowing for that difference in responsibilities north and south of the border, can the hon. Gentleman tell the House the real figure?

Mr. Gallie: The hon. Gentleman refers to water. The rate support grant for water in the Strathclyde region is absolutely infinitesimal. Basically, the charge for water and sewerage services is set by the councils and I see no reason to change the figure of 34 per cent. along the lines suggested by the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to clarify that point further as the debate continues.

As to the charge that the rate support grant is not sufficient for local authorities to sustain services and thrive in the years ahead, I must come back once again to the stated intent of Glasgow district council to cut back on the council tax. At the same time, I do not hear a charge that Glasgow will cut services. Glasgow seems to be able to live with the settlement and has adapted it to meet the needs of the people in its city without passing on the massive increase that we heard so much about from the hon. Member for Hamilton. Indeed, there have been numerous examples of other local authorities announcing standstill and reduced council tax settlements, despite what Opposition Members said.

I have every reason to feel a certain degree of pride with regard to Kyle and Carrick district council. When that council changed administration almost two years ago, it inherited a massive deficit of £2 million on the revenue account, which it has turned round. That is a sign of good Conservative management in local authorities. That must not be condemned but applauded.

When I examine the spending programmes for this year, and had I been a councillor on Kyle and Carrick district council—we have been told that it is a radical right-wing council, yet it seems to be going on a spend, spend, spend programme, as the local paper suggested; and perhaps I am a bit more right than some members of the council—I would certainly have looked at a reduction in council tax charges for next year. That would have been meritorious.

The rate support grant means that expenditure will be directed at improving the infrastructure and aspects of Kyle and Carrick. It means that new jobs will be created as a result of the way in which cash is spent, and Kyle and Carrick will prove that its cash investment will be advantageous to council taxpayers in the future.

[Mr. Gallie]

Stirling district council was condemned for laying off 18 people and much has been said about job losses. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) suggested that there are problems for local authorities in this area. He referred to the imposition of the community charge and the fact that that had created many more jobs in local authorities. If that is the case, and given that the hon. Gentleman has got his way and we have returned, somewhat reluctantly as far as I am concerned, to a property-based tax for funding local authorities, perhaps local authorities should now be examining the manpower that they are using in this area. If there had been a massive increase in the requirement for labour at the time that the community charge was introduced, and if Opposition Members are correct now, perhaps there is an opportunity to cut the number of people employed in this area.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to buy him a cup of tea afterwards and explain to him how a local income tax would mean significant staff reductions? I would like to see that, and we have been arguing for it for many years.

Mr. Gallie: I recognise that the hon. Gentleman is an ardent supporter of a local income tax, but I think that he will recognise the impossibility of introducing such a tax against the background of the numerous local authorities in Scotland. His argument might gain a little value following the changes that we are studying.

Having said that, I have no wish to see a local income tax introduced in Scotland. It would not be rational, and it would be highly bureaucratic. Those involved in the tax would be looking deeply into the affairs of individuals, and I would not support that intrusion.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend might care to inform the Liberal Democrats that some of us have examined the working practicalities of a local income tax in great detail. My information—based on research which I have done during a number of years—suggests that such a tax would be even more costly to operate than the community charge, and would cause far more resentment.

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman goes down that way, I remind him that we are talking not about the council tax or any other tax but about revenue support grant, and the hon. Gentleman should stick to that.

Mr. Gallie: I was talking about revenue support grant and the adverse effect on jobs that that would have, as has been suggested by Opposition Members. Advantage could be taken of recent changes which would allow additional cash through revenue support to be used in a different manner.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Given that revenue support grant is dependent in its proportion on the manner in which other local finances are raised, and given that the hon. Gentleman has ruled out a local income tax and has, in addition, ruled out a property tax, will he put on record for the people of Ayr that he still supports a poll tax?

Mr. Gallie *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want the hon. Genteman to go down that way and talk about the poll tax, the council tax or any other tax. We are talking about revenue support grant.

Mr. Gallie: I respect that view, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is with great reluctance that I do not respond. I would certainly have liked to respond in a positive manner to the hon. Gentleman's comments. Given your guidance, I will attempt to stick to revenue support grant.

With your indulgence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall concentrate a little further on jobs. A local authority must look at the number of people it employs when considering revenue support grant as an element of its financing. With about 60 per cent. of local authority expenditure going on the wage bill, that is very relevant. It is the responsibility of every local authority to look at its staffing structures and to attempt to get the right structure to meet its needs.

After all, running a local authority is not much different from running any business, if one considers the turnovers for each local authority. In Kyle and Carrick, for example, about £14 million comes in revenue support grant from the Government.

We have heard no whining from Kyle and Carrick. The council is holding its council tax, and it is still managing to spend £2 million on capital projects. That is despite the fact that Kyle and Carrick's revenue support grant has been reduced during the current year. We have heard no one whine—the council has got on with the job, and a dashed good job it is doing.

It is not just local authorities who have been forced into cutting jobs. The *Daily Record* has cut 200 jobs, and the House has not heard the Opposition complaining about the cut in the newspaper's staffing. Yet Opposition Members think that the loss of 18 jobs in local government is a major disaster. That is a logic which escapes many of us, and certainly escapes the workers at the *Daily Record.*

I have heard comments about cuts in the education budget as far as it affects school buildings. It is my view that Strathclyde regional council has failed to address the real problems of sound maintenance and management of its school building programmes. I did protest about the closure of Castlehill, a school which had a 70 per cent. occupancy rate and a set place in its community. I protested against the background of Strathclyde having promised a replacement school for Castlehill up till the eleventh hour, when there was a sudden change and the council went for hon. Gentleman was elected."] The closure was wrong. It was bad management, and that was what I criticised. That record in the management programme for the provision, new build and maintenance of school buildings has continued for 10 or 15 years.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I thought that it was on record that the previous Secretary of State for Scotland had mentioned how prudent and good an authority Strathclyde regional council was. Many of the council's management plans saved a lot of money. I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's statement on management or mismanagement. Will the hon. Gentleman put that on record so we can see clearly where he believes the deficiencies were in Strathclyde?

Mr. Gallie: I must say that the hon. Gentleman's reading is not mine. If he cares to present to me the statements made by the various Secretaries of State who have commended Strathclyde regional council on its schools maintenance programmes, I shall take them on board.

Mr. Stewart: Did my hon. Friend hear the sedentary comment from Opposition Members to the effect that Strathclyde proposed the closure of Castlehill because he had been elected to the constituency?

Mr. Gallie: I must think carefully before I respond to my hon. Friend. I must say that it is not the first time that I have heard that remark. Certain remarks were made along similar lines with respect to a sewage works at Greenan. I would like to discount those comments, because I do not believe that any authority with any credibility could consider making judgments in such a way. On that basis, I shall dismiss the comments that my hon. Friend heard from the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) referred to the much-needed link between the A77 and the M8, and to the link between the M77 and the A77. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudon (Mr. McKelvey) and myself have both been chasing my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South on that matter over recent months.

Strathclyde regional council has had capital consents given over the years which should have allowed it to make progress on that length of road, but year by year that cash has been diverted elsewhere. I am well aware of the delicate state of the negotiations between my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South and Malcolm Waugh, the convener of the transport committee of Strathclyde regional council. I do not wish to aggravate the position and I shall not comment further. I should like to think that agreement can be reached in the not-too-distant future and that plans for the road link will come to fruition.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made some remarks about sewerage facilities in Ayrshire. Here again, there are instances——

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I am not sure whether I misheard the hon. Gentleman or whether he referred to my constituency when he meant to refer to that of someone else.

Mr. Gallie: I have referred to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) when I should have referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). Apart from the pleasantries exchanged outside the Chamber, the fact that I used the words "hon. Friend" speaks for itself.

In drawing my remarks to a close, it would be churlish of me not to refer to the generous increase of more than 8 per cent. in housing capital allocations given to my local authority recently. I recognise that that is not revenue support, but it is worth noting and I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench for it. It is also worth while extending my comments to the housing non-revenue account payments which will also meet with satisfaction in my area. I recognise that I am beginning to stray a little, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so before I incur your wrath, I shall take my seat.

8.30 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) made a commendably brief speech. It was fascinating because it revealed how his mind operated. He sought to give us a lesson in elementary economics of such naivety that I suddenly realised how lucky we were to see the hon. Gentleman in the House at all. If he had applied such simplicity in his business affairs, he would have gone bankrupt long ago and would have been unable to take his seat in the House. I have never heard such misrepresentation of the facts on expenditure, revenue or proportions grossed up or grossed down. I do not think that he understood what the order was all about.

The difficulty that we have in discussing the orders is that we have little to go on when we try to work out how the different figures in the orders have been arrived at. The Minister would have us believe—I apologise for missing the early part of his remarks—that expenditure figures are calculated according to some sophisticated mathematical formula. He would have us believe that everything is worked out to give authorities their proper due. *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friends will allow me to speak, I will not barrack them in the middle of their speeches.

The approach of the Minister and of many Conservative Back Benchers is simple. They take the general view that local authority expenditure is bad and Labour local authority expenditure is worse and not to be tolerated. I will give the Minister at least some credit. I think that he was trying to be accurate. All that I can do is be charitable to him by saying that he does not understand the formula.

The Minister's view is that any wage increases must be paid for by efficiency savings. That view is commonly reflected on the Conservative Benches. Many Opposition Members know that that is unrealistic. In many cases, the phrase "efficiency savings" is a euphemism for driving down wages and sacking people. That is what it amounts to.

Everyone knows perfectly well that it is unrealistic to expect efficiency savings to meet all the increases which are in the pipeline. Let us take the example of wage increases. We know for a fact that teachers in England and Wales have already received a 2·8 per cent. pay increase. We do not know what the figure will be in Scotland. I should be surprised if it was less than 2·8 per cent. We know that other wage claims are in the pipeline. The Minister cannot expect ordinary people to put up with large increases in tax from April this year and the imposition of VAT on electricity and gas without seeking recovery for that in their wages.

It is bad enough that the Minister says that there should be no pay increase. He is asking for a severe reduction in people's living standards. People are right to seek at least to maintain their current living standards. Our ethos should be to increase people's living standards. There is no way in which the pay increases that are in the pipeline can be met by the settlement. Indeed, there is no way in which those pay increases can be matched by loss of jobs or anything similar.

Mr. Salmond: I noticed the Minister shaking his head when the hon. Gentleman was making the point about efficiency savings in the public services. The hon. Gentleman is familiar with my constituency and with the Willowbank adult training centre for the mentally disadvantaged. Does he think that efficiency savings in that centre can be used to pay reasonable salary increases to the extremely committed staff who man that centre?

Mr. Hughes: I certainly do not believe that efficiency savings, particularly in places dealing with the mentally handicapped, should be the way in which staff wages are increased. Many of the staff who put in for pay increases are dedicated people who offer a service more often than not above and beyond the call of duty. They do not simply see their way through the day from 9 am until 5 pm, or whatever time, and then go home. People take their work home with them. They have a commitment to the people whom they serve. That is not confined to those who deal with the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Bill Walker: I wish to understand clearly what the hon. Gentleman is saying. As I understand his argument, his view is that it is unrealistic to expect the wage increases that are in the pipeline to be met by efficiency savings. He is not saying that there is no such thing as efficiency savings?

Mr. Hughes: Of course I am not saying that there is no such thing as efficiency savings. However, for at least the past five years, if not longer, we have been told that tale every year. We are told that there must be efficiency savings and efficiency gains. The facts and figures show that local authorities throughout the country have made large efficiency savings and gains. They have squeezed and cut the services down to the bone. When I give some examples of how that has been done, people will understand that we have gone so far that we cannot go any further.

The Minister praised some authorities for holding their council tax down. I wonder how many of them are spending their reserves. Perhaps he can answer that. In my view, to spend the reserves simply on keeping the council tax down is bad. If there are reserves, they ought to be spent on the people directly by providing services.

We have this sterile argument year after year. The Minister and Conservative Members say that so long as an authority holds its rates, poll tax or now council tax steady, with no monetary increase, it is a good authority. I say that that is not necessarily the best test. It is not a bad test, but it is not necessarily the best of tests. We need to look at council tax and service provision together.

Let us consider what is in store for local authorities. I am told that a 3 per cent. pay award across the board cost Aberdeen city district council £5 million on its band D tax. That will take a lot of recovering in council tax.

The trouble is that Ministers do not take into account the many demands being made of local government. The population is increasing in the north-east of Scotland, which implies increasing demand in the city of Aberdeen and the region. We are entitled to an explanation from the Minister of how he arrives at his figures for the area.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Member will appreciate that not all the council tax figures for the north-east of Scotland are in. However, he will also appreciate that the recommendation to the Grampian region is for a zero increase in council tax, that Banff and Buchan has decided on a 4·8 per cent. increase and Gordon on a 4·7 per cent. increase. Those figures are not compatible with the argument that the settlement is somehow unfair to the north-east of Scotland.

Mr. Hughes: That goes to show that one should never give way to a Minister in the middle of one's speech because one will not get the answer one expected. I did not ask the Minister about the figures. I asked how many authorities in Scotland are using their reserves to keep the council tax down.

I shall now deal with what I regard as the unfairness to the north-east of Scotland. The aggregate external finance has been cut by 3·3 per cent. for the city of Aberdeen, but it has increased in Grampian by 2 per cent., in Banff and Buchan by 1·8 per cent., in Gordon by 1·2 per cent. and —the oddest of all and I cannot understand any reason for it—in Kincardine and Deeside by 5·1 per cent. What are the factors that govern such huge differences in aggregate external finance in a fairly compact and cohesive area?

Why should the aggregate external finance for Aberdeen, which faces the tremendous social problems normally associated with cities, decrease by 3·3 per cent. while Kincardine and Deeside which borders it—the constituency overlaps the local government boundary for the city—gets a 5·1 per cent. increase? I know that there are problems in rural areas, but why should there be such a difference?

I know that the Minister's stock answer will be that the distribution figures are worked out by the distribution committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. The decision on the figures is not taken by COSLA, but by the Minister. He cannot duck his responsibilities by saying that such matters are discussed or decided elsewhere.

The explanations for expenditure decisions and how they are arrived at are inadequate. What about community care? We have been told that much money has been transferred to local government so that it can deal with community care. Yet we are also constantly told, and given example after example, that the amount of money transferred is inadequate to deal with the social problems involved.

We have all been made aware in our constituencies of examples of the lack of follow-up care and attention—examples of people being put into local authority houses and left on their own without supervision. Who is responsible for supervision? Is it the hospital or the regional authority? Is it the health trust or the social work department? No one seems to know.

As far as one can discern, the distributions seem to mix up community care expenditure and expenditure on aids and adaptations to houses, which is unfair. The Minister must look more closely at the way in which, under the tenants' rights legislation, so-called amenity houses can be sold while sheltered housing cannot. That is resulting in severe problems with the provision of aids in amenity houses. Authorities are beginning to wonder whether they should spend money on anything except temporary adaptations, which can be taken out. That is bad economics. It is much better to make proper, permanent provision for the people who need such aids so that the houses can be transferred to other needy people later.

We mentioned education and I hope that the Minister will listen closely because expenditure on education has been cut so much that Grampian region, which the Minister keeps telling me is a very good authority—I am sure that that remark in *Hansard* will be used in election manifestos in May——

Mr. Stewart *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I shall not allow the Minister to renege. I had a ringing endorsement for Grampian regional council from him and it will have to stay in the record. He is not going to wriggle out of it now.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. I shall not allow an ambitious and hopeful surrogate Minister to intervene.

I take it that the Minister agrees that Grampian region has done extremely well on education, but we have problems. Beechwood school in my constituency caters for children with special needs. The school swimming pool has been closed for more than a year because the region does not have enough money to repair the heating system or install a new one. One might ask, "What's a swimming pool? It's just for recreation. The children can go elsewhere." The kids are going elsewhere, but they have to be out of school for two and a half hours to get a half-hour swimming lesson. For children with special needs, swimming is not simply recreation; it has therapeutic value. It is disgraceful that such money should be held back and that there is not enough in the budget. That is one example of how education is being squeezed and the children who are most in need are the ones to suffer.

People are beginning to understand that one will always have to pay the price for neglecting social provision and social problems and for ignoring the rise in drug addiction and other similar problems. There is a price to be paid. Parents in many parts of Aberdeen are becoming desperately concerned because syringes that have been used to inject drugs intravenously are being left lying around. That is dangerous for health. That is the cost which must be paid. If one neglects good housing conditions and good education, the community will pay the price.

It is far better for the community to face up to the costs of providing good education, social services, housing and employment prospects. That is a much better and more positive price to pay. People are beginning to grasp that argument and the fact that holding the council tax down —as the only real test of a council's efficiency or value —is bad news and a bad way to approach the problem. The more that they wake up to the fact that good social and local authority provision are good for the community, the better. We are winning that argument and we will win votes as well.

8.48 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): The hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) said that my area has high expenditure, but it is not much higher than other areas of Scotland. The hon. Member for Tayside, North mentioned addressing the issues, and I shall certainly do so tonight—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should be called to order.

I have served on local authorities for a number of years, and I know exactly where all the problems began. Just in case the Minister has never visited a constituency such as mine, let me tell him about the poverty and the misery that has been created over the years by the Government. We have heard all the rubbish about the revenue support grant, but everyone knows that it is a pittance, which will never deal with the problems.

In my area, some houses have been boarded up for two years. People are crammed into houses, and others are homeless. They never will get a house from the Government. My authority is still paying the interest charges on houses that were built 60 years ago. We know all about local authorities and we know how, over the years, the Government have pressed them hard and brought them to their knees. How did they do it? The answer is the Miscellaneous Financial Provisions Act 1983 and the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982, which gave the Secretary of State more powers. Is it not a scandal, wrong and shocking that the Secretary of State should have those powers?

I wish that we had a video of all the problems that have been created since the Government came to power. All the problems I have mentioned are related to the rate support grant and to the revenue support grant, which is supposed to clear up the problems of the country.

What have we got? Unemployment is high all over the place. The poor health of my constituents is unsurpassed throughout Britain. Glasgow has the worst infant mortality rate in Britain, and the mortality rate for adults between 45 and 65 years is the highest in the country. Those are the problems created by the Tory Government. The people of Britain and of Scotland must do one thing. They must recognise that the Government are not on their side. If they were, they would not just be giving people a small pittance in the revenue support grant.

How are people supposed to deal with the problem of 12,000 drug addicts in Glasgow, with an evil trade worth £188 million? The police cannot even catch the dealers for a breach of the peace. They cannot deal with the problem, but the morgue is full of youngsters. What are the Government doing about that when they talk about statistics? This is not a game for the faint-hearted or one of comedy. It is a game of seriousness, because people are out there dying on the streets. We want to make sure that something is done. That is why we must increase the revenue support grant when we take power.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside mentioned the unemployment figures, and how we should deal with them if we cannot deal with the problem through the rate support grant. The only way to deal with the problem is to regenerate the economy. We should not pay £9,000 for people to sit in their houses and lie on the labour exchange. The Government should invest that money to give those people a job and hope. Show them a light at the end of the tunnel. If the Government cannot do that, they should not be in power, and they should never return to power.

Many local authorities in Scotland, especially those in Glasgow, would like to do more to improve housing. Over the years, Glasgow has suffered from Tory landlords who have left and sold their properties off at a pound a time. They put a burden on local authorities, when priority should have been given to people who are living in slums. Their fathers and mothers could not get a job and they were on the labour exchange from the day their children were born to the day they died. This is the kind of world that the Tories want people to live in.

Bad education is hereditary. Why did the Government not take up the recommendations of the Plowden report, which said that areas of deprivation should be made a priority and given nursery education? It also said that the pupil-teacher ratio should be reduced. *[Interruption.]* It is all right for the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) to laugh. While you are laughing, people are suffering out

[Mr. Jimmy Wray]

there. I hope that the cameras are on you, because you are a certain calibre of Conservative. Why are you laughing when people out there are suffering?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. May I cool things down a little bit by saying that I am responsible for none of this? The hon. Gentleman keeps on referring to "you", but that means the occupant of the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman refers to an hon. Member or hon. Lady, he will be in order.

Mr. Wray: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your correction. Unfortunately, we are worried about Conservative Members who come in here—perhaps they have been sitting in the Tea Room, when we have been sitting in the Chamber all day because we are really interested in trying to improve services throughout Scotland.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend and I are close friends. He will be aware that I have been inundated with requests from mothers for nursery provision in all areas, including Erskine, Kilbarchan, Lochwinnoch and Gourock. Those mothers are desperate for their kids to get some pre-five education. My hon. Friend is quite right that Strathclyde cannot provide it, because it does not get enough money from the Government to satisfy the needs of our people.

Mr. Wray: My hon. Friend is quite correct. Strathclyde region had policies that were designed to last not for one or two years, but for between five and 10. It had decided to implement policy, but when it had an opportunity to implement the recommendations in the Plowden report, it had to close schools down. Plowden recommended that people living in deprived areas should have a pupil-teacher ratio of 1:10 not 1:20, 1:30 or 1:50, as in the past. That is the kind of education we need for people from humble backgrounds. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Conservative Members will listen carefully.

Mr Bill Walker: I genuinely respect the hon. Gentleman's passion and concern. I trust, however, that he acknowledges that not all Conservative Members have no experience of poverty, and that we care just as deeply as he does.

Mr. Wray: That applies to very few Tory Members. I have never heard a Tory Member make a passionate speech about his or her constituents living in poverty and bad housing. If you lived in my area——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to intervene on the hon. Gentleman again, but he has not yet got out of the habit of saying "you". I hope that he will try to do so.

Mr. Wray: From now on, I shall address my remarks to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that Labour Members are extremely concerned about the changes that have been made, especially with regard to housing. Under health legislation of 1970, if a house is below tolerable standards and is damaging household effects, a tenant in Scotland has a right, because the local authority is not dealing with the service as it should and is creating a hazard to the tenant, to summon the local authority to court.

Under housing legislation of 1966, local authorities have the discretion to spend money to put those properties right. Glasgow district council has had to spend millions of pounds in compensation, because the Government would not give it enough money to deal with the problems in the area.

Strathclyde regional council was restricted by rate capping, so it could not deal with its transport problems. The Government then introduced deregulation, when good services disappeared and we were left with ghost streets. A greyhound service and a leapfrog service now compete with each other. Many important services have been lost, so we know exactly what the situation is.

The Government wasted millions of pounds when they introduced the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985, allowing local authorities to buy equipment and waste money. Those millions of pounds could have been spent on solving the problems. If the Government had come to me, I would have told them about the food and drugs legislation, the Water (Scotland) Act 1946 and section 130 of the Medicines Act 1968, which would have saved local and central Government millions of pounds. We took them to court because they did not know the Act, which is why they had to introduce the 1985 Act. All that was a waste of money.

Why do hon. Members think that all the mad schemes which the Government have introduced, such as the poll tax, the council tax and those mad local government schemes, were not respected by COSLA? We had seen what local government reorganisation meant. Men and women who had worked for years in local authorities were dumped on the dole because the Government had bought out their jobs.

Two decades later, the Government are doing the same again. They are looking for money through the introduction of those schemes. Schemes such as child support have nothing to do with helping children: they are simply about helping to clear up the deficit. Of the £530 million coming in, only £50 million will go to the children. That is why local councils cannot provide the rate and revenue support that is needed.

I realise that many hon. Members are waiting to speak, so I shall not take a great deal more time. I could stand here all night, because I have a great deal of experience in the corporation. I live a lot among the people. They act as a sounding board for me every Saturday. Why do not the whole Government take a walk with me around Paddy's market on a Saturday and see exactly what the problems of the people are? A walk around the Oxfam shops will show them just how well people are doing.

I just hope that, next time we deal with rate support revenue or any other assistance which the Government hope to give working-class people, they will give them a wee bit more.

9.3 pm

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): The consequences of this important debate will have an impact on thousands of council workers and millions of service users. Once again, this debate has shown that there are lies, damn lies and Scottish Office statistics. The Government have particular reasons for distorting the figures this year, because this is the worst settlement for local government since 1979, and Opposition Members can all remember quite a few bad ones.

Tonight we need to compare the figures for 1994-95 with the figures for 1993-94—not that this year's figures were very brilliant. But before we do so, we should bear in mind two points which may have become muddled by certain Conservative Members in this debate. First, what inflation rate are we talking about? We are not talking about the rate that includes mortgage interest relief—at 1·8 per cent. We are talking about the other inflation rate, which, according to the Red Book, will be 3·25 per cent. in the coming year.

Secondly and crucially, we must remember that the money for next year includes community care money that was not included in the settlement for this year. That community care money will amount to about 2 per cent. —a fact consistently forgotten by Conservative Members, enabling them to inflate the actual figures for next year's spending.

I want to look at the figures for Lothian region; it helps to look at one authority instead of bandying about general figures. The aggregate external finance for Lothian region for this year was £572 million. Aggregate external finance for next year will be £583 million. No doubt the Government will tell us that that represents an increase of £11 million. I must tell the Government, however, that transferred money for new expenditure on community care will amount to £11·5 million; so the cash settlements for Lothian region this and next year will be the same.

I could also point out other items of new statutory expenditure, such as money for devolved school management and local government reorganisation. Taken together, these would mean that the cash for next year, in straight terms, is less than for this year. For the sake of this debate, however, let us assume that the figures for the two years are the same. Since 1979, as far as I can remember, Lothian region has never suffered no cash increase from one year to another.

The settlement therefore represents a real cut, given the inflation rate of 3·25 per cent. This 3·25 per cent. cut is part of a general public expenditure cut across local authorities in Scotland and across all the services in the United Kingdom. This has led Andrew Dilnot of the Institute for Fiscal Studies to say that this public expenditure round makes Lady Thatcher and Lord Howe look like socialists, so draconian is it and so much worse than anything they imposed.

It is because of this sort of figure that the Government aim to reduce the share of GDP taken by public expenditure from 45 to 42·5 per cent. in only three years. These draconian figures are getting worse; my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) has seen the Grey Book—the updated public expenditure figures—which reveals an additional £750 million cuts in public sector asset creation. No doubt there will be other changes too, but that is the one that she has drawn to our attention.

This is a terrible settlement for local government, and it is part of a terrible public expenditure settlement. Lothian will receive the same cash this year as in the previous year, once the community care money is stripped out of the figures.

The Government claim that there can still be a cash increase of 1·75 per cent. It does not take too much imagination to realise that the only way to achieve that is to hike up the council tax. Even a cash increase of 1·75 per cent. will still mean a cut, but to achieve that cut Lothian region will have to increase its council tax by 10 per cent. So the region faces next year a cut in services and a 10 per cent. increase in council tax.

Quite apart from the general budgetary problems faced by the Government, it probably suits their political purposes to do this, because this is regional elections year and a time of local government reorganisation. Doubtless the Government hope that the people of Lothian will feel that theirs is not a good council, because it is putting up the council tax by 10 per cent. and cutting services at the same time.

The Government hope that the people of the region will not regret the passing of that council—but the people of Lothian are not stupid. They are quite used to the cuts imposed on them by this Government, and they will realise, when their council tax rises and the cuts are imposed, that the blame lies at the door of the Government.

To get to that 1·75 per cent. capping point in the next recap, Lothian councillors must decide how to take £12 million out of what is already a strictly disciplined base budget. Those decisions will be made this week, and £12 million of cuts must be made in education, social work and other services. Although the decisions have not finally been made, we will probably find that, when people leave their jobs, their jobs cannot be filled, there will be fewer teachers and people in community education, grants to voluntary organisations will be cut, and school meal charges may even go up.

Lothian region will have to make those cuts because it is not getting enough money from central Government. It has had a massive real-terms cut, which means that the amount it receives this year will be the same as that for next year. The cuts would have to be twice as great if Lothian were to give the normal pay increase. In its budget this week, it will have to allow no money whatever for wage increases for its employees. We may have heard of pay freezes since the second world war under various Governments, but I cannot remember a pay freeze that did not give at least some protection to low-paid workers.

We all know that thousands of council workers are on low pay. Let us consider the effect that the settlement will have on their lives. If the freeze is maintained for the next three years, their pay will be cut by 10 per cent. Many of the tax increases that we know will happen in April will penalise low-paid workers in particular—such as the freezing of allowances, increases in national insurance contributions and VAT on fuel; not one low-paid worker will get a penny of compensation for VAT on fuel.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend will realise that there will be a swingeing increase in rents for the thousands of Scottish Homes tenants that the Government control. That will affect very much the low-paid workers in local government. Once again, we are seeing the boot being put in to people who are least able to defend themselves.

Mr. Chisholm: I thank my hon. Friend for adding that point. Housing is not strictly the subject of this order, but it relates to the public sector pay freeze, and allows me to say that there will be a rent increase in Edinburgh for another reason, because Edinburgh does not get a penny of housing support grant. I will not trespass on that subject, but that must also be borne in mind.

The public sector pay freeze is built into Lothian region's budget and all the Government's budgetary calculations. They are assuming that it will hold for the

[Mr. Chisholm]

next three years. Public sector workers have an impossible choice. If the freeze does not hold, there will be job losses. From this settlement and the general public expenditure settlement, we are likely to get job losses, a pay freeze and a devastating effect on services—all because of the economic incompetence and mismanagement of the Government.

It is not even as though, at the end of the day, it will achieve the Government's objectives. They would argue that we must take that medicine to solve the problem of the budget deficit, yet many experts are questioning whether the Government can achieve, by taking so much demand out the economy through pay cuts and public expenditure cuts, the growth that is necessary for them to achieve their targets.

Studies have been made in the past week by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, the London Business School and the CBI, all of which say that the Government will not achieve their growth targets, and therefore will not solve their budget deficit problems. That leads to the obvious conclusion that the only way in which we shall have some restoration of public services, solve the deficit and achieve growth is by electing a Labour Government. That cannot come too soon.

9.13 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) took the present collection of Ministers round Paddy's market, he might have difficulty in finding a buyer. His speech, however, was very worth while. It brought us back to some of the basics—basic services affected by the orders.

There is a tendency for debates such as this to become ritualistic. The debates are also complicated by the fact that virtually no one understands the distribution formula that is being discussed. This is very much the Schleswig-Holstein question of Scottish politics. Only three hon. Members have ever understood it: one is dead, one is mad and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is no longer in the Chamber.

That ritualistic quality does not convey a message worthy of the subject. In the normal course of events, the Government describe the settlement as generous, and the Opposition call it miserly and inadequate. We quote figures from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, such as £1·20 and 10 per cent. increases in council tax. The Minister implies, or even says in some cases, that COSLA has a vested interest in the figures and that its estimates are, therefore, not to be trusted.

When the overall settlement for Scottish local government was made, I took the precaution of asking the House of Commons Library to give its opinion of what the settlement would mean for the revenue position of Scottish local government. I did that at least to demonstrate that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) was not the only person to use the services of the statisticians in the Library.

I think that the House of Commons Library provides a reasonably authoritative and independent estimate. It is not a hotbed of anything, apart from librarians. This is what the Library said about the settlements:

> "We estimate that after adjustment for changes in responsibilities this implies falls in real Government Support Expenditure (GSE) of 1·7 per cent. in 1994-95, 1·9 per cent. in 1995-96 and 0·7 per cent. in 1996-97. On an equivalent basis Aggregate Exchequer Finance . . . will fall in real terms by 2·9 per cent. in 1994-95, 2·7 per cent. in 1995-96 and 1 per cent. in 1996-97."

Even if the Minister is not prepared to accept figures from local government itself, is he prepared to accept argument and analysis from the House of Commons Library? Is he prepared to accept that that is the real position that faces local government in Scotland over the next few years of his stewardship? It is not good enough for him to point to individual councils that have succeeded in controlling their finances and to say that that proves that the overall settlement is adequate. That proves nothing except that some councils have managed their finances very well.

I was interested to hear hon. Members on both sides of the House compliment Grampian region on the running of its finances—although the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) seemed to have forgotten the complexion of the council, and I am not entirely convinced that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) knew it in the first place. In any event, Councillor Pearl Paul, Scottish National party finance convener of Grampian region, will no doubt take the tributes made to her—by implication, at least—in good faith and in good heart. Grampian region indeed deserves to be complimented, not only on freezing the council tax but, for example, on the excellent 10p bus scheme that it introduced this year, which has been lauded by old-age pensioners throughout the region.

Let me offer a quick catchline to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside, which he will doubtless hear rather more often during the coming weeks. What is the difference between the current administration of Grampian region and the Conservative party? The current administration helps pensioners and freezes the council tax; the Conservative party freezes the pensioners and helps itself to the tax.

Individual councillors and councils can do very well by prudent financial management and by looking after their own resources. That, however, does not alter the fact that, on the whole, the settlement and the orders are extremely bad news for the financial position of Scottish local government. We deserve an answer to the point about the overall settlement and the overall squeeze on local authority finance.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman kindly read out some of the observations of the House of Commons Library. I doubt that any hon. Member would suggest that our Library gives us anything other than splendid service. Would the hon. Gentleman care to read out the qualifications listed along with the figures that he gave?

Mr. Salmond: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that the only part that I did not read out was the following sentence:

> "As you will be aware, there was an announcement yesterday on local authority finance in Scotland."

Apart from that, I read out the whole of the Library's summary. I am happy to hand the full correspondence across the Chamber. I hope that, now that I have given the hon. Gentleman that information, he will join us in the Lobby tonight. Who knows? Wonders will never cease.

There is a real and important point in regard to what the settlements mean for Scottish local government. The

Minister should tell us a bit more about the overall settlement and not about individual success stories of councils in Grampian or elsewhere.

Scottish local councils and councillors are underpaid, under-appreciated and under the thumb of central Government. That position is deleterious to good local government administration. By and large, local councils and councillors in Scotland discharge their responsibilities very well. There are individual exceptions. Some councils are blots on the landscape of Scottish local government. When Ministers and the Labour Front-Bench team fling at each other the extreme examples of Kyle and Carrick and Monklands, it does not add to the debate and both parties are on a loser.

I have another question on finance. What evidence can the Minister produce to show that withdrawing powers from Scottish local government—powers that are covered by the revenue support grants—will lead to the better administration of public services in Scotland? What evidence can he produce that control by quango is more economically efficient than control by democratic local government? What evidence has emerged from the recent experiences of the Greater Glasgow health board and various local enterprise companies that control by quango, adding to the 5,000 quango members appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the £5·5 billion—40 per cent.—of the Scottish Office budget already controlled by quango, will be in the best interests of the economic administration of services?

In the administration of finance, local government and local democracy have a better track record than quango government. Every local democratic council, even Monklands, has one essential saving grace. If Monklands district council does not discharge its responsibilities properly, its electorate can get rid of it at the next electoral opportunity. That check on efficiency is not available to anyone who wants to get rid of quango members who are clearly not allocating and carrying out their responsibilities properly. I can see that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are becoming somewhat restless about the comparisons that I am drawing, but they are relevant to the economics of the revenue support grant in Scottish local government. Local government provides both the best economic and democratic means of allocating finance for important services.

My next argument relates to the cost implications of the changes, including the £5 million that is mentioned in the orders. There is a good argument that single-tier local government will be more efficient. There is academic evidence based on the fact that smaller councils have a good track record on efficiency. I grant that to the Minister, but he should also face the fact that severe questions surround the estimates on the changes to Scottish local government that he has provided to the House. The estimates of other bodies seem to be a good deal more competent and soundly based than the Minister's. Apart from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other participants in the debate, independent organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy are severely critical of his estimates. The range of estimates also tend to show that the Minister is not confident about the figures that he has put forward.

As the Minister knows, before I fell among thieves in this place, I used to turn a penny as a professional economist. It was well known in the economics profession that, to safeguard one's back against future inquiry, one could conduct a scenario analysis. One would present not a single figure for projections and forecasts but a wide range of figures so that one might blunder into the right estimate. That appears to be exactly what the Government have done.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked the Minister a question last Wednesday. Incidentally, the hon. Gentleman should be running a seminar on how to ask questions during Scottish questions, from which many hon. Members might benefit. When he asked the Minister to give to the nearest £10 million his latest estimate of the changes in Scottish local government, the Minister's eyes glazed over. At the very least, that should not make us confident that there had been a proper and adequate financial examination of the figures.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not know whether I fall into the category of thieves among which the hon. Gentleman has fallen in this place, but I do agree with him that we have not had from the Scottish Office any suggestion of the way in which it has arrived at its figures. At the least, it owes the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the rest of us some explanation of how it has arrived at its figures because, bluntly, Miss Anna Capaldi and her Touche Ross figures have just been exposed as being totally flawed—in fact, I do not know how Touche Ross got taxpayers' money.

Mr. Salmond: I happily exclude the hon. Gentleman and myself from the category of thieves into which we have both fallen. I am not so sure that I would be excluding Touche Ross, if we consider the benefits that have been gained for itself from its expensive report into the financing of Scottish local government. I think that the argument has been well made once again by the hon. Gentleman.

I want to make two final arguments, in summary. I hope that the Minister will not continue to make the argument that I hear sometimes from his lips, that somehow, when the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which is the representative organisation for local government, says something it is necessarily in the pockets of the Opposition parties and necessarily its viewpoints and arguments must be disregarded. I merely draw to his attention the fact that the president of COSLA, Charles Gray, is one of the more independent-minded members of the Labour party in Scotland and has a known track record of saying things in an extremely independent way. When someone such as Charles Gray makes comments on those matters, his arguments deserve to be taken on their merits. I should like some indication, at least, that the Minister is prepared to do that and not allow Charles Gray to fall victim to the "Stalinist tendency" that has been identified in the ranks of certain political parties in Scotland.

Secondly, and lastly, I should like the Minister to show some appreciation of the fact that the debate is not just another ritual debate about the revenue support grant orders. As the hon. Member for Provan reminded us, the debate affects finance, and real services which affect real people. I hope that if the House gives leave to the Minister to sum up the proceedings this evening, there will be some sign in his closing speech—which I do not think was there in much of his opening speech—that he realises the importance to people of the services that we are debating this evening.

9.26 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The debate has been characterised by some excellent contributions by Opposition Members and by total ignorance about local government displayed by Conservative Members.

I begin by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), who made a tremendously passionate and clear speech about the implications of the orders for ordinary people outside the House. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) was equally right when he drew attention to the ritualistic nature of the way in which we debate rate support grant orders and housing support grant orders. They become just another item on the agenda of the business of the House and we sometimes forget how much they matter to people and how measures that we can joke about and make cheap debating points about across the Chamber affect people's lives and mean more suffering and more deprivation for everyone. It is important that we try to remember that and keep our remarks to the point of the debate.

This is a very disappointing settlement for local authorities in Scotland, and it is not only hon. Members who have long experience of local government who are saying that but local government itself. Of course the Minister would argue back that local government "would say that, wouldn't it", saying that it has an interest to argue that it is a poor settlement. As the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said, the objective analysis of the settlement that is provided by the House of Commons Library suggests that the settlement is worse than does the analysis by COSLA. We should keep that in mind when we consider the figures.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) drew attention to the fact that most local government expenditure is tied up with employing people; the wages bill accounts for most of it. Ingeniously, he argued that we can cut that out of the rate support grant settlement—freeze employment, not think about employing any more people and so on. He said that the settlement is generous if one considers only the 40 per cent. expenditure that remains after one thinks about employment.

I draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside the fact that the local government services that are provided across Scotland are people-intensive. They have to be people-intensive. They are about employing people. Government statistics show that there are more pensioners in Scotland, and more people aged over 85, than there ever have been before. That fact in itself means that local government needs to employ more people to look after the elderly. There will have to be more home helps and social workers—residential and domiciliary—and more warden support and meals on wheels. The provision of such services means people being employed to deliver them—there is no way around that. One cannot exclude people costs.

Mr. Kynoch: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the figure that I cited for the revenue support grant increase excluded community care and that the increase in revenue support grant could be applied to the non-wages element if the wages element were frozen?

Mr. McAllion: The hon. Gentleman says that the figure that he cited excluded care in the community; but it is not only care in the community that is people intensive; all the services provided by local government are people intensive. For example, everyone admits that crime is a massive problem in Scotland, especially in the urban areas. There are more offenders than ever before. Local councils provide offender services and need social workers to look after offenders. Victim Support is in its infancy in Scotland and if it is to grow and if victims are to get the proper care and attention that they require, that will have to be provided by local authorities and regional councils and the social workers employed by them.

It is disingenuous of the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside to argue that we can discuss local government services without talking about local government employees. Local government services are all about local government employees. If one reduces the number of local government employees, one reduces local government services to people who need them. If Conservative Members do not understand that simple fact, they do not deserve to be representing their constituencies.

Mr. Bill Walker: I happen to agree with the hon. Gentleman that local government services are largely about people doing jobs on behalf of the community. I also agree with what he said about issues such as law and order —we all think that more money should probably be spent. However, a large percentage of the cost involved in the provision of services is taken up by human factors such as wages. There is nothing odd about that. Retail distributors know that it is not uncommon for 60 per cent. of their costs to be accounted for by wages, but one can increase efficiency and make savings by changing the way in which services are delivered. The hon. Gentleman must accept that that is as true in local government as it is in distribution.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In other words, reduce employment.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has answered the hon. Gentleman's point. The retail industry is all about low wages, reducing the number of employees and cutting corners. One cannot cut corners when providing services for vulnerable people. Cutting corners in the provision of such services means that the vulnerable suffer and end up being sacrificed for the sake of levying a council tax lower than might otherwise have been the case had proper services been provided by the local authority. That is what Conservative Members favour.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Does my hon. Friend agree that, when the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) refers to the need for efficiency and compares public services to retail, he is making a fundamental mistake? One cannot compare a home help with someone working in retail, in a shop. If efficiency is to be improved, presumably a home help will have to look after more old people. A better service would result in home helps looking after fewer people more intensively, which is the very opposite of private sector efficiency.

Mr. McAllion: My hon. Friend speaks from direct and recent experience of working on a major regional council. He knows what it means to deliver services to people in a large part of Scotland. If some Conservative Members had come from a local government background, we might not be debating such orders.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. McAllion: I cannot give way again. I must make progress. The hon. Gentleman has been here since 1979 and it is many years since he worked in local government, if he ever did.

I believe that a copy of the brief from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has been given to every hon. Member. The first sentence states:

> "The Convention re-affirms its earlier view that on average Council Tax bills are likely to increase by about 10 per cent. or £1·20 per week next year as a result of the settlement proposals".

COSLA is not saying that the council tax will increase because inflation is going up, because local authority wage settlements are going up or because local authority services are being increased; it is talking about council taxes going up by £1·20 as a direct result of the revenue support grant that the Government have made available to local authorities in Scotland.

That example is not an isolated one. As many hon. Members have pointed out again and again, it is only two weeks since we debated an order on the housing support grant which will inevitably increase rents across Scotland. We have also recently heard about the increase in NHS prescription charges. We have heard about the massive increases in income tax that the Government are to introduce in April. We all know about VAT on fuel. If we consider all those things together, a pattern begins to emerge. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has set himself the target of eliminating the public sector borrowing requirement, which currently stands at £45 billion, by 1997-98. He will do that by cutting public services in every way that he can think of. One way is to cut back on the funding for local government, as the order shows.

COSLA makes that point very clearly. It says that the level of grant-related expenditure for next year is well below the figures that it has identified as being necessary to maintain the level of services available in local authorities at the moment. If COSLA says that the amount is not enough even to maintain services, against a background of increasing unemployment in Scotland—that is the official level of unemployment and not the unofficial level, which is much higher—and against a background of massively increasing poverty in Scotland, what does that imply for ordinary people whom we are meant to represent here?

Tayside regional council social work department recently sent me a report. It considered the figures from the 1991 census. It went through a number of the changes in my part of Scotland over the past 10 years. I suspect that they are fairly typical of what is happening in the rest of Scotland. The department pointed out that there has been a massive increase in the percentage of single-parent households. As there are more single-parent households, there is a need for greater child care facilities to be provided through local authorities.

There is also a need for more nursery provision through local authorities and there is a need for more bridging schemes to allow single parents to make the jump from relying on benefit to going back into employment. There is a need for employment schemes to be run by local authorities. There is a massive need for local authorities to increase their expenditure at a time when the Government are cutting the RSG that is available to local authorities in Scotland.

The department points out that, over the past 10 years, there has been a large increase in the percentage of people living in the area who are recorded as being permanently sick and who are on invalidity benefit. The Secretary of State for Social Security has already told us that he intends to eliminate about 700,000 people who are currently in receipt of invalidity benefit. When they come off invalidity benefit, they will go back on income support. They will then need social work services which are provided through the local authority. When they look to the local authority to provide those services, they will find that the Government have cut the grant and that the local authorities are, therefore, unable to help them. The situation will be even worse than it is at the moment. So it goes on.

The percentage of low-income families across the city of Dundee has not changed since 1981. On many occasions, I have heard the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Under-Secretary, shout about the British economic miracle that took place in the 1980s. Where was the British economic miracle in Dundee, in Glasgow, in Edinburgh or in Aberdeen? The percentage of people living on low incomes is the same as it was 10 years ago. The economic miracle bypassed them; they have never had access to it. Those people need strong local authorities which are able to provide them with the services that they need.

One point that has not been brought out concerns the aggregate external finance figures which are provided in the order. They show, for example, that Tayside region will get a percentage increase next year of 2·2 per cent. As has been pointed out time and time again, that does not make an allowance for care in the community. Once we make an allowance for that, we are talking about a very small increase of less than 1 per cent. or even about a cut, yet councils will face increased demands for their services. There will be a cut in the aggregate external finance available to Dundee district council.

The grant-aided expenditure figures within the aggregate external finance figures show that Tayside regional council will have an increase of 2·56 per cent. The Secretary of State will use that figure for capping purposes. The right hon. Gentleman is actually encouraging Tayside regional council to increase its expenditure above the funding that he is making available to it. That argument applies even more to Dundee district council; its grant-aided figure allows for an increase of up to 5 per cent. but funding is not provided to cover it.

In effect, the Minister is saying that he is withdrawing central Government support for local government services. At the same time, he is allowing local councils to increase their expenditure, in the hope that he will make local council tax payers pay for that before the Secretary of State steps in to cap the councils. The Secretary of State is desperate to cut public expenditure and he is doing so by back-door methods. He hopes that, at the end of the day, local authorities will be forced to increase their council tax and that they will be blamed for that, and that he and the Government will not be blamed for cutting support for local authorities. That is completely despicable.

It is assumed that any pay awards will be met from efficiency savings. We have heard much nonsense about what that means. Teachers and local government workers have made pay demands which are in excess of 10 per cent. If even 50 per cent. of their demands are met, there will be tremendous cuts in local government services.

We have heard much about efficiency savings. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said that one of

[Mr. McAllion]

the greatest efficiency savings that could be made arises from school closures. Do Conservative Members think that they should advocate school closures when people in Scotland are calling out for child care facilities and increased nursery provision? The only matter that we are discussing is how to shut schools and pay off teachers to make savings for local authorities. It does not make sense.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North referred to schools falling below what he called the economic level. I remember that argument being used in respect of the mines back in 1984. Uneconomic pits had to be shut down. Why do not Conservative Members, in particular the hon. Member for Dumfries and the right hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), use that argument about farmers? Why do they not say that uneconomic farms have to close down? Why do they pay surpluses to farmers? Why do they subsidise them to set aside fields that they do not even farm? They actually give them public money to do that. We never hear Conservative arguments about economic farms because farmers generally vote Tory. That is why the Government are prepared to pay massive subsidies to farmers.

When it comes to schools and children's futures, we hear Conservative Members talk nonsense about uneconomic schools and having to close them down and leaving kids on the scrap heap. It is no wonder people turn to drugs or to crime, bearing in mind the way that they are treated by the Government. If the debate proves anything, it proves what the Scottish people have always said—that is, that the Conservative party is not fit to be in government. The sooner the people in the south of England realise that, the better it will be for the whole United Kingdom.

9.42 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I shall be very brief because some of my hon. Friends also want to speak.

I should like to add to what my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) said about the Lothian region. The people whom I represent in Midlothian district council pay regional and district council rates. Midlothian district council has told me that its grant-aided expenditure for 1994 means a reduction of 0·46 per cent. When we boil that down to money, we see that the district council will lose £439,000 out of a budget of £10·287 million.

The gearing effect means that the council tax will rise by 20 per cent. We will have that against a backcloth of unemployment, a wage freeze, lower-paid workers, and even VAT on fuel. The Secretary of State has told us the expenditure that it is appropriate for authorities to spend. Where will economies be made? They will be made among people who can least afford them.

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is listening not to me but to one of his colleagues who would say that what I am saying is a load of nonsense anyway. It is not nonsense. I am making a plea on behalf of not only my constituents but many others in a similar plight who pay rates to district councils.

I was a county councillor and a regional councillor for 16 years and I know what it means when the Government make cuts. I fought against both Labour and Tory Government cuts in the past. I became the ex-chairman of the Labour group because I fought against the Callaghan Government on cuts. I was not elected to local government for cuts; I was elected to give services to the people whom I represented. That is what we are trying to do here. We are trying to tell the Government that public expenditure cuts are bad. Tory Members, the Minister and the Government seem to think that cuts in public expenditure are great. That is the way with rates and everything; the stock exchange will hit the ceiling.

Many companies are waiting for the day when the Government start to spend money in local government. I see that as a way of getting out of the recession and giving people what they deserve. There are many other things that the Government are delaying for which we will have to pay a high price in the future. I am talking about the renewal of sewers, housing, hospitals and many other things that come under the so-called umbrella of capital expenditure.

The people of Midlothian are no different from anyone else. They have had cuts. All their industries have been decimated—the coal industry, the carpet industry and the paper industry before that. Many industries, especially electronics, were brought in supposedly to save the locality that I represent. However, we find that they are moving out.

All I can see is an area that needs help and a council that cares. By the way, we may be hoist by our own petard because the council spends money on making the place more beneficial to investors and others in the area. There is hidden poverty behind the facade of so-called prosperity. When we look at the unemployment figures and so on, we see that there is poverty in the community. I have made many appeals to the Secretary of State on behalf of our young people. They cannot get jobs in the collieries or elsewhere. This direct cut in district council expenditure is one of many cuts that these people cannot afford.

I am making a plea to the Secretary of State and I want an answer: how can the Government justify this cut? What have the people of Midlothian or Scotland done to deserve it? Is it the result of the Government's incompetence? As I see it, it goes back to black Wednesday. We are all paying the price for the incompetence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government.

9.47 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Once again, the Secretary of State and the Minister have got the situation wrong with regard to Scotland. They have come forward with proposals that will mean further cuts in the quality of life for the people whom I represent.

Undoubtedly, some of the profound statements made by my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) went into the deaf ears of the Minister who will blunder on tonight and make the usual decision—cuts, cuts and cuts. He will not listen to my hon. Friend's plea for social services, home help and services for the mentally handicapped. We have already heard pleas about dealing with crime in Scotland. Once again, the Minister will do nothing to help to reduce crime in Scotland, which will continue to rise. We will continue to have the problem of drug barons having more money than the police to furnish their evil trade in drugs.

Earlier, I made an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) about nursery provision, for which there is a tremendous demand in my area. Unfortunately, local government does not have the wherewithal because of the Government's continued savage denial of local finance. Local government cannot get young folk into pre-five education quick enough because there is not enough money.

I hope that the Minister is listening to the point that I am going to raise. Scotland has one of the longest coastlines in Europe; we have literally thousands of miles of coastline. Scotland is one of the most important countries for tourism in Europe, and certainly we contribute a considerable amount to the coffers of Great Britain. Tourists come not just to visit the City of London, Manchester or Birmingham, but to visit Scotland. The revenue that that provides to this country is enormous. If we spent some time, consideration and money in that area, that revenue could increase.

I remember not long ago the town of Salou in Spain was castigated in the papers, and rightly so, for sewage problems which created an unhealthy situation for tourists. Did that fall on deaf ears? No. The people of Spain and Salou realised the consequences of that and proceeded not to bury the sewage or hide it out of sight, but to do something about it. They spent £250 million to solve the problem and to make sure that Salou became an admirable, decent and healthy place to go and have a holiday.

The Government do not recognise the role that local government has to play to ensure that the environment in Scotland is brought up to a decent standard. That would ensure that the American, Canadian, Australian and Japanese tourists all come and spend their money. But what do the Government do?

I often fly to London, and the situation has got that bad that one can see the devastation from up in an airplane. One can see quarries unfilled, and dirty and dank places. When one drives through Britain, what does one see? Rubbish is dumped by the side of the road. There is household and domestic rubbish and, worse, there is business rubbish from businesses which cannot afford to pay the going rate. They are tipping on the fly at night all around the country, and especially in Scotland.

Renfrewshire is becoming one huge tip, because the Government are not providing enough money to allow local companies to develop and dump their rubbish legally. I also use the train, and when I go through Britain and look out of the window it is an appalling sight. There is rubbish strewn about everywhere, and falling buildings and devastation. The Government do nothing.

At one time, folk used to sing songs about the River Clyde. "What a wonderful place, the name of it fills me with pride". If you were going up the Clyde in your wee boat tonight, Madam Speaker, you would need a big brush to clean away the stuff at the side of it after you docked it. I can assure you that our beautiful beaches have been turned into rubbish dumps.

The Minister does not need to believe me. I am sure that he will believe one of the great newspapers of Scotland, the *Evening Times*, which mentioned that about 40,000 pieces of rubbish had been dug up from a stretch of about one mile on the Ayrshire coast. That is not very far from where the Minister and I live. We do not just fly over rubbish or drive through it—we also sail thorough it.

The Government have not taken on board the serious point that if we wish tourists to come and spend money in Scotland, we must ensure that local government gets sufficient money to clean up our beaches. We must ensure that the water supply meets the standards of the European directive, and we must ensure that our sewerage system is the best in the world, and not the worst.

I say to the Minister that, once again, the people of Scotland are getting a shabby deal from the Government. Once again, the Government are savagely reducing the quality of life. Once again, they are denying our people the ability to make a decent living, by failing to ensure that there is a solid and decent tourist industry. I shall finish on this note: why does the Minister not do the right thing and resign?

9.54 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Madam Speaker, time-wise we need to press on, but I should like to say that I am appalled by the consequences of the unpicking of the Lothian social work department. My hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm), for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who was a councillor in Edinburgh, and other colleagues have outlined general worries. In view of the time, I shall simply ask six precise questions following long and detailed conversations with John Chant, who is the longest serving director of social work in Britain. He has rightly been awarded a CBE for his work.

First, in removing the statutory requirement to establish a social work committee and appoint a director of social work, how does the Minister envisage that the new councils will carry out their statutory and other responsibilities to provide for the social welfare of their community and ensure accountability for the development of policy and the delivery of service? That question has not yet been answered.

Secondly, is the Minister confident that all of the new councils will be of a size that will enable them to provide the full range of services currently offered by mainland regional social work departments? I pay tribute to what has been done in Strathclyde, Lothian, Tayside and elsewhere in the advancement of social work in recent years. It is a crying shame—I shall not use stronger language—that all the work should be unpicked when Members of Parliament know at first hand from our day-to-day work how it benefits our constituents.

Thirdly, what requirements does the Minister intend to place on the new councils to ensure the preparation of community care plans and plans for the development of criminal justice and child care services? What steps does he intend to take to ensure that such plans are drawn up by people with the relevant qualifications and experience? It is far from clear that the smaller new councils will have such people, particularly specialists.

Fourthly, how does the Minister intend to ensure that the new councils put in place proper systems of professional accountability, develop social care policies, provide appropriate services and deliver those services in an accountable manner? How is that to be done? We have not been told.

Fifthly, in the absence of a social work committee or a director of social work, what arrangements does the Minister propose to make to ensure that sufficient staff are trained and deployed to meet the statutory requirements of the mental health and child care legislation? There has been no indication of how that will be done. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) knows a great deal about such matters.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Unfortunately, he serves on the Standing Committee which is considering the Criminal Justice Bill, not the Committee considering the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Dr. Godman: Does my hon. Friend accept that the burdens that are placed on our social work departments will be exacerbated by many of the clauses in the Criminal Justice Bill? Those additional burdens have been ignored by the odd-job lot on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Dalyell: As the member of the Scottish Labour group on the Criminal Justice Bill, my hon. Friend is in a position to know. It is a serious matter.

Sixthly, local authorities are now substantial purchasers of social care services. How do the Government intend to ensure that local authorities give first consideration to the needs of the person to be served and the quality of care provided? What steps have been proposed to avoid service provision being led solely on the basis of cost? Do the Government intend to require local authorities to consider and evaluate any proposed contract for the provision of social care services by a suitably qualified or experienced person?

All my colleagues on the Opposition Benches could go on and on about the subject. Those questions have to be answered very soon and not at the fag end of the Committee stage of any Bill.

10 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): The debate has once again highlighted the divide in the House on local government issues. One the one hand, the Government and their supporters are unwilling, on any occasion, to praise the tremendous work done in Scotland by the employees who provide some of the best services that one can find anywhere in Europe. We have heard the usual snide comments about inefficiency and lack of value for money. That is not the local government scene that Opposition Members know. We know that local government provides excellent services in Scotland and it would at least show a little humility if the Government sometimes allowed their consciences to get the better of them and if they praised the excellent work that is done.

On the other hand, Opposition Members praise the work going on. We have to sit through debates on local government in Committee and in the House, but we hear precious little appreciation of the efficiency, effectiveness and economy demonstrated by Scottish local authorities, in the face of the tremendous difficulties that have been heaped on them year after year by the Conservative Administration.

The contribution by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) was one of the highlights of the debate. He made a passionate speech and spoke at first hand about the real issues facing Scotland and the real context within which the revenue support grant settlement should be viewed. He mentioned poverty, unemployment and many of the other problems that local authorities are trying to tackle. Sadly, they are doing so in very difficult circumstances because of the Government's policies, attitudes and prejudices.

Such debates are always characterised by technicalities. The Government like to hide behind a smokescreen of revenue support grant orders. We hear from Government Ministers that every order is better than those of the previous year. We hear that the order will allow councils to cut council taxes and to expand services. If any of that were true, there might be something in Government policies for Opposition Members to praise, but the local government settlement does none of those things. It is another smokescreen to hide continuing cuts at the very heart of local government in Scotland.

As if the local authority settlement were not bad enough, the existing problems of cash-starved services endure. We can see that from the problems with crime, care in the community, housing and—at a time of rising unemployment—economic development.

One other consideration will loom large for the Government and for Ministers during the next two or three years—reorganisation. How eloquently my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) posed his questions about this crazy reorganisation and the bill, which will have to be measured in higher council taxes for the Scots or in massive cuts in services and dramatic job losses.

That is the price that we are paying and will continue to pay for the Government's incompetence and mismanagement of the Scottish economy and—what is more important—for a Government who, after 15 years, have refused to face up to the fact that we have genuine and endemic structural problems in Scotland, which are not being tackled.

This evening, it is important for us to move beyond the reckless and irresponsible behaviour of the motley crew on the Government Benches and to talk about the settlement. We have heard that, in cash terms, it is supposed to be yet another that captures the plaudits, as far as the Government are concerned, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Over the next three years, we will witness a cut of a third of £1 billion in real terms from local authority budgets. How can that be squared with an excellent settlement on revenue support? It simply cannot, because significant real terms cuts will be made. How do the Government measure up to that? Is the Minister willing to explain away that cut or is he willing to carry on with the smokescreen in an attempt to deceive Scottish public opinion into thinking that we are making significant progress?

Another issue that we must consider is the naive simplicity demonstrated, once again, by Conservative Back Benchers. We have heard, of course, of the links between the local authority settlement and the possible cuts in or freezing of council tax levels. The Government do not understand that those levels are based on a number of factors, not just the revenue support grant settlement. Those factors include expenditure levels, the possibility of capping and non-statutory expenditure in which many local authorities are involved. My own regional council, for example, provides one of the best concessionary transport systems anywhere in Britain. For its trouble, however, it does not get a penny from this mean Government.

The Prime Minister is always talking about expanding nursery provision, but "Where's the beef, Prime Minister?" In Scotland, some of the excellent provision does not get any help from the Government. We have heard enough from the Government about how they help out local authority services, but in key services non-statutory spending is going ahead because Labour councils care about and appreciate real need, unlike the Government.

The Government's settlement falls well short of what would be needed, in real terms, to keep ahead of inflation. At a time of massive problems, it also falls well short of the expectations of Scots. It falls well below the expectations of local authority leaders. Senior officials in local government, of course, know at first hand the problems that they face.

We must also consider services. The settlement will do nothing to deal with the 1 million crimes that are committed in Scotland every year. We have a crime epidemic under the so-called law and order party. The settlement will not provide for an extra policeman or provide an extra opportunity for a young person involved in crime to be caught. Once again, we see the nonsense of a settlement that does not match expectations in an area where the Government are trying to take credit.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Provan said, the settlement will not help to tackle the endemic problems of poverty. Some 900,000 Scots, or one in six, live in families where income support is the only source of income. How do the orders square with the reality of misery for hundreds of thousands of people in Scotland and nearly 250,000 children under the age of 16? They simply do not. The Government are trying to deceive all who listen to their hollow promises about real improvements in revenue support grant.

Unemployment has been mentioned by my hon. Friends. The Government have seen unemployment rise in Scotland by nearly 4,000 a week in the past month. Again, they are constraining our local authorities from tackling economic development in the way that they want. We could put the unemployed back to work. Our local authorities could help. We could give the young people the skills that they need, but we need the tools to do that. That means hard cash, not vacuous comments from a Government who simply do not care, but who try to deceive people into thinking that they do.

According to the revenue support grant settlement, £5 million will go towards local government costs of reorganisation. Even by the Government's estimates, however, those costs will be £200 million. According to COSLA's expectations, they will be nearly £720 million. Once again, however, we find that the Government will not provide any substantial help towards the massive costs involved.

The settlement is a bad one by any stretch of the imagination. It is a settlment that will steal a third of £1 billion from local authorities and will not go even towards providing the costs, of up to £720 million, of the crazy reorganisation. The message to Government is clear and simple: you can fool some of the people all of the time, but Scots believe that it is time for a rethink about the need for serious money to tackle the serious problem that Scotland is enduring.

10.9 pm

Mr. Stewart: May I make three points in winding up the debate? First, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) criticised a speech that I did not make rather than the one that I made. None of my hon. Friends has criticised the hard work done by many people in local government. whatever their political party, and officials throughout Scotland.

Secondly, I understand that the Opposition intend to vote against the orders. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) confirmed that. As we know from the press, he is a man of great parliamentary guile and, as he constantly boasts, lots of Conservative Members will doubtless vote with him in the Lobby. I point out for the record that, if he succeeds in the vote on the first order, he will deprive local authorities in Scotland of £31·8 million to which they are entitled. If he succeeds in the vote on the second order, he will deprive local authorities in Scotland of £100 million a week from the beginning of April. But if that is the Labour party's policy, so be it.

Thirdly, I have wound up these debates when the right hon. Bruce Millan and the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) have led for the Opposition. All three right hon. and hon. Gentlemen had one thing in common: they gave every impression that they had read the orders and were aware of the details and figures concerned. The hon. Member for Hamilton hardly referred to the order.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: No, I must get on for a moment.

My hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch), and for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) rightly supported the orders.

Before I deal with some of the general points that have been raised, may I respond to some of the detailed points? The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) made a fair point about the usefulness of planning for current local authority expenditure. I accept that point in principle, which is why last year, for the first time, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced not only Government support expenditure and aggregate Exchequer finance figures for 1994-95, but his plans for the forward two years of the 1993 public expenditure survey—1995-96 and 1996-97. The hon. Gentleman will accept the constraints, but in principle he made a fair and proper point.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) argued that the client group methodology was biased against rural authorities. I have heard urban authorities argue that the methodology is biased in favour of rural authorities, but representations from his authority and others will no doubt continue.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked me a specific question about the differences in the distribution between the city of Aberdeen and Kincardine and Deeside. Those relate to the two authorities' different loan and leasing charges this year. As it is fairly late in the evening, may I write to the hon. Gentleman explaining that point in detail?

Throughout the debate, Opposition Members have argued that local government in Scotland was badly treated by this Conservative Government compared to the last Labour Government. I remind them that, on the 1977-78 settlement, the president of COSLA said:

> "To have been told by the Secretary of State that the percentage grant was being savagely cut by 4 per cent. was something none of us expected."

I refer Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm), to an excellent recent article by David Begg, chairman of the finance committee of Lothian regional council.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Begg is much respected by Opposition Members, and he has said that, according to his

[Mr. Stewart]

estimates, local government employment has increased in Scotland by 3·9 per cent., in full-time equivalent jobs. He went on, in the *Local Government Chronicle* of 9 February, to say that his figures

> "destroy the myth that 14 years of Conservative Government have decimated services and destroyed jobs."

I commend the article to Opposition Members.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Am I right in thinking that the debate on the orders can continue until 11.30 pm? The Minister seems painfully unaware of that, given his refusal to give way to hon. Members who have sat through the entire debate. Is there some agreement to which neither you nor I is a party about when we must proceed to vote on these orders?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct: I am party to no agreement. The debate can go on until 11.30 pm

Mr. Stewart: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was about to give way to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)—I just wanted to get my point on the record.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister intend to write to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) dealing with each of his six important questions about the operation of our social work departments? If so, will the hon. Gentleman be good enough to put a copy of his letter in the Library? They were criticial questions dealing with the need to continue the efficient operation of our social work departments.

Mr. Stewart: Of course, the hon. Gentleman's questions were in order, but he will recognise that they were not specifically related to the 1994-95 settlement. They were, however, related to the broader issues covered by the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, and if the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raises those questions in Committee, I shall be happy to deal with them. If not, I shall of course respond to him in writing and put a copy of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Salmond: The Minister heard me refer to a Library analysis which seems to demonstrate a continuing squeeze on Scottish local government over the next three years. I know that the figures have been supplied to the hon. Gentleman by his new parliamentary private secretary—the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Does he broadly accept the Library's analysis?

Mr. Stewart: I believe that this is a realistic but tight settlement. Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has ever said anything different. I would point out, though, that per capita expenditure in Scotland is 34 per cent. higher than it is in England and 26 per cent. higher than it is in Wales. I hope, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman will not maintain that Scotland is being hard done by in this settlement. The total level of support for Scottish local authorities, compared with support for English and Welsh authorities, is very high.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There is a great deal of noise in the Chamber, and I am sure that the Minister missed my question about the Library figures—at any rate, he avoided answering it.

Madam Speaker: A number of conversations are going on. I do not want to stop them, but I should be obliged if they were not quite so noisy.

Mr. Stewart: I believe that, although the settlement is tight—nobody denies that—it is realistic in terms of the increases in local authority expenditure that have been made in Scotland in recent years against a background of the need for public expenditure constraint. I am grateful to my hon. Friends for warmly welcoming the settlement as realistic and reasonable. I commend the orders to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 266.

Division No. 148] **[10.19 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie

Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*

Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*

O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. John Spellar.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Resolved,

That the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

PETITION

Warren Drive and Snows Hill Crescent, Blackpool

10.32 pm

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I wish to present a petition on behalf of the Warren Drive and Snows Hill Crescent Action Group, whose members live in my constituency. They are concerned about proposals in Blackpool borough council's local plan for the area which would result in severe traffic problems, detrimental social effects and disastrous environmental consequences in the only open green spaces left in this otherwise densely populated residental area. The petition has been signed by 808 people.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Government to declare the said land to be public open space.

To lie upon the Table.

Traffic Growth (Blaby)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.36 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): It is fitting that I should follow the presentation of that petition, which was also concerned with yet further pressure of the growth of traffic.

I believe that the growth of traffic is one of the biggest long-term problems—if not the biggest—facing the United Kingdom today. In my constituency of Blaby in south Leicestershire, which used to be a rural area before 1962, much has changed. Not all the change has been good; some has been excellent, but most of that change has been due to the motor car. In 1962, the M1 was built up as far as Lutterworth. That was followed by the M6—the M6-M1 junction is in the south of my constituency—and then by the M69. Rural calm in my constituency has been shattered for ever as traffic growth on all roads has increased.

The debate is aimed to express the unhappiness of my constituents arising from the growth of traffic, and to ensure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is in no doubt as to the scale of the problem in this one constituency, this one region of the country, but is repeated nationally.

The growth of traffic impinges on all aspects of life —first, and most obviously, noise. People cannot sleep at night. People are for ever with the hum of traffic in their ears. There is also pollution, and the carbon emissions from traffic relate to our Rio commitments.

We also have asthma, which is currently the subject of much debate in the newspapers, and general health problems. We have the danger from traffic. When I was a child, I used to bicyle to school. No longer is that possible. We have the real stress caused by the growth of traffic and congestion. We have damage to the environment. We also have light pollution, about which constituents are beginning to write to me, as innumerable road lights lead to one being able, as it was described at the weekend, to read a book throughout the night in many villages.

Forecasts vary, but most would suggest that traffic will approximately double in the next 30 to 40 years, and the Department of Transport's forecasts state, in a written answer to me, that the growth in car traffic is forecast to be between 57 and 87 per cent. between 1994 and 2025 and the growth in heavy goods vehicle traffic during the same period is forecast to be between 54 per cent. and 110 per cent.

What is our response to be? Will we double the number of roads? I read from a letter that I believe encapsulates the situation. It is from a constituent who has lived on the Leicester road in Glen Parva for 25 years. He writes:

> "On first moving to my home the road was an attractive elm tree lined avenue with light traffic even at peak times. Sunday was quiet and gardens in evening time were akin to being in the countryside. The 'dawn chorus' of birdsong was interrupted by isolated passing vehicles or at worst a single public service bus.
>
> There has been an insidious deterioration of living conditions adjacent to the A426 over the years, at the root of which I consider to be the increase in vehicular traffic, its density, nature and behaviour.
>
> Traffic noise under normal flowing conditions is now at such a level that normal conversation in the frontage of the house is not possible and proper rest within front bedrooms is elusive; the constant road noise of passing vehicles is disturbing. There is virtually no time of day or night—weekday and weekend—when no traffic noise is discernible."

He continues in the same vein. My constituent wants the Glen Parva bypass to be built. It has been planned; indeed, the proposals were drawn up 30 years ago.

Development has taken place in the region because it was believed that the road would be built to take the traffic flow but, understandably, people living near the proposed route are very upset. Ironically, the route follows two old and quieter transport systems—the Grand Union canal and a dismantled railway.

Although the Department of Transport has not funded the Glen Parva bypass this year, I believe that it will be built, backed by all the locally elected representatives in my constituency. But will it be enough? In 15 or 20 years' time, will we want another, wider road and will the Leicester road be congested again? I fear so unless we have an entirely new approach to dealing with traffic growth.

It was announced today that the M1 in the north of the constituency is to be widened to four lanes each way between junctions 21 and 21A in the next financial year, 1994-95. The M1 cuts deeply into Leicester Forest East, making life hell for those who live near it. Houses are blighted, and lives are disrupted.

Of course, the M1 was not so noisy when people bought their houses, and they want proper noise screening. Indeed, the Department of Transport has given an assurance that it will extend the planned noise screens all the way along the route through Leicester Forest East. However, my constituents and I want more. My constituents want proper compensation for the disruption of their lives, for the nightmare that their lives have become.

Sadly, the nightmare continues. At a recent Department of Transport presentation in the constituency, a civil servant from the Department said that the M1 would need to be widened further by the end of the decade. If that is true, will the Department consider buying properties now to end the anguish of my constituents who live alongside the route, or will it at least consider giving proper compensation?

I quote the chairman of Leicester Forest East parish council:

> "If the DOT predictions prove correct then we will have the situation that the M1 through LFE will be in a state of chaos for a period in excess of 10 years. The situation on the M1 is indicative of the lack of long term planning which we are suffering from in all aspects of Government, we have just completed lane closures for installation of lighting, now we have lane closures because of Junction 21A, next year lane closures for widening to 4 lanes, and in the near future closures for widening to 5+ lanes."

Again, that encapsulates the point of the debate.

Next to Leicester Forest East, the A46 Leicester western bypass is being built. It is cutting off the village of Glenfield from the villages of Groby and Ratby and from the Bradgate Park area to the north as it is built to a new junction—junction 21A—which was not planned when the motorway was built because traffic was much less.

Besides all the disruption and unhappiness caused by the building, two ancient footpaths, which are still used by many residents, mostly now for recreation, are being closed. My hon. Friend the Minister—we have corresponded on this—will tell me that they are not being closed, but being diverted. He has suggested to me a mile-long walk alongside this very busy four-lane dual carriageway.

I suspect that a mile-long walk along a four-lane dual carriageway is not many people's idea of recreation, especially if they are old, or if they have dogs or children

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

with them. I suggest that my hon. Friend chastises the civil servant who suggested that, because it is, frankly, ridiculous. In this case, as in so many, cars are being put before people.

Further south in the constituency, where the boundaries run with those of Leicester city, there is Narborough road south, which has become a major highway. Huge developments, including the opening of the M1 and M69 junction—junction 21—have created vast traffic flows. What was a suburban road—a relatively quiet road—is now eight lanes of very busy traffic, with a dual carriageway in the middle and two service roads on either side. Leicestershire county council has recently imposed a 50 mph limit there, but to little avail. Trucks continue to thunder by, shaking people's houses.

Again, I shall quote a constituent, whose letter sums up everything that I wish to say:

> "Therefore, Government legislation is required for compensation to be granted for these properties . . . road works associated with the M1 Junction Employment Area which are responsible for the following:
> (1) Residents are unable to use front bedrooms and front living rooms due to excessive noise.
> (2) Suffer from vibration of heavy vehicles.
> (3) Cannot open windows due to traffic noise and air pollution.
> (4) Property deterioration.
> (5) Children cannot get readily to sleep.
> (6) The effect of carbon emission on residents.
> (7) Residents cannot sit peacefully in their gardens.
> (8) Suffer huge loss in house value."

Those residents are too far from the road works to qualify for compensation, although their lives have been severely harmed. Their living environment has been spoilt. I urge the Government to compensate my constituents and at least to pay for double glazing. Above all, I ask the Government to look at the overall problem of the growth of traffic.

I now move south through my constituency to the market town of Lutterworth which was bypassed when the M1 was extended north in the early 1960s, having been built up to there in 1962. How calm it must have been when the M1 was built north—but no longer. Traffic streams through the centre and heavy goods vehicles shake all the buildings.

Already, a southern bypass is planned and will be built within the next two years. However, planners propose a box around Lutterworth, a western relief road to surround the town with heavy traffic.

Lutterworth is a popular place to live. Many new housing estates are being built, the houses in which command great sums. It is a popular place to live because of the quiet rural environment, with the fields between Bitteswell and the town where a small stream meanders. That is the site of the proposed western relief road, and that too will be destroyed for ever for short-term gain.

I hope that the road will not be built, and I urge my hon. Friend to resist the pressure from developers who are offering to build the road for the county council so that they can proceed with further developments. I urge my hon. Friend not to approve the scheme, but to look at the whole environment of the town, and, if action is required, as it may be, to put a new junction on the M1 north of the town, at junction 20A. The M1, after all, was built to bypass Lutterworth. Does it really need a second bypass not 30 years on?

Also in the south of the constituency is the A47, which was once a quiet country road. It now shakes to the passing of endless HGVs. It is very dangerous; there have been many accidents and some fatalities. Villages such as Walcote in my constituency were not designed for such traffic. The village is cut in half and ruined by the traffic.

Leicestershire county council has introduced some traffic calming, but with small effect. The building of the A1-M1 link, the A14, will be a palliative, but for how long? As it is, this new road has been driven through some unspoilt countryside, which we can ill afford to lose. It was described to me by my hon. Friend's predecessor as likely to be one of the last major new roads through virgin territory; I hope so, but we need a new approach.

Still in my constituency, the A5 is now intended to be dualled all its length. That will make another major source of traffic. Leaving aside new roads and new developments, even little villages are touched as roads carry more traffic than before—more traffic than they were designed for. Rural lanes become rat runs, and villages are spoilt by traffic, while the life of the villagers is degraded.

The huge problem of traffic growth affects everyone. Roads are designed and built to cure the situation, but in my constituency the Soar Valley way and Lubbesthorpe way were built not six years ago. They are, in effect, brand new roads, but they have already been dualled to cope with the extra traffic. If the traffic should double, as is predicted, what then? Will we have to double the size of those roads again?

I have demonstrated the problems of my constituency of Blaby, but if hon. Members would like a national example or an example in London, I refer to the M25, which has created huge traffic growth around London. People commute from Chelmsford to Chertsey. That is ridiculous, but it is being encouraged by road-building policies.

I ask the Government to take careful note: the problem will not go away. The Government are making sensible moves in the right direction, and I hope to encourage more tonight. I know that they are taking greater note of public transport needs. I received a letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) today, in which he said:

> "The Government is committed to a greener future for transport in Britain and wants to see the railways play their part."

It is excellent to hear that. Fifty years ago—perhaps even 35—I could have gone around my constituency by railway. I cannot do that now because of the Beeching axe. We must continue to encourage the return of freight and passengers to trains. We must also encourage everyone away from roads, I hope, by a policy of carrot and stick. We must enable cleaner, better buses and trains. I hope that rail privatisation will do just that for the railways. I applaud road pricing and the increased tax on fuel in the Budget.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to consider further provision and much firmer action. I urge, for instance, assistance for cyclists, encouragement for pedestrians and real assistance and encouragement. Leicestershire county council—to give credit where it is due—is very supportive of transport choice and of corridors. It is opening the new Ivanhoe line, it is assisting the cycleway from Dover to Inverness, through my constituency, and it is supportive of cycle paths. I applaud that, but I urge the Government to enable and assist further car sharing.

There is a new scheme called "Leicestershire", which is run by Environ, which used to be the Leicester Ecology Trust, in conjunction with de Montfort university. I heard about it on Friday on a visit there. Many of my constituents drive into Leicester. I was astonished to discover that there are 47,000 empty car seats travelling into Leicester per day at peak times. Again, we should enable, encourage and assist car sharing.

Last week, the *Leicester Mercury* reported that four out of five drivers would support more environmental driving campaigns. In other words, they are prepared to change their driving habits. That is what we all must do.

On Saturday, a constituent, a friend of mine in his 60s, said: "We cannot go on like this." He was referring to traffic growth. He is right—we cannot. At 6 pm, outside the House, anybody trying to cross the road through the fumes could do so easily because the traffic is at a standstill. We cannot go on like that, in London or in Leicestershire.

Some people in villages such as those in my constituency will always have to drive. I am not anti-car as such. My hon. Friend the Minister has been quoted—I hope correctly—as having a love affair with the car. I urge him, if not to have a divorce, at least perhaps to cool his ardour. I look forward to being able to take public transport around my large, semi-rural constituency. I hope to see hon. Members using public transport to get to Westminster. We must change our attitudes. Perhaps we need to allow a little more time for travelling.

In conclusion, I urge my hon. Friend to tackle this huge problem of traffic growth before it overwhelms us all, as it is beginning to overwhelm my constituents in Blaby and in constituencies across the country.

10.54 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): Because my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) has spoken with such good sense tonight, we can all be sure that it will not be reported in the national media and press tomorrow.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this Adjournment debate. He has raised a number of extremely important issues, and I would find it difficult to argue against most of his propositions. His constituents can rest assured that their Member of Parliament means what he says and carries out his word.

As it happens, I have a copy of the *Leicester Mercury* of Saturday 16 October 1993. The headline is: "Bridge battle will go to Parliament". It has, and here it is. My hon. Friend has brought the battle here, as he said he would. In the journal, there is a photograph of my hon. Friend with a large number of people who were showing him exactly what they meant about the issue of footpaths.

I know that I will not have time to answer all the points raised by my hon. Friend, but I undertake to write to him on the detail. I shall concentrate on his major proposition, which is that we need a new approach to transport and the car in this country.

Of course he is right, and that is happening, although one may be forgiven for not realising that from reading what is written in the press by the various environmental and some of the motoring correspondents, who seem not to listen to this sort of debate. In such debates, Members of Parliament and Ministers can sort out a few of the controversial issues of the day.

My hon. Friend talked about the growth in traffic. He is absolutely right. In December, we announced a review of the methodology of traffic forecasting. For some time, I have not been convinced that we had it right, so we are looking at that with the help of outside, independent experts.

Hon. Members may say that that is clearly meant to be a cover-up—that we just change the statistics. As someone who taught economics for 16 years before entering the House, I know that George Bernard Shaw said:

> "If you laid all the economists in the world end to end, they would not reach a conclusion."

My hon. Friend then listed a number of important and practical points which concerned his constituents—for example, noise. Noise can be so intrusive. I happen to live next to a major road. I find it rather more quiet in my tiny flat in central London than in the pastures of Wiltshire, and the reason is traffic noise.

My hon. Friend was generous to point out that my Department is providing a great deal of screening from traffic noise. We are doing more. We are making enormous technological and engineering progress—for example, in new kinds of concrete surfaces. I am not talking about those terrible road surfaces that roar all night across the country; I am talking about whisper concrete technology and porous asphalt technology, which is coming on apace. Therefore, we can tackle noise to some extent.

Clearly, pollution also extends to emission pollution. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his policy on fuel duties, has given a long-term signal of the direction in which we mean to move here. My hon. Friend referred to sustainable development. That is very important. The Department of Transport was a major player in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's launch of our sustainable development policy a little while ago.

My hon. Friend also referred to asthma, which afflicts so many people. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has established a working group on that, which expects to report in the first half of this year on asthma and traffic. A number of other reports have been made, which [illegible] course I have seen.

My hon. Friend also mentioned light pollution. I could not agree with him more. One of the most distressing things about the countryside now is the way in which it tends to be lighted by roads. But good news is at hand. Only last year, I published a good lighting guide for transport engineers, which points out that new lighting technology has improved the situation dramatically. Spillage of light from roads will be minimised—we will never get rid of it completely. Light on our major motorways and trunk roads is important for safety, but I am at one with my hon. Friend on the distress which light pollution can cause in the countryside.

I am looking urgently at the deep problems which affect transport in this country. For example, we must look at the motives for travel. Obviously, freight is a prime motive for any kind of transport in different modes, as is commerce and business. Leisure and pleasure are increasingly important motives for use of different modes of transport. They are important, because 90 per cent. of our journeys and freight travel by road, yet 40 per cent. of my Department's budget is spent on public transport subsidy, and quite right too.

Nevertheless, we must discuss the motives for travel, and we must address fairly and squarely issues such as demand management. That means different things to different people. To some it means marginal cost pricing. I feel strongly about that. I have thought it odd for many

[Mr. Robert Key]

years that we priced marginally the cost of a journey by train, plane, taxi or bus, but not by motor car or goods vehicle.

There is also the question of integrating planning with our transport, which is a part of demand management. Urban congestion, charging and road pricing are also involved. Of course, the management of demand can also refer to the management of the consequences of demand, and that is different. The consequences of demand include the congestion and pollution to which my hon. Friend referred. We must address also the important issues, such as whether it is the number of cars or the number in use at any one time.

We must do much research with the motor industry, which is concerned that the number of vehicles will fall in the coming years. That would be bad for employment in this country. The Government are often criticised for our failure to achieve long-term planning. The current roads programme was envisaged and detailed in 1989 in a White Paper.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have been engaged since August last year in a prioritisation review of the road programme in this country. One of the motives for that is the establishment of the Highways Agency, which will be up and running from 5 April and will be charged with our road programme and the planning and maintenance which eats up such a substantial and growing part of the roads budget.

That will leave Ministers with rather more time to concentrate on proper integrated transport policies. Of course, it is right that we should encourage the use of modes of transport other than motor car. We must also recognise that the car will be with us for a long time.

My hon. Friend may be interested to know that this afternoon I was the co-chairman of the Greener Motoring Forum, which was established by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside. The forum had representatives from car manufacturers, motoring organisations, local authorities and a number of other people who are interested in the future of transport in this country. That included the Department of Trade and Industry, because we do not build roads for fun. We build roads, and improve and maintain them, to ensure the economic prosperity of this country.

My hon. Friend said in the *Leicester Mercury* on 16 October 1993—I am sure that he remembers it as if it were yesterday—that, if we are to have roads, we must take account of the people who already live near them and their ancient rights of way.

My hon. Friend mentioned the Grand Union canal and the dismantled railway that traverses his constituency in the area of Glen Parva. I have so much sympathy for his constituent who described what the area was like some years ago.

I am sorry that we were not able to accept the Glen Parva bypass for transport supplementary grant in 1994-95. Competition for funds was fierce this year, particularly as it has been necessary to reduce funding for local transport infrastructure by 15 per cent. Even more rigorous scrutiny of local authority bids than usual was warranted in the light of the current economic climate. The decision letter to Leicestershire county council included some detailed advice on bidding for funding for new major schemes in the context of the package bids for funding in urban areas.

I know that I shall have to end on this note, Madam Deputy Speaker. Package bids are a new feature of our transport supplementary grant. It means that we can invite local authorities to put together integrated transport bids that give proper attention not only to the motor car, to roads and to the quality of life of people who live beside roads as well as those who use them, but to cyclists and to pedestrians.

I shall shortly announce a new Government cycling policy. I am not sure that we have ever had one, but it is high time that we did. Also, we shall encourage local authorities in those package bids to bid for pedestrianisation schemes, which will add so much to the quality of life.

The Department of Transport is accused of many things. It cannot be accused of failing to look forward with optimism and realism to the needs of the next century. It is a demanding challenge, and one which I accept. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to air some of the arguments tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 1 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Madam Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Ron Leighton, esquire, Member for Newham, North-East, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Truancy

1. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to crack down on truancy following the publication of truancy levels in the recent school performance tables.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): My right hon. Friend recently announced a £14 million programme in 1994-95 to help schools and the wider community fight truancy. Eighty-six English local education authorities successfully applied for funds as part of the grants for education support and training—GEST—scheme. A similar programme has been supporting expenditure of some £9.6 million in 1993-94 on schemes proposed by 71 local education authorities.

Mr. Heald: I welcome that reply, but does my right hon. Friend—sorry, my hon. Friend accept that the educational and social consequences of truancy are disastrous for young people? Will he take even more action, first by encouraging the Office for Standards in Education to ensure that the figures submitted by schools are accurate and, secondly, by ensuring that local education authorities employ sufficient educational welfare officers to enforce the provisions?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend's second point is a matter for local education authorities, but I hope that the publication of truancy figures which we began this year will concentrate their minds sufficiently to deal with the problem properly. Ofsted will indeed be seeking to ensure that the returns produced by schools on truancy are correct. We must ensure that all young people of school age are in school where they should be, not only so that they are educated but so that they are kept out of trouble. Those who are not in school when they should be are likely to be getting into trouble, perhaps being pursued by drug pushers or becoming involved in petty crime. Truancy is unacceptable and we must stamp it out.

Mr. Pope: Is the Minister aware of the problems caused by people posing as social workers in order to gain access to children? Will he accept that schemes such as Truancy Watch are nothing but a gimmick, and a dangerous gimmick at that, and that, if the Government were serious about combating truancy, they would invest in more educational welfare officers and in better training and qualifications for them?

Mr. Forth: I am glad to say that that rather pathetic and disgraceful point of view is not shared by the Labour local education authorities which are queuing up to participate in the imaginative Truancy Watch scheme. The hon. Gentleman has apparently taken no account of the fact that in the area that pioneered the scheme juvenile crime during school hours has dropped by 50 per cent. in the first few months of the scheme. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reconsider his attitude because it will not gain him any friends.

2. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding Truancy Watch.

Mr. Forth: One hundred and one schemes were suggested by local education authorities for inclusion in the 1994-95 truancy and disaffected pupils GEST programme. Half the 86 approved schemes include a Truancy Watch element along the lines of a pilot scheme currently operating in Staffordshire. A number of senior police officers and representatives of the business community have welcomed these schemes.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I give a warm welcome to what is clearly a very successful start for Truancy Watch? Is my hon. Friend aware that, as a result of the pilot scheme, juvenile crime has dropped by half? Does he agree that it is absolutely disgraceful that the civil rights organisation, Liberty, is telling children to stand up for their rights and ignore police requests to return to school? Should not children be in school, learning right from wrong and learning to respect authority, rather than cocking a snook at it?

Mr. Forth: It would be tempting to dismiss Liberty as a bunch of eccentric mischief-makers if what it was saying was not so serious. To encourage young people to stay away from school when they should be in school is a social scandal about which I hope the organisation is thoroughly apologetic. I hope that it will reconsider its advice, which does not reflect the widespread concern that I know exists about truancy. I am glad to say that most local education authorities are now very concerned about the problem, as evidenced by the number that have come forward with imaginative ideas to participate in my right hon. Friend's scheme, which is offering £14 million. I hope that everyone will co-operate in reducing truancy across the country.

Mr. Bradley: Will the Minister explain why, despite the success of truancy schemes in Manchester, no resources have been allocated to such schemes for the next financial year?

Mr. Forth: Yes. They produced a rotten bid.

Mr. Lord: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way to reduce truancy is to make schools more attractive to pupils? May I urge him and the Secretary of State to reconsider the proposal to make team games compulsory, especially in secondary schools? Does he agree that team games are enjoyed enormously by most pupils and that even those who may not at first think that they would enjoy them often do so once they are involved?

Mr. Forth: Yes, the importance of team games is very much recognised by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister and by the Government as a whole. For precisely the reason that my hon. Friend has given, we must find the best and most satisfactory way of ensuring that everybody connected with schools—teachers, governors and pupils—is involved as far as possible in team games and in all other kinds of sport. I have great confidence that that will happen in future.

Higher Education

4. **Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students were undertaking courses of higher education 10 years ago and at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): We need high take-up of appropriate and demanding vocational qualifications in the next three years if we are to achieve the challenging national targets for education and training. Our aim is that one in four 16-year-olds should be starting general national vocational qualification courses in 1996. Our longer-term aim is for half of all 16 and 17-year-olds to take GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate or advanced level.

Mr. Hicks: I am not sure about my hon. Friend's response to my question—

Hon. Members: It was the wrong answer.

Madam Speaker: Order. May I ask the Minister to look at his answer? We are on Question 4.

Mr. Boswell *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We all make mistakes. Come along.

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful for your indulgence, Madam Speaker.

The Government's policies have led to record student numbers in higher education. Total student numbers in England rose from some 718,000 students in 1982-83 to 1,201,000 in 1992-93—a massive increase of more than 67 per cent.

Mr. Hicks: That sounds a darned sight better answer than the previous one.

Despite the unease that some of us felt about the introduction of student loans, will my hon. Friend say how the level of funding for students in higher education here compares with that for their equivalents in our European partners? Secondly, will he give an assurance that there is no suggestion that our students should be charged part of their tuition fees?

Mr. Boswell: Our student funding package, both in grants and in loans, compares most favourably with those of all our European counterparts and I assure my hon. Friend that the Government have no plans to introduce tuition fees.

Mr. Grocott: Would not it be a good idea if, in line with their thoughts in recent years, the Government started publishing league tables of ministerial competence? It might be helpful if, as well as publishing statistics comparing the number of places in higher education now with the number 10 years ago, they published statistics on the opportunities for school leavers now compared with those a decade ago. Is not it crystal clear that many pupils make the choice simply because there is no alternative open to them? Is not it time that the Government started expanding real opportunities and real choice for school leavers?

Mr. Boswell: It would be an excellent idea for Departments to publish comparative tables; our Department, under my right hon. Friend, would come high. Also, we have a good record in relation to school leavers. For a start, we now have a comprehensive range of vocational qualifications to supplement the well-tried academic qualifications and there has been an expansion in the number of school leavers over the past five years. We have the highest staying-on rate and young people have ranges of qualifications which they will find of great benefit in their future careers.

Mr. Forman: Is my hon. Friend aware that a recent development that will please many students who are benefiting from higher education is the Government's decision to modify their proposals for student union reform and to introduce a sensible code of practice and the right of students to opt-out? Will he confirm that that is now the Government's policy?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. We now offer a programme, based on the principles set out by my right hon. Friend, of choice, accountability and democracy in student unions and the control of excesses by codes of practice determined by the institutions. That, too, is positive news for students in higher and further education.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does not the Government clampdown on expansion in higher education mean that institutions are reluctant to make firm offers until A-level results are known? Does not that mean chaos in August for students and for institutions?

Mr. Boswell: Many people would like to see greater certainty in that matter and would like to base all offers on actual rather than prospective or projected qualifications. Our student numbers are at record levels and, if that is a clampdown, it merely reinforces a record level of student numbers.

Grant-maintained Schools

5. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what surveys have been undertaken of the progress being made by grant-maintained schools since acquiring self-governing status.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools has found that self-governing schools use their freedom to good effect. Inspectors have observed in most grant-maintained schools a greater proportion of satisfactory or better than satisfactory lessons than in maintained schools generally, commendable pupil behaviour and attendance and improved teacher morale. That picture is confirmed by a survey published by the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre in the past month, in which the majority of schools responding reported increasing pupil numbers, improved pupil-teacher ratios and, in the secondary sector, the introduction of new subjects.

Sir John Hannam: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the disappointment felt by the majority of teachers and governors at St. Thomas high school in my constituency where, in the past week, parents voted down a proposal to become self-governing? Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to examine the material circulated by the local education authority and other parties, which, of course, must be governed by a code of conduct?

Mr. Patten: The holder of my office now has powers to declare void ballots where there has been any doubt about any of the material circulated. If my hon. Friend does not mind, I shall not comment on the school in his constituency, for fear that I may have to examine the case. However, I shall ask my hon. Friend to forward all the documents to me.

Without commenting on that case, I understand that Devon is controlled by the Liberal party and, of course, throughout southern and western England, the Liberal party is notorious for its use of underhand political campaigning. Indeed, there have been attempts, led by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), to cause local authority chief education officers to dance to Liberal party tunes.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Will the Secretary of State join me in ensuring that, where all the proper procedures have been followed, he will not go any further in introducing legislation to force schools to become grant-maintained against the wishes of local people?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman knows that, as a fellow geographer, I always listen carefully to him, but I am little surprised that he seems to have lost his daffodil, along with one or two others Opposition Members. I keep my legislative options under continual review.

Mr. Pawsey: My right hon. Friend referred to the lower level of truancy in grant-maintained schools and to higher teacher morale. Is he aware that there is one area in which GM schools do not do so well—competitive sport? The reason is that some local education authorities, for spiteful reasons, will not allow their schools to play competitive sports against GM schools.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. Children who are educated in grant-maintained schools are educated by the state—they are state school children, just as children in maintained schools are educated by the state and are equally state school children. It is true that in certain authorities—Middlesbrough, Nottingham and Derbyshire, to name but three—it is difficult or impossible for local county-maintained schools to play competitive sports against grant-maintained schools. It must be wrong that we can send sporting teams to South Africa but it is impossible to send sporting teams to grant-maintained schools. It is a disgraceful form of educational apartheid.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Secretary of State accept that, given the lower number of schools that have opted out this month, he has wasted £200,000 of taxpayers' money on advertisements for GM status? Can he tell the House whether the contents of those advertisements were statements of fact or merely statements of opinion?

Mr. Patten: The Liberal party has even fewer education policies than the Labour party, which is saying quite a lot. The hon. Gentleman, together with some of his hon. Friends in another place, has mentioned the nature and content of the advertisement. He made a great fuss, public to-do and tumult about referring it to the Advertising Standards Authority, which has now given the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends an answer: go away and grow up.

Parental Opinion

6. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what mechanisms exist for his Department to gauge parental opinion, as consumers, to the extent that it relates to the Government's policy for schools.

Mr. Forth: Like other hon. Members, Ministers receive correspondence from their constituents and are therefore well placed to gauge parental opinion. In addition, parents' views are regularly sought or made known through, for instance, consultations, meetings with representative bodies and special surveys.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Minister understand that increasingly the consultation on opt-out schools is turning against the Government's policies and opt-out schools are diminishing parental choice, in that schools select pupils, rather than parents selecting schools for their children?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The facts are that the number of schools balloting remains high, the turnout in those ballots remains high and the number of yes votes remains as high as historically it has been since the beginning of grant-maintained schools. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman make a better effort to consult his parents, as he is obviously completely out of touch.

Sir Malcolm Thornton: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways of assessing parental opinion is by looking at what parents do with their children? Will he join me in congratulating St. Mary's college in my constituency, which recently opened, from its own resources, a £750,000 sports centre? That facility will be enjoyed by many children who can take advantage of the assisted places scheme, which allows them to attend that school as a matter of choice by their parents—an opportunity which would be denied to them by a Labour Government.

Mr. Forth: What a refreshing contrast between my hon. Friend's positive attitude and the carping and negative attitude of Opposition Members. I believe that, at the appropriate time, parents up and down the country will draw their own conclusions from the sort of attitudes exemplified in the Chamber.

Mr. Beggs: As the Department assesses the opinion of parents, can the Minister tell the House whether there is any evidence of support for those schools that choose to be more selective with their intakes?

Mr. Forth: I believe that the answer is yes. We have encouraged schools up and down the country to consider their own policies—what they would like to do and how they would like to do it—to consult parents locally and then to come forward with proposals for changes in their administration policies if they think that that is appropriate. A number of schools do that and a number of them keep the matter under review. That is something that we encourage because it adds to the elements of choice and diversity in education which my right hon. Friend has been determined to encourage since he took office just under two years ago.

National Vocational Qualifications

7. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what targets have been set for the uptake of general national vocational qualifications among 16 to 19-year-olds over the course of the next three years.

Mr. Boswell: We need high take-up of appropriate and demanding vocational qualifications in the next three years if we are to achieve the challenging national targets for education and training. We are aiming for one in four 16-year-olds to be starting GNVQ courses in 1996. Our longer-term aim is for half of all 16 and 17-year-olds to take GNVQs at foundation, intermediate or advanced level.

Mr. Coombs: In welcoming the evident popularity of GNVQs and their importance to the national training targets, may I ask my hon. Friend to agree that their future success will depend on the standards that they set? In that context, will he examine the comments by Professor Smithers of Manchester university, who said that the qualifications were not sufficiently knowledge-orientated, rather than skills-orientated, and that they should be assessed universally by an examination?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. As he will know, the message is so good that inadvertently I have repeated it, but it does bear repeating.

I could not agree more with my hon. Friend's comments on rigour. I refer him to the speech that I delivered this morning at the GNVQ workshop conducted by the Confederation of British Industry, in which I analysed all our remaining concerns about GNVQs and dealt with them in a positive but constructive mode.

Further Education Colleges

8. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that colleges of further education publish information regularly for parents and employers about their achievements.

Mr. Boswell: Colleges are required to publish extensive information about the achievements and career destinations of students and make this available to local schools for distribution to pupils in year 11. In 1993, we first included college achievements in the comparative performance tables. We expect colleges to develop their own charters which will highlight performance information. Through these arrangements, we are determined to help young people and their parents to make informed decisions about all the options available.

Mr. Richards: Does my hon. Friend agree that the performance tables are vital in helping students and employers to decide which courses best suit their needs? Are not they crucial in helping to increase post-16 education, particularly in my constituency where the excellent Llandrillo college recently won a national training award?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is entirely right. We believe in giving schools, colleges, parents and pupils an information revolution in which they will be given as much information as possible. That will expand the opportunities and raise the standards for all in the crucial area between the ages of 16 and 19.

Mr. Dafis: Does the Minister have any information on the number of students who are being obliged to leave further education because they cannot afford to carry on with their courses? Is not that because they are unable to obtain discretionary grants, income support or housing benefit? Will the Minister, with his colleagues, consider putting together a satisfactory package of funding for further education students, so that we can have an end to the terrible waste of resources and the failure to train our young people to take up their opportunities?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman will know that current provision on discretionary awards varies by local education authority. He will also be aware that, through the Sir John Cass and Gulbenkian Foundation, we are conducting an authoritative study on the matter which we will publish at the end of March. We shall then carefully consider its conclusions.

Mr. Evennett: While I welcome the publication of more information by colleges of further education, will my hon. Friend give a continuing commitment to school sixth forms? Will he confirm that the Government believe in choice and diversity in education post-16 and that school sixth forms do a good job in developing young people's education in addition to colleges of education?

Mr. Boswell: I have no difficulty in agreeing with my hon. Friend. Recently, we published a new framework for the way in which we handle proposals for school sixth forms alongside further education colleges. They are both important, they are not antagonistic and they should be complementary.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Do the achievements of the colleges of further education include the decision of Bath further education college to sack 60 lecturers? The college has now had to rescind that decision and go to arbitration. Would not the Minister do better to urge further education employers to go to arbitration, rather than supporting the employers in a decision to foment industrial unrest?

Mr. Boswell: I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman suggests that I should involve myself in an industrial dispute. I made it clear, in the context of the holdback letter that we sent to the colleges employers' forum, that we expect some progress on flexibility in contracts. We are not prepared to intervene in the details and I am sure that both parties will be able to resolve the matter amicably and positively between themselves.

Schools (Drug Abuse)

9. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he is taking to combat drug abuse in schools.

Mr. Forth: Education is an important element of the Government's strategy for tackling drug abuse. The national curriculum requires teaching about the harmful effects of drugs, and helps to develop pupils' capacity to resist pressure to misuse drugs. My Department has published guidance for schools and has funded projects, materials and national bodies working in this field.

Mr. Ainsworth: May I thank my hon. Friend for that answer and ask him to continue to provide as much reassurance as possible to parents throughout the country who are rightly worried about this important matter? Will he extend education about drug abuse from the higher stages in children's careers to the youngest sensible age?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I believe that the content of the curriculum covering this important matter is about right at present. We start at a very early stage and build up the information about drugs imparted in the classroom to our young people, the effect that they have on the body, the effects of misuse and so on. That is surely one of the most important contributions that education can make to informing young people about drugs and their harmful effects. I believe that as we see the effect of the national curriculum accumulating over the generations of young people, the beneficial effects of education on drugs will become ever more clear.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: If drug education in schools is so important, as the Opposition as well as parents know, why have Government cuts reduced the number of drug education co-ordinators from 135 this time last year to a mere 75 today? What kind of message does the Minister think that that sends to parents and young people alike?

Mr. Forth: I think that the hon. Lady is referring to decisions by local education authorities throughout the country and their prioritisation for expenditure. It was indeed the case that some years ago my Department initiated a pump-priming grant, for a specific period only, to allow local education authorities to assess the value of the co-ordinators. The pump priming was extended not once but twice. It then came to an end. Local education authorities, correctly in my view, are now making their own decisions about their priorities.

Mr. Whittingdale: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the *Daily Express*, which reported its investigation into drug abuse in schools over three days last week? Does he accept that the problem afflicts not only schools in the inner cities but schools everywhere in the country, including in my constituency? Does he agree that it is essential that staff and teachers maintain the utmost vigilance if we are to eradicate the menace?

Mr. Forth: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. Of course, truancy is another element. It must surely be the case that when young people are not in school where they should be, they are vulnerable in shopping centres or wherever, to drug pushers and others who seek to abuse or mislead the children. Therefore, our strong emphasis on tackling truancy is an important part of the overall strategy to reduce the vulnerability to drugs of our young people.

Parental Choice

10. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on parental choice of schools.

Mr. Patten: The Government have given parents the right to express a preference for their choice of school. In some 90 per cent. of cases, that preference is met. Parents now have much more information, in particular through the publication of school performance tables, school prospectuses and annual reports. There is a wider choice of schools now, with the expansion of the self-governing grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges, more schools with sixth forms, and the network of new technology colleges which I launched yesterday.

Dr. Wright: How does the Minister explain parental choice to the parents at Five Ways primary school in my constituency who have just been told that the Department for Education will not allow them to expand that popular and successful school because someone in Whitehall has discovered that there are surplus places at a school two miles away? What would the Minister further say to the 38,000 parents who last year had to go to appeal because they were not given the school place of their choice? Does not that show that although the Government talk about parental choice, it means increased power for schools to choose parents and less power for parents to choose schools?

Mr. Patten: Labour-controlled Staffordshire county council does not have the best reputation for local education administration. The second of the hon. Gentleman's two questions about the number of appeals shows how well the parents charter and the citizens charter are working. Parents are rightly making successful use of the appeals mechanism. Nine out of 10 parents receive their first choice the first time, which is good. I do not know about the case of the specific school mentioned by the hon. Gentleman in the first of his two questions. If he writes to me I shall personally consider the position and write to him.

If there are two schools within two miles of each other, and there are many surplus school places, there should probably be only one school. The school left should be the high-quality school around whose walls parents queue for their children to gain admission. We want top-quality schools, not half-empty schools such as those kept by Labour local education authorities, in Staffordshire, for example.

Mr. Ashby: What choice do parents in north-west Leicestershire have when the local education authority refuses to pay the travel costs of children whose parents have made a choice of school? That applies particularly in rural districts where distances travelled may be great.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is right. Leicestershire is another local authority that is notorious for discriminating against parental choice. In the same way, the new Lib-Lab pact in Essex is trying to discriminate against those who want to send their children to schools of their choice.

Madam Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Patten: The Liberal and Labour parties are doing the same thing in Wiltshire, where they are deliberately discriminating against parents who exercise the choice to give their children a religious education.

I am sorry for that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I should hope so.

Nursery Education

11. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the standard spending assessment calculation for the education of under-fives.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): As part of his review of policy on under-fives, my right hon. Friend will bear in mind the implications for the under-fives element of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Pickthall: Since the Prime Minister, and subsequently the Secretary of State, have recently discovered the virtues of nursery education, would it not be sensible, just and financially prudent to change the basis of the SSA calculation for under-fives away from a simple population count in a local authority towards the provision of places in a local authority? That would get rid of what is, in effect, a subsidy for bad providers to spend elsewhere in their budget. It would allow good providers relief from having to cut other sectors in their budget in order to provide good nursery education.

Mr. Squire: We shall bear the hon. Member's observation in mind—other hon. Members have also advanced that argument. A number of local education authorities provide good provision for under-fives while maintaining spending at the SSA level. If the hon. Gentleman's desire, which is certainly that of the Government, is to see an expansion of the service, it would seem perverse to change dramatically the way in which the SSA is distributed in favour of those who are already serving a large number of under-fives.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend consider, not only the SSA calculations for county councils, but the relationship with first schools and the grant-maintained sector? Send first school in my constituency, which is grant maintained, is anxious to provide nursery provision. I know that the Department is currently considering that case.

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend will understand if I avoid giving an answer on the specific school that he mentioned. We shall look carefully at all applications from schools, including grant-maintained schools, that seek nursery provision. Where applicants fall within laid down criteria, we shall seek to satisfy my hon. Friend's justifiable concerns.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Why did not the Minister have the good grace to mention the fact that, of the 40 top providers of nursery education, 40 are Labour education authorities? Why does he not stop including all forms of child care in the same bracket as high quality nursery education, and give advice and guidance to all local education authorities to start providing more and more nursery places?

Mr. Squire: The reason that I did not give the answer that the hon. Gentleman wanted was that I was not asked the question. As the hon. Gentleman has now asked the question, I shall underline the fact that, of the 34 Labour authorities that the Labour party is anxious to boast about in terms of nursery education, 70 per cent. fall in the bottom 40 for exam results and 82 per cent. fall within the bottom 50 for truancy levels. We should hear a bit about that.

Schools (Northumberland)

12. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has any plans to visit schools in Northumberland to discuss school budgets.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to visit Northumberland schools. My colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), will visit two schools in Northumberland on 14 March.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the Minister visits two schools in my constituency so that he can become aware of the problem posed by the combined effect of the county needing to fund the 2.9 per cent. teachers' pay increase and facing a capping limit of 1.5 per cent., the result of which is that all schools in the county face reductions in their budgets. Is he aware of the problem? What does he plan to do about it?

Mr. Forth: Northumberland does no worse and no better—it is very close to the average if one looks at the pattern of schools' expenditure. I see no reason why an efficient and responsible local education authority should be unable to maintain the standards that we expect of it in the current financial circumstances. There is no proven causal connection between the level of expenditure and quality of education output. I would expect that in the right hon. Gentleman's area, as in all others, school governors, teachers, heads and the local education authority would take it on themselves to continue to deliver a proper standard of education.

Mr. Bellingham: When the Minister is on his way back from Northumberland, will he make a detour to Norfolk and visit some schools there—

Madam Speaker: Order. No. I am afraid that he cannot.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Like the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I am very disappointed by the response from the Minister about the visit to Northumberland. Is the Minister aware that about four fifths of the population of Northumberland live in the urban south-east corner, with the rest in the rural part? We are quite happy to support the high cost of rural education in Northumberland, but would it not be better for the Minister to go up there and see what is happening rather than regard the area as if it were part of a colony in darkest Africa?

Mr. Forth: Northumberland is treated in exactly the same way as all the other 108 local education authorities. They are all subject to the same impartial, even-handed treatment, both by the funding formula and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We would, therefore, expect Northumberland, like all other local education authorities, to ensure that it delivers a proper, acceptable and increasingly high standard of education to all its pupils.

Mr. Harry Greenway: When considering the budgets of Northumbrian schools, will my hon. Friend reflect on the great success of the policy of devolving budgets to schools in Northumberland and elsewhere, the more responsible spending that has resulted from it and the much more valuable spending from the point of view of the pupils, which is what schools are all about?

Mr. Forth: Yes, indeed. The local management of schools programme has been one of the most successful programmes in the past few years. It has proved some important things, not least that if responsibility is given to governors and heads they will seize it and make full use of it in coming to difficult decisions about priorities in their schools, and that these decisions are far better made where they matter, in the school and in the classroom, rather than in some local education authority which is probably remote.

Students (Employment)

14. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the percentage of students attending universities who are supplementing their grants or loans by employment in term-time jobs.

Mr. Boswell: Information derived from the recent student income and expenditure survey indicates that, of students sampled, 23 per cent. had some earnings during term-time, and rather more during the Christmas and Easter vacations. Information is not available to indicate whether the students concerned were in receipt of grants or student loans.

Mr. Wareing: Is not it absolutely deplorable, after the years of the great Thatcherite economic miracle, that students today are in a worse position than they were before 1979? Is not it disgraceful that the Government seem to have no plans whatever to encourage students to keep to their main task, study during term-time? What are the Government going to do about it?

Mr. Boswell: I find the question absolutely extraordinary. The hon. Gentleman needs to remember how many universities there were in Liverpool when my right hon. and noble Friend became Prime Minister. He also needs to recognise the huge achievements of the two universities in Liverpool in establishing a city of learning. In his spare time, he may care to reflect that we now have record student numbers, no increase in student drop-out and the most effective and successful higher education system in the world.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that part of young people's education must include doing part-time and holiday work, and that it is educationally beneficial to them?

Mr. Boswell: It is very much a matter of degree, but not many students get by without working at some stage during their studies. It is the norm in many other countries that students must work their way through college, whereas we produce a generous student support package. That is reflected in the efficiency and timing of our degrees and the quality of the results achieved.

Grant-maintained Schools

15. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken to encourage schools to consider the option of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Patten: The governing body of every local education authority-controlled school is now required to consider, at least once a year, whether to hold a ballot on whether the school should seek grant-maintained status and, if they decide against it, to explain their decision to parents. In addition, to be helpful we are setting up a network of local centres to give factual information on grant-maintained schools. There is already one such centre in Bolton, and to be particularly helpful, we are just setting one up at the excellent Castle Hall school in the constituency of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

Mr. Arnold: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking those steps to combat the immense amount of negative propaganda against grant-maintained schools. Is he aware that, in authorities like Liberal and Labour-controlled Kent, £100,000 of education funds have been diverted to those black propaganda activities? Will he look at the leaflets and at the scaremongering, which is worrying parents and teachers?

Mr. Patten: The parents of Kent have already voted overwhelmingly in favour of grant-maintained status. For example, by 1 April more than half the secondary school children in Kent will be educated in grant-maintained schools. I will certainly look extremely carefully at what strikes me as a scandalous waste of money by the chief education officer for Kent and his officials on that black propaganda.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in the United States for a series of meetings, including some with President Clinton and the United Nations Secretary-General.

Mr. Mudie: Is the Lord President aware that more than £1 billion of taxpayers' money spent to persuade people to take out personal pensions ended up in the pockets of salesmen through commissions? Is he also aware that more than 300,000 men and women are losing benefit because of bad advice? Given that growing scandal, is not there a case for urgent Government action, or is this, once again, something for which the Government will take no responsibility?

Mr. Newton: I do not regard the fact that some 5 million people have taken out personal pensions, which will significantly improve their prospects in retirement, as anything like a scandal. The hon. Gentleman will know that some of the advice that has been given is currently under examination, which is entirely right. I know of no reason to justify his accusation.

Q2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the obvious success of the Prime Minister's visit to the United States? Does he recall that Sir Winston Churchill variously described the temperature of our special relationship with the United States as normal and blazing? What is the temperature now?

Mr. Newton: I can best describe the relationship as very cordial indeed. It is a long-standing relationship based on shared interests, as has been confirmed at a joint press conference which my right hon. Friend and the President held within the past hour or so. Their discussions have covered a wide range of international issues, including Bosnia, Russia and the world economy. The President's support for the joint declaration on Northern Ireland was particularly welcome. The visit is confirmation that we have a continuing, strong, all-round relationship with the United States.

Mrs. Beckett: When the President of the Board of Trade has need of legal advice, to whom does the Leader of the House suggest he turns?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has been advised, quite properly, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and made the position entirely clear in his evidence to the Scott inquiry yesterday.

Mrs. Beckett: Is not the position of the Attorney-General as the Government's chief legal adviser becoming increasingly untenable as Ministers seem to use him as a scapegoat to save their own skins?

Mr. Newton: The concern of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade was clearly an anxiety that people might misrepresent him in exactly the way that the right hon. Lady is now seeking to do. My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General's advice on public interest immunity has remained consistent and, of course, he is due to give evidence to the inquiry.

Mrs. Beckett: Does not the Leader of the House realise that what sticks in the throat of the British public is that, having secretly sold arms to Saddam Hussein, which were used against British troops, Ministers were prepared to see innocent men go to gaol to cover up their conspiracy and that is what people cannot stomach?

Mr. Newton: Let me remind the right hon. Lady what was written in a letter to *The Times* as long ago as 12 November 1992:

> "Public interest immunity cannot be waived by either the prosecution or the Ministers. It was for the judge to decide whether the interests of justice in ensuring a fair trial for the defendants outweighed those considerations of public interests referred to in the certificates. There was no question of anyone attempting to suppress evidence".

That letter was written by counsel for one of the accused.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the Department of Health action on safari holidays for young offenders?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed I shall. There is a widespread view that those overseas trips were inappropriate. We are all concerned to see effective, proper treatment and deterrents for young offenders and the statement this afternoon will help bring that about.

Q3. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: When the Prime Minister returns from his visit to the United States, will he be kind enough to look personally into the case of my constituent Paul Kenney, who did not return from his journey to Portugal, but was found dead on a beach? Will he please consult his colleague the Prime Minister of Portugal, who has not had the common decency to tell the parents, or me as their representative, why this lad died, how he died, whether he was murdered or why the parents could not find the body for a month? If the right hon. Gentleman agrees that it is the Government's duty to look after ordinary citizens when they travel abroad, will he please start raising merry hell about this case?

Mr. Newton: I am conscious of the hon. Gentleman's understandable concern for his late constituent and I have of course looked at the Adjournment debate he had not long ago. I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that during his visit to Portugal on 24 and 25 February, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised the case with the Portuguese Foreign Minister and I hope that that was helpful.

Sir Roger Moate: Will my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Secretary, personally do their utmost to ensure the success of the negotiations, which are at a critical point, on Norwegian entry into the European Community? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be quite outrageous if the unreasonable demand by the Spanish Government for a few thousand tonnes of Norwegian cod were to prevent the entry into the Community of one of our closest friends and a fine European country?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows very well that it has been a prime objective of the British Government to bring about enlargement of the Community and the progress that has been made is one of our significant achievements over the past couple of years. On some reports I have seen today, progress has been rather greater so far in respect of Sweden and Finland; apparently, there remains some way to go, but we shall wish to see negotiations with all four applicants successfully negotiated.

Q4. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gunnell: The right hon. and noble Baroness Thatcher missed one Prime Minister's Question Time in 12; the present Prime Minister has missed one in eight. Whatever the importance of the present visit, does not that frequent absence devalue his accountability to the House? Why is he more anxious to answer questions in Pittsburgh than in Parliament?

Mr. Newton: I must say to the hon. Gentleman, whom I usually regard as among the more reasonable of those on the Opposition Benches, that I reject out of hand the suggestion that he has made. I think that my right hon. Friend's achievement in various international negotiations both in Europe and on the wider scene are among the main achievements that he has put forward on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Garnier: While my right hon. Friend is in the United States, will he be given an opportunity to tell the people, as opposed to the President of the United States, of the true nature, history and habits of the IRA?

Mr. Newton: I have already referred to the very welcome support of the President for the joint declaration. I hope that that in itself will have an effect on some strands of opinion in the United States which may perhaps have failed to appreciate the true nature of the IRA.

Q5. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mandelson: Does the Lord President of the Council agree that, with unemployment still up around the 3 million level, with many young and long-term unemployed in that number, jobs remain the biggest single issue facing the country? In the light of that, will the Lord President of the Council respond positively to the important initiative taken today by the Trades Union Congress to work in co-operation with all political parties on policies to get unemployment down?

Mr. Newton: I welcome any kind of co-operation by the TUC or, indeed, anybody else, in the interests of maintaining the recovery from recession, which is the secure basis for the jobs that the hon. Gentleman wants to see. If I may say so, it will not be served by the Labour party's support for a minimum wage, a 35-hour week and many new burdens on business.

Q6. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I convey to my right hon. Friend the House's full support for the Downing street declaration on Northern Ireland? Has my right hon. Friend been able to take note of the survey that took place over the weekend in the Irish Republic which showed that the vast majority of the people there call on the IRA-Sinn Fein to renounce violence?

Mr. Newton: I do very much agree with my hon. Friend and am grateful for her words. As she knows, the Government are making every effort to seek peace in Northern Ireland. It is heartening to note that some 94 per cent. of people questioned in the Irish marketing survey agreed with calls on the IRA and Sinn Fein to renounce violence. I am sure that that corresponds with the overwhelming wish in this country and, indeed, many others. I hope that their leaders will take note.

Q7. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Is the Lord President of the Council aware that if the highly efficient borough of St. Helens received the same level of revenue support grant as the boroughs of Wandsworth and Westminster it would not be required to charge its citizens one single penny in council tax? Does he feel that there might be a whiff of scandal and corruption in that?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not.

Mr. Fabricant: While condemning the appalling massacre in Hebron, does my right hon. Friend agree with me that that was the work of a lone madman and that, for the sake of the 300 million people who live in that area, it should not in any way impede the peace process?

Mr. Newton: Like, I am sure, everyone on both sides of the House, I share the horror at the massacre of innocent Palestinians in Hebron on 25 February. I am sure that the whole House would once again want to send its condolences to those who were affected and their families. I accept entirely and agree with my hon. Friend that the massacre must not be allowed to jeopardise the peace process. The British Government will certainly do everything that they can to see that it does not.

Q8. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cunningham: Does the Lord President recall that, referring to the setting up of the Scott inquiry, the Prime Minister said that no restrictions would be placed on its terms of reference? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that ex-employees of Matrix Churchill and their representatives have been denied the right to give evidence to the inquiry, and that Lord Justice Scott has said that he will consider the matter if the Government and the Prime Minister agree? What is the Lord President going to do about it?

Mr. Newton: I think that it is generally true to say that the procedures of the inquiry are for Lord Justice Scott to consider and operate. Obviously, if there were perceived to be problems and if representations were made to the Government about difficulties that they could do something about, those difficulties would be considered extremely carefully.

Q9. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Riddick: Is my right hon. Friend aware of any Government Department that hands out special green forms to job applicants who are related to politicians—forms that receive preferential treatment—and pink forms to everyone else? Is he aware that that disgraceful form of nepotism is being practised by Labour-controlled Monklands council? Will he join me in urging condemnation of the practice by the local Member of Parliament—the Leader of the Opposition, who has been strangely silent on the subject?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend may feel surprised that his question has been reached. He has raised a very interesting point; I might speculate that the absence of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) arose from nervousness that the question might be reached.

Air Attack (Bosnia)

3.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With your permission, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so very quietly and rapidly? We have an important statement from the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Hurd: With your permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on recent events in Bosnia.

At 6.31 local time yesterday morning, six Galeb single-seater air-to-ground attack aircraft were identified by NATO airborne warning and communication system aircraft over Bosnia. A NATO combat air patrol consisting of two United States F16 aircraft went to intercept and investigate. At 6.35, the AWACS issued a warning to the six Galeb aircraft.

At 6.42, the NATO aircraft visually identified the planes. A minute later, the NATO pilots observed what they believe were bombs exploding in and near a factory. It is thought that the target was an ammunition factory near Novi Travnik. Between 6.42 and 6.45, further warnings were issued, and again no response was received.

At 6.45, NATO aircraft shot down one of the violating aircraft, and in the next five minutes three more of those violating aircraft were shot down. The remaining two were reported as having flown into Croatian airspace, at which point the engagement was ended in accordance with the NATO rules of engagement for enforcement of the no-fly zone. There were later reports that the two aircraft were seen landing from the north at Banja Luka airport.

This was the first known violation of the zone by a formation of fixed-wing aircraft. The action was taken under the authority of United Nations Security Council resolution 781, which established the no-fly zone, and resolution 816, which authorised its enforcement and which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council. The House will have noted the unanimity of views on the incident during my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to Washington. I discussed it yesterday with the Greek Prime Minister, the American Secretary of State and the Russian Foreign Minister. Hon. Members will have seen statements by Mr. Churkin, the Deputy Russian Foreign Minister, that any party that violated the no-fly zone had to bear full responsibility for the consequences.

Those events and the reaction to them show that the parties should be in no doubt of our earnest in implementing decisions on Bosnia. We shall continue active work with the international community on how to build on the progress in Sarajevo and reach a negotiated settlement.

I can tell the House that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the President of the United States of America have today announced an initiative to promote the reconstruction of Sarajevo in order to normalise life in the city. A joint British-American civil planning mission will be established to work with the city authorities in Sarajevo, with the European Union and with the United Nations to assess what is needed to restore public utilities in the city.

Meanwhile, the UN will be drawing up plans to assess the feasibility and the means of breaking the siege of other cities and towns in Bosnia, including Mostar, Vitez and Maglaj. That is in addition to the plans, of which the House already knows, to rotate the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica and to reopen Tuzla airport to receive supplies of humanitarian aid.

Reports are coming in from Moscow that the Bosnian Serb leader, Mr. Karadzic, has reached agreement with the Russian Foreign Minister on how Tuzla airport might be reopened with Bosnian Serb consent. If confirmed, that, too, would be a welcome step.

On the wider front, the Americans are telling us of substantial progress in the effort, which I support, to reach agreement among the Croats, the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Muslims. Those are all good examples of the concerted international effort now being made to extend the progress in Bosnia and to make the humanitarian effort more effective.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am obliged to the Foreign Secretary for that statement, which I called for yesterday. I believe that many people in the House will share my view that it should have been made yesterday.

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that we believe that, by arming and dispatching six aircraft on a bombing mission, someone deliberately attempted to flout UN resolution 781, which established the no-fly zone over Bosnia? The right hon. Gentleman was very careful in his statement not to identify the aircraft or those people who dispatched them. Is any evidence yet available to identify the aircraft that have been shot down, and therefore to lead to a conclusion as to who was responsible for that challenge to the authority of the United Nations in the no-fly zone?

The action obviously was a flagrant breach of resolution 781 of the Security Council and, in connection with it, it is quite clear that the action taken by American F16s under the NATO command was fully justified by resolution 816 of the Security Council, which gave effect to the implementation of the no-fly zone resolution. The indisputable legality of the action to enforce the UN Security Council resolution is clear, and it has my support and, I believe, the overwhelming support of hon. Members.

Can the Foreign Secretary confirm reports from Moscow that the Bosnian Serbs have now apparently, very belatedly, agreed to the reopening of Tuzla airport? If so, that would be good news. Has a date been set for the implementation of that decision by the UN? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the apparent threats by the Serbian chief of staff, General Milovanovic, to attack aid convoys? Has UNPROFOR made it clear that such action would not be tolerated?

Can the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House the current status of the humanitarian aid programme in Bosnia—air flights and convoys? Does he accept that we support his recognition of the need to keep Russian support for progressive implementation of Security Council resolutions on safe areas, and other resolutions referring to the situation on the ground in Bosnia? If such progress can be achieved and Russia continues effectively to secure Serbian compliance, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it should not be necessary for lethal air power to be used again?

May I welcome the decision of the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister to launch an initiative for the reconstruction of Sarajevo, which is very good news? Will the right hon. Gentleman give the

[Dr. John Cunningham]

House more details of that initiative, and will he confirm that it will involve not only America and Britain, but all members of the European Union?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's support for the action taken yesterday. It is not yet clear from where the six Galeb planes came, although it seems at least possible that it was from airports that are under the control of Serbs in Croatia. That is not yet certain.

In my statement, I mentioned the reports from Moscow about Tuzla, which I and the right hon. Gentleman have read. The United Nations has plans, which have been drawn up by General Rose, for reopening Tuzla airport. It remains to be seen how that will mesh in with whatever has been agreed in Moscow. I hope that it will not be too long before that happens.

Aid convoys are proceeding. Of course, each day, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and her representatives on the spot have to judge with our people—the Overseas Development Administration for example—how convoys can safely operate on a particular day, but aid is flowing, although not yet in the quantities that are needed and which we would like.

The right hon. Gentleman is right about the importance of keeping the Russians on board. That is why I telephoned Moscow twice yesterday about the incident, and I was glad of the response that I received. It is important—especially if there is continued progress on bringing the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats together—that the Russians should continue to put the necessary pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, so the Russians' part in the matter is important.

I cannot give further details of the Anglo-American initiative on Sarajevo. I have set out the details of what has been agreed between the Prime Minister and the President. As the right hon. Gentleman said, the initiative is not exclusive—others are free to join it.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the speed with which he contacted the Russian authorities, and I note the obvious importance of that move at this sensitive time. Does he agree that whoever was responsible for the flagrant violation of the no-fly zone has received the clearest message, as the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said? If anyone else seeks to embark on such a course, it is vital that they receive the same message. With the clarity of that message comes far greater hope for peace in the future.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I agree. Whatever the exact origin of the planes, it was clearly a deliberate provocation and a test of the no-fly zone—a test which NATO passed.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Whether they came from Banja Luka or Krajina, I am puzzled that we did not have the capacity to detect six aircraft lifting off the ground at much the same time. Perhaps the Secretary of State could explain. What is the policy on helicopters in the no-fly zone? Are they being left alone?

Like the right hon. Member for Copeland, I welcome the Sarajevo initiative. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that it is being initiated on the assumption that Sarajevo will not become a divided city?

When the Secretary of State spoke to Prime Minister Papandreou, did he take the opportunity to say that many people think that Greece's attitude to Macedonia and its blockade is wholly unjustified?

Mr. Hurd: The aircraft were identified quickly by the AWACS. It is not clear from where they started, but they were quickly identified and efficiently dealt with.

On future enforcement, as I said, the events were the first infringement of the no-fly zone by a unit or force of fixed-wing aircraft. Serb and Croat helicopters have certainly violated the rule before. Helicopters are much more difficult to deal with. One cannot be certain of their purpose—they may be carrying wounded or supplies, so it is less easy—but it is a matter for local judgment and discretion.

As for Macedonia, the former Yugoslav republic, I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I made these very points to the Greek authorities yesterday. The Greeks have anxieties and concerns which are very widely felt in Greek public opinion, but I said that, in the view of Greece's partners, that does not justify action that is almost certainly illegal in terms of trade, and which certainly diminishes the authority and influence of Greece as President of the EC.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his statement about NATO's swift resolve in enforcing UN resolutions is very welcome, and was much better made today than yesterday, as the facts become clearer?

Will he reassure us that the same resolve will continue to be applied in the renaissance of Sarajevo, which is very welcome news, in lifting the siege on Srebrenica and other towns and, of course, in unblockading Tuzla airport? Does he agree that Russian co-operation, which was welcomed yesterday and which continues to be welcome, is indeed what we want, as long as Russia is playing its full part in the international community, as a member of the United Nations and as part of the peacekeeping effort, and is not seeking to reassert influences from the distant past in ways which, in the distant past, disturbed rather than stabilised areas of the Balkans?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with all my right hon. Friend's points, including the last. These are steps forward. There may well be reverses and disappointments in Bosnia in the future, but it is beginning to look as if we may be at the beginning of the end of what has been a nightmare.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): As this is the first time that NATO forces have ever been engaged in combat since the organisation was set up—and set up for quite a different purpose—can the Foreign Secretary tell us whether the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Prime Minister were notified in advance of the intention to shoot down aircraft which had not been shot down hitherto in the no-fly zone?

Is it not strange that, despite all the marvellous intelligence available, the Foreign Secretary cannot yet tell us the origin or nature of the aircraft that were shot down? Is he aware that NATO is not the world's policeman and that for a British Foreign Secretary to speak of Russia being "kept on board"—when the responsibility rests with the United Nations of which Russia is a permanent member, and when Russia has a much closer interest in the Balkans than the President of the United States whose aircraft were engaged—is clearly not a matter that can be brushed aside as if this were a western action to maintain peace on behalf of the United Nations, whose Security Council was never consulted specifically on the military action?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has not been following this matter with his usual care. NATO was acting within the framework of United Nations Security Council resolution 781, which established the no-fly zone, and resolution 816, which authorised its enforcement and which the Russians supported.

Therefore, the line of authority is very clear—from the Security Council, with a proper vote and proper support, unanimity—through a NATO decision authorising action. In these situations, one cannot hang about while everyone is consulted. Either the planes, which were rapidly identified and were bombing a target on the ground, are dealt with effectively or they are not. There has to be authority; there has to be a framework of law. They were in place and NATO took effective action.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend tell us a little more about the precise nature of the relationship of Russian troops to the United Nations command and control systems in the Balkans? Does he agree that the closer the relationship between Russian, French and British troops in the policing of the operation, the better? Has he had positive signals to that effect from contact with his counterparts in Russia?

Mr. Hurd: Yes indeed; those are Russian troops that have been in Croatia under UN command for some time, and they are now in Bosnia under UN command. They are in exactly the same position under the same authority as are the British troops in Bosnia. They are under UN command.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Are Russian motives utterly compatible with those of NATO?

Mr. Hurd: One has to judge the tree by its fruits, and the Russians' actions in the past few weeks, first in Sarajevo, and again yesterday in the way in which they responded to the incident, have been positive and helpful. Of course we cannot take it for granted that there will be no disagreements in the future, but in the past two or three weeks, their co-operation has been very helpful.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is no use talking tough unless one is prepared to act with comparable toughness, and that on this occasion NATO has done both, when put to the first real test of whether it is prepared to take military action in support of United Nations resolutions?

My right hon. Friend has not told the House where the American aircraft flew from. I presume that they came from an aircraft carrier, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as Italy is a member of NATO, the Italian Government are perfectly happy for Italian air bases to be used in support of NATO operations?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, of course; the answer to my hon. Friend's second question is yes. Those arrangements were made and completed in great detail, with the full co-operation of Italy as a member of NATO. I am sorry, but I cannot remember my hon. Friend's first question.

Mr. Colvin: I asked for confirmation that there was no point in talking tough unless one was prepared to act tough.

Mr. Hurd: The House knows, and I think that it agrees, that in this country we are not in favour of talking indiscriminately of military action as though it could bring peace. We know that it cannot, and that is why, as I have described, the peace effort has to go ahead. However, we have judged that, for certain measured purposes, the use of armed force is necessary, and one of those is in order to respond to infringements of the no-fly zone.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I welcome the fact that decisive action has at long last been taken to implement United Nations resolutions in Bosnia. Can the Secretary of State say more about what action will be taken to give proper protection to the so-called protected areas? Will he also stifle any prospect of a unilateral withdrawal of UNPROFOR forces from Bosnia in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Hurd: There has never been any question of British troops being withdrawn unilaterally from UNPROFOR. It is clear that their presence and that of those serving alongside them in UNPROFOR will be needed, at any rate for the time to come.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I mentioned Tuzla and Srebrenica. I also mentioned Vitez, which, although it was not one of the original safe areas, is still to some extent under siege. I mentioned Mostar, too. None of those is exactly the same as Sarajevo, and that is why what the French and British are trying to achieve in New York is for the Secretary-General to provide specific plans for the relief of each of those places.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend will have noticed a certain unease in the House about the Russian operation involving Tuzla. Of course everyone will welcome the reopening of the airport, but can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Russian forces in Bosnia are working directly under the United Nations, and that the UN command would have known about the initiative on Tuzla before the Russians entered into it?

Mr. Hurd: I mentioned the plans that Mr. Akashi and General Rose, on behalf of the UN, have already made for the relief of Tuzla, and I mentioned the need to mesh those in with whatever agreement may have been reached in Moscow in the past few hours. Clearly that will mean a UN operation, and the co-operation of the Serbs and of the Bosnian Muslims will be needed if the airport is to be opened.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Foreign Secretary aware that some of us are profoundly uneasy about what has happened? Is he saying that, whatever President Yeltsin has said, the Russian Parliament and the Russian military have agreed to all that? We are also uneasy because the Greek Foreign Minister has said that what happened was unnecessary. It seems to some of us that those who know most about the subject are the most concerned and uneasy.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's question, like the question asked by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), would have been apposite if the Russians had criticised what was done. Those two questions seem to have been produced by autopilot; the situation is not as those who asked them expected.

The Russians have made it clear—Mr. Churkin made it clear to me on the telephone and then publicly—that, if it

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turned out as it did turn out and the no-fly zone had been violated by a unit of fixed-wing aircraft, those who launched that unit had to accept the consequences. That is exactly our point of view. I spent a long time with the Greek Foreign Minister on that subject yesterday, and I do not think that, at the end of the day, he disputed the conclusions of NATO.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent decision of the Russian Government to send 800 troops to Bosnia marked a major triumph for British diplomacy during the Prime Minister's recent visit to Moscow? Will he assure the House that, in the current dangerous and escalating circumstances, any further initiatives in Bosnia will be carefully co-ordinated with the Russian Government?

Mr. Hurd: The Prime Minister urged the Russians in Moscow two weeks ago to do their utmost to influence the Serbs. The Russians told him on that occasion that they were willing to send troops. I do not agree with every statement of Russian foreign policy. I discussed that in Moscow recently with Mr. Kozyrev and with Mr. Grachev, the Defence Minister. When one considers what the Russians have said and done in respect of Bosnia in the past few weeks, I believe that it is positive and that it justifies our keeping in close touch with them, as we are doing.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does not it seem strange that the Foreign Secretary, even at this stage, cannot tell us where the planes came from and who was responsible for them, especially taking into account the fact that the AWACS planes are capable of spotting almost anything on the ground? Is it not a case of diplomatic blindness? If mistakes may be made at that level with all the technology and equipment at hand, if the war begins to escalate, what may happen if we become more deeply embroiled in the war?

Mr. Hurd: That seems to be an autopilot question, which seems to stem from the proposition that there was a great deal of doubt. Those Galeb planes were identified bombing a factory in the Croatian part of Bosnia. Therefore, before they started bombing, they were quite clearly infringing the no-fly zone. The Security Council authorised that no-fly zone and authorised member states to enforce it, and that is what was done.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the Yugoslav aircraft industry has produced more than 150 of those Galeb aircraft, that many are still operating and that we do not know quite where they are operating, it is important that NATO has good intelligence about who is operating them? Bearing in mind that infringement of the no-fly zone, would he consider further restrictions of air movement of aircraft from the different warring factions over the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Hurd: There is no doubt in anybody's mind that the planes were operating in the Serb cause. Whether they originated from a part of Croatia occupied by Serbs, or from Serbia, or from a part of Bosnia occupied by Serbs, is an interesting but secondary matter, in view of what they were doing and of the rules of international law.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Is not the key point the fact that, in the past two months, we have seen more progress than in the previous two years in bringing an end to a conflict which has already claimed almost 200,000 lives and created millions of refugees? Looking ahead to the wider peace process, which the Foreign Secretary mentioned, will he reconfirm that the Government's position is still not to recognise the results of ethnic cleansing or any changes of borders which are brought about by force?

Mr. Hurd: It is clear—I think that it is common ground to everybody, even the Bosnian Serbs—that a negotiated settlement must start with a substantial Bosnian Serb withdrawal, from perhaps up to about a quarter of the land which they now occupy. That is what David Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg accomplished on HMS Invincible and since. The Americans are carrying that forward, to see whether they can proceed to that position by an agreement between the Croats and Muslims. If they can, well and good.

The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right: the Serbs cannot expect to hold on, by force of occupation, to all the land that they occupy at present.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the demonstration of resolution on the part of the United Nations and NATO is thoroughly to be welcomed? Does he also agree that the positive steps forward to which he referred are a direct result of, and thoroughly vindicate, our recent decision to pursue violations of UN resolutions in Bosnia with greater vigour?

Mr. Hurd: Various things have come together for good. Undoubtedly, the NATO decision was part of that. Undoubtedly, the leadership of General Rose on the ground is part of that. Undoubtedly, the recent Russian action is part of that. The much more intensive American diplomatic action is very welcome, because it shows all concerned that the Americans are not hanging back. Like the Europeans, they believe that, at the end of this, there must be a negotiated peace, because there cannot be a military victory for anyone.

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Can the Foreign Secretary tell us what representations the Prime Minister has made to President Clinton about the involvement of United States ground forces in helping the humanitarian effort and a peace settlement for Bosnia? Can he give an assurance that we have made it clear to the United States that any future action by US military aircraft must be strictly in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council of the United Nations, and that there cannot be any unilateral assistance on one side or the other in this civil war?

Mr. Hurd: That is the whole basis on which the Americans have been operating, and on which the two F16s operated yesterday.

As to the presence of American ground troops, President Clinton made it clear last year that the United States would be willing to help with troops on the ground once and if there were an agreed settlement which all the warring parties were implementing. That stage has not been reached.

I have told the House about the agreement to rebuild civilian services in Sarajevo, which the President and my right hon. Friend have reached. Obviously, that will involve the active American participation of experts in rebuilding the city, and that is a forward step which the House will welcome.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): What my right hon. Friend said about Greece will be widely welcomed. Can he confirm that he will do everything in his power to persuade the Greeks to back away from a confrontation with Macedonia—a confrontation which would only aggravate the conflict in the Balkans?

Mr. Hurd: As I said, the Greeks have genuine anxieties—if one goes there and listens to Greeks of many different political persuasions, one understands that. They believe that the integrity of Greece is threatened by the constitution, the flag, the name and so on of this small state to their north. I do not agree with that, and Greece's other partners do not agree with that, but we must reckon with that fact.

What needs to happen is the withdrawal of these measures—which are illegal and will prove very expensive for Greece, as well as for the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia—and continued discussion under the auspices and chairmanship of Mr. Cyrus Vance to resolve these questions and issues between Greece and her northern neighbour.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): In view of the serious situation in Bosnia that the Secretary of State has described, how can he justify the redeployment of British UNPROFOR troops away from central Bosnia to support the action in Sarajevo? Will the British Government now respond positively to the request from the United Nations commanders on the ground, including General Rose, for the deployment of extra British UNPROFOR troops?

Mr. Hurd: The Coldstreams were redeployed in Sarajevo because that is what General Rose wanted, and they have done an invaluable job there. It is for the United Nations to redeploy forces under its control. In this case, we readily agreed that, in the circumstances of last week, the Coldstreams were needed in Sarajevo.

It would be excellent if other countries came forward with troops, which could increase the resources available to UNPROFOR and General Rose. We have provided, and are willing to provide, extra specialist help as he requires it. When one is thinking of substantial military units, we believe that the call should go principally to those who, unlike the French, ourselves and one or two other countries, are not responding substantially already.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the action might put our aid workers and troops in more danger? Has the right hon. Gentleman taken into account the recent history of Russia, which shows that President Yeltsin might not be in total control in the near future? Might not the action lead to further rises in the nationalism that is worrying everyone so much? Should not the American President at least commit troops and aid workers to face the same dangers as he expects those of other countries to face?

Mr. Hurd: The American President has made his position clear. Obviously, the greater the American involvement on the ground as well as in the air and in diplomacy, the more America's allies will be pleased. Of course, the hon. Lady is right to say that there is a risk. If our aid workers and troops wanted to avoid risk, they would stay at home.

Mrs. Mahon *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady cannot buck that point. What Government must do—this puts us in a different position from Opposition politicians—is weigh the risks. We have the power to put the lives of service men and aid workers at risk, and we should use that power only when we are clear that the likely benefits outweigh the risks. We are so clear at present.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Following the question from my hon. Friend the Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), does the Foreign Secretary agree that the incident underlines the importance of intensifying the effort to find a peaceful, and, above all, stable, long-term solution? What mechanism does the right hon. Gentleman consider to be the most appropriate to try to find such a solution, and what role does he see in the longer term for Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg?

Mr. Hurd: The role that the UN and the European Union have given David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg remains as it is. When a negotiated agreement is eventually built brick by brick, their names and proposals will be a part of that building—I do not doubt that.

I have reported on what the Americans are attempting to do, and the House knows what the Russians are attempting to do. The European Union will meet to discuss the matters again next Monday. There is no doubt that the efforts of all those I mentioned are now moving together in a way that was not always true in the past. If we can continue that impetus, we may be able to continue the progress.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Given that the recent and determined UN action must already have had the wonderful effect of saving many innocent lives in Sarajevo, does the Foreign Secretary now accept that equally determined action two years ago would have saved the lives of many thousands of innocent people in the former Yugoslavia? Does he now accept the ancient lesson of history that appeasement can never be supported and can never be successful?

Mr. Hurd: We have been saving lives in central Bosnia month after month. The hon. Gentleman may be referring to the arms embargo. I believe that if the embargo had been lifted, the war, instead of dying down, would have blazed up, and perhaps spread to other countries. I do not believe that that would have been a remedy.

If the hon. Gentleman was thinking of a massive armed intervention on the ground, he should be aware of what that might have led to. If he believes that action from the air could have produced a peace settlement, he is wrong. Action from the air can produce certain clear results, including the defence of UNPROFOR, maintaining the no-fly zone and getting heavier weapons removed from Sarajevo.

We carefully worked out those things. We measured the risk against the benefits, and we in NATO decided to take the risk in those areas. To suppose in a lordly sort of way that there were options for the use of force a long time ago

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which could have saved lives, rather than killed more people, is to assume something that is far from being proven.

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): While the opening of Tuzla airport will be important, does the Foreign Secretary agree that it would be even more useful to open up the northern route into Tuzla in north central Bosnia? That is the spur from Zupanja to Tuzla which leaves the Zagreb-Belgrade highway.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in a couple of weeks, a pan-European convoy with large contingents from Britain will try to get through to Tuzla along that route? The Bosnians in Tuzla do not understand why that route—which is non-mountainous, unlike the southern route—has not been opened for aid convoys. Will the Foreign Secretary look at that and undertake that either himself or one of his hon. Friends will have talks with the Workers Aid for Bosnia group which is forming a convoy in the near future?

Mr. Hurd: It is essential that the convoy should proceed in close contact with the UN and the ODA. Most of the relief that is getting into Tuzla has come by road through Serb-held lands. We believe that the quantity is inadequate. That is why it is important to open the airport.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): United Nations officials have confirmed that, since last October, there have been more than 1,000 violations of the no-fly zone by Serbian, Croatian and Muslim aircraft. Will the Foreign Secretary explain clearly to the House why this violation provoked a NATO attack? Was it because either NATO or the United Nations had confirmation that the planes were involved in a bombing attack, or because it was the first occasion on which more than one fixed-wing aircraft violated the no-fly zone?

Mr. Hurd: The second.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): Following the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), which the Foreign Secretary did not answer exactly in his normal manner, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that Sarajevo is still under siege? It is important that that point gets across. It comes across that somehow Sarajevo has been saved. While I welcome what has happened there, it is clear that people cannot leave that city, and they are under siege. What measures will be taken to improve the position?

Mr. Hurd: The Bosnian Government have not encouraged people to leave Sarajevo. It is partly under siege. There is an airlift. Some supplies get in, but not enough. The civilian life of the city is still to a large extent paralysed. That is why we, with the French and the US, have urged the UN to appoint a commissioner to work alongside General Rose and Mr. Akashi to restore civilian life. That is why the Anglo-American agreement that I have just announced takes the form it does.

We are not talking just about Sarajevo: other places are under siege. Mostar has been under siege by the Croats. Vitez has been under siege by the Bosnian Muslims. Each is a different area, with different participants, difference hindrances. Therefore, different remedies are needed. That is what is being worked out.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West. In one of his responses, the Foreign Secretary said that the Serbs should not be allowed to hold on to "all" of the land that they had gained by aggression. Why did he say "all" and not "any"? If borders are to be violated as they have been, what assurances can he give the people of Albania following recent violations of the border there by the Serbians?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman speaks as if we were dealing with a simple invasion of Bosnia by the Serbs. Serbs live in Bosnia. We are talking about what is the fair share to be retained by Bosnian Serbs so that they continue to live in their country. That is the question.

The answer worked out is that the Bosnian Serbs need to withdraw from about one quarter of the land which they have seized. Bosnian Muslims should have approximately one third, and that is what they have agreed. The Bosnian Croats should have 17.5 per cent. Those are not absolute figures; they are part of the negotiations now taking place. What is at issue is not so much the total proportions as the quality and nature of the land—which towns, which villages—that should be in each category.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Can the Foreign Secretary confirm that the six attacking Bosnian aircraft were first identified by NATO command only during the attack on Novi Travnik or shortly thereafter? If that is not so, is not it a matter of serious concern that the attacks were allowed to take place? Given that the six aircraft were engaged after the bombing mission on Novi Travnik, why on earth was it necessary to give the aircraft two separate warnings?

Mr. Hurd: Because that is the agreed procedure, to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. I believe that the majority of the House would feel that the operation was remarkably effective and successful.

Lloyd's Membership

4.13 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in your power to rule that Members of this House comply with the Register of Members' Interests in respect of declaring their membership of syndicates in Lloyds? If they do not, they are defying the will of the House.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps I can be helpful to the House. The matter was referred to yesterday. It may be helpful if I draw attention to the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which includes the words:

> "to consider any proposals made by Members or others as to the form and content of the register and to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests."

The hon. Gentleman should pose his questions to the Select Committee. In view of that Committee's responsibility, I wish to make it clear that I shall entertain no further points on the subject.

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement

4.15 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

> That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population, to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricity and water, to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental, to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes, to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings, and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people.

We are in the throes of a debate on the future of the welfare state. Day by day, various Ministers pluck out of the air yet more and new statistics to claim that this country can no longer afford universal benefits or a universal welfare state. But, since 1979, that very same Government have presided over an economic strategy in which the richest fifth of the population has increased its share of national income from 35 to 43 per cent., while the share of the poorest fifth has dropped to a mere 6 per cent. of national income—from 10 per cent. in 1979, even then an inadequate figure. In Britain, welfare spending as a proportion of both national income and Government expenditure is considerably and significantly lower than in other European countries.

Yesterday, the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) let the cat out of the bag. He was finally brought to the Dispatch Box to admit that, since 1979, average earnings in this country have risen by 35 per cent., and the average state old-age pension has risen by 3.2 per cent. Yet the same Minister claimed that pensioners' average income has risen by 39 per cent. during that period.

What the Minister fails to discuss or admit is that the supposed 39 per cent. increase in the average income of pensioners hides a multitude of sins. It disregards the fact that many older pensioners, particularly older women pensioners, have no access to occupational pension schemes, savings or investments. They are not the people who read the *Financial Times* to see how their shares are going: they are the people who wonder how they will be able to pay their gas or electricity bills at the end of each quarter.

The use of global average figures is a dangerous trend. Groups that we used to refer to as on the lunatic right and now just think of as completely loopy—such as the No Turning Back group and the Adam Smith Institute—seem to be trying to join in the debate.

The No Turning Back group proposes the abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme and offers the opt-out of state pensions in return for bribery in the form of national insurance payments. The same Government now pay more and more money into the national insurance fund as a means of promoting the private pension industry. I believe that the Government's pension strategy is largely about promoting the private pension industry, at the expense of the welfare state and the principles of a state scheme.

Yesterday, the Adam Smith Institute came out in its true colours and went even further: it proposed the wholesale abolition of the welfare state. Some Conservative Members propose the destruction of the welfare state in its entirety. The Secretary of State claims that he is the great defender of the welfare state, but, under questioning, he admits that, if the Government stay in office until the end of the

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century, the state old-age pension will be reduced to a mere 10 per cent. of average earnings, from a high of 26 per cent. when the last Labour Government left office. Inadequate though it was, the pension then was considerably better than it is now.

This is not the first time that I have introduced such a Bill. In fact, it is the 11th time that I have introduced the same or a similar Bill designed to set out a comprehensive programme to improve the lot of the elderly in this country. The way in which the elderly are treated is a measure of a society's civilisation. The way that we in this country treat our elderly population is a standing disgrace. Too many of them live in poverty, too many die of hypothermia and too many live in fear of their gas, electricity and telephone bills, and having to pay for their television licence.

The Bill is a comprehensive measure. It would require the appointment of a Minister to co-ordinate all aspects of policies for the elderly. They are concerned not simply about pensions, but about education, recreation, culture and a variety of subjects, including housing.

It would also require both local authorities and local health authorities to produce an annual report explaining what they do for their elderly population, what services they provide, how they provide them, what the life expectancy is, and how effective the services are, because too many housebound, bedridden elderly people are suffering from enormous cuts in social services expenditure. They are not in a position to lobby, either here or at town halls. They are the victims of Government spending cuts in respect of local health authorities and local councils.

In addition, value added tax is a wholly regressive form of taxation. The compensation measures proposed by the Government, which they plan to introduce in April, are wholly inadequate. They take no account of the regional differences in fuel bills. Fuel bills tend to be higher where it is colder. Scottish bills tend to be higher than English bills, and so forth.

Likewise, the standing charges for gas, electricity and water, the telephone rental and the television licence fee are like another poll tax for low-income households. In the Bill, I propose that the vast profits being made by the privatised gas, electricity and water companies should instead be put to good use by being channelled into abolishing the standing charges for pensioner households, both to save them money and to protect them from having supplies being cut off.

The right to be able to get about is crucial. In London, we are very proud of the travel permit scheme for pensioners. Its introduction was a great achievement by the Labour-controlled Greater London council, and it has been a mighty struggle to maintain it. Similar schemes have been introduced in many other cities. I believe, however, that it should be extended to the whole country. If the Republic of Ireland can provide a national travel scheme for its retired people, why can this country not do it?

I come now to the crucial part of the Bill. Too many elderly people live in great poverty. Too many are unable to make ends meet. Too many have no savings, and those who have them find that the savings are often eaten up because of the rules on the use of savings before housing benefit and the like are paid.

I therefore propose that the first thing to be done is the recalculation of the state old-age pension to restore the link that was so cruelly and brutally broken in 1980. Until 1975, the basis of the calculation of the pension each April was the link between it and average earnings. The basis is now the average price rise, which means that, as a proportion of average earnings, the state old-age pension has fallen and fallen. As I said earlier, it is due to fall to a mere 10 per cent.

I propose that the link be restored, and that we aim to be able to pay a state old-age pension of half average earnings. It could be achieved, although it would require considerable expenditure, and it would bring us somewhere near the European average in countries where they are trying to protect and look after their elderly.

Those who campaigned a century ago for the principle of a welfare state and for a state old-age pension to banish for ever the fear of the workhouse and of poverty in old age would be appalled if they could have foreseen that, in 1994, we would live in a society which, having achieved a universal welfare state, was prepared to preside over its destruction in favour of greed and private profit.

My Bill seeks to do something different. It seeks to recognise that the richest in the country have done very well over the past 15 years. We spend far too much money on arms; we could be spending it on socially useful things. We are allowing too many hospitals and social services to be destroyed. The Bill goes some way towards redressing the balance, and eliminating once and for all the fear and misery of poverty in retirement.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Don Dixon, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Llew Smith, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, Ms Mildred Gordon, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Tony Banks and Mr. Bob Cryer.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population, to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricity and water, to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental, to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes, to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings, and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 62.]

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[5TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Overseas Aid

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.24 pm

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I beg to move,

That this House notes with concern the high proportion of British aid that is tied to the purchase of British goods and services; notes the remarkable coincidence between defence-related contracts and the allocation of British aid; further notes that many of the companies who have benefited from such deals are major donors to the Conservative Party; believes that allegations relating to the Pergau Dam affair have seriously undermined the credibility of the British aid programme; condemns the past conduct of Her Majesty's Government in relation to this matter; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to restore the public's confidence in British aid by setting a timetable for achieving the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. GNP, reducing the proportion of tied aid and increasing the proportion which is spent on the basic human needs of the poorest people.

In opening the debate, I intend to advance five propositions: first, that the Pergau dam project was a costly mistake to which the Government should never have committed taxpayers' money; secondly, that the only possible explanation for that error was the Government's eagerness to lubricate the trade channels with Malaysia and especially the arms trade; thirdly, that, as in the case with arms to Iraq, the Government proclaimed one policy to Parliament and the public, but, in reality, pursued another; fourthly, that there has been an unhealthy use of the overseas aid programme generally to assist arms sales around the world; and, fifthly, that there has been an equally unhealthy dominance in the receipt of the aid and trade provision by firms that are donors to the Conservative party. In conclusion, I shall propose changes in policy to ensure that those wholly unacceptable happenings do not recur.

I begin, therefore, with the decision to support the Pergau dam project. In 1987, which was a year before the Government got committed by the then Prime Minister to supporting that project, the World bank's power sector had advised against that hydro-electric project and suggested instead that Malaysia should concentrate on gas-fired electricity generation until the turn of the century. The Malaysian Government turned down a less expensive tender for such a power station, which, incidentally, British companies were well placed to supply and which would have been far less environmentally damaging.

That was before the then Defence Secretary's now notorious visit to Malaysia in March 1988, when he signed a protocol on arms sales in conjunction with a promise on aid, and before the equally notorious visit by the then Prime Minister. Having got hooked on the project, the Overseas Development Agency sent a team to Malaysia to assess the project. The Public Accounts Committee has described that as the shortest project appraisal ever to come before it. Nevertheless, the then Prime Minister offered the Malaysian Prime Minister support for the project, conditional on full economic appraisal.

A year later, in February 1990, the ODA concluded that the dam was a "very bad buy" and the Department for Trade and Industry proposed a review of the Malaysian power sector. Nevertheless, the Malaysian Government were determined to proceed and, in February 1991, the then Permanent Secretary to the ODA, Sir Tim Lankester, told Ministers that the proposal, which was not some flea-bite incidental project but the largest single funding ever to be made by our overseas aid programme, was

"unequivocally a bad one in economic terms"

and an

"abuse of the aid programme".

Sir Tim told our Public Accounts Committee a few weeks ago that he therefore required ministerial orders to go ahead with the payments. Mr. Rais Yatin, who was Foreign Minister of Malaysia at the start of those discussions, has said that the deal was a "gross irregularity".

In its report last year, the National Audit Office drew attention to the history of errors in the project and concluded that the cost to the British taxpayer was £234 million, plus more than £50 million for funding soft loans.

Among the first duties of Parliament are the voting of moneys to Governments and the check on their use. We should be failing in our most fundamental duty if we did not censure the Government for their assent to that expenditure.

That brings me to the question, why? The answer is that, so keen were Ministers to re-establish trade with Malaysia that they set aside a series of normal procedures to enable them to do so. There was, first, the agreement made by George Younger, now Lord Younger of Prestwick, to link an arms sales package with the promise of aid. He says:

"a verbal understanding was given by somebody—to link the aid to the defence contract".

The House is entitled to know who that somebody was.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the relationship between British and Malaysian Ministers became unacceptably cosy, and that there are grounds for investigating the basis on which public interest immunity certificates were signed by Ministers against the interests of Mr. Lorrain Osman, who was then in Pentonville prison in London, which, if they had not been signed, might have led to the disclosure of documents that would have enabled Mr. Osman to present his defence in a proper fashion?

Sir David Steel: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that there is a case for looking into that connection. In preparing what is inevitably a wide-ranging speech, I decided not to go down that alley, but it is one well worth exploring and I hope that hon. Members will do so in the debate.

I have a copy of the subsequent memorandum of understanding that was signed by the two Prime Ministers after a meeting from which all officials were excluded. As it is classified as secret, I shall not read any of it to the House. Suffice it to say that it contains some unusual provisions, including the use of concessionary interest rates by private banks to be guaranteed by the Government, rather than the normal export credit guarantee arrangements, the establishment of permanent units in our

[Sir David Steel]

Ministry of Defence and in Malaysia to oversee the contracts and the provision of military training, as well as a list of various arms suppliers.

Here I have to be blunt and say that, in the course of batting for Britain, which our former Prime Minister did extremely well, her close circle often seems to have been involved. In this case, Sir Tim Bell, well known as her public relations adviser, is also adviser to the Malaysian Prime Minister and to Tam Sri Armugam, who controls GEC Malaysia, and was heavily involved in some of the contracts under the deal.

Another person who helped broker parts of the deal is Mr. Steve Tipping, a business associate of Mr. Mark Thatcher and, indeed, best man at his wedding. Tim Bell told the *The Sunday Times* when asked to clarify Tipping's exact role:

> "What he does for a living is introduce people to each other".

That is lucky for him. It is clear that between them, George Younger, Margaret Thatcher and persons unknown made the deal, which also included an agreement to give Malaysian Airlines a landing slot at Heathrow airport, for which the Treasury had to fork out more than £2 million of public money as compensation to British Airways.

I now turn to the deception of Parliament. According to the Alan Clark school of thought, none of it, including possible payments to middle men or politicians into Swiss bank accounts, is at all untoward in the determined pursuit of British business interests. *[Interruption.]* Some Conservative Members say, "Hear, hear", but it is not the stated policy of Her Majesty's Government.

I do not want to get hung up on the argument about whether it was illegal, but it was certainly wholly against the ODA's declared policy objectives and the published guidelines of the aid and trade provision which specifically exclude as eligible "equipment for military purposes".

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the principal responsibility of the British Government, of any persuasion, must be to look after British interests first? In that context, is it not quite clear, after the events of Thursday and Friday onwards concerning the Malaysian trade embargo against Britain, that countless thousands of British jobs are at risk? Would not the right hon. Gentleman be doing Britain more good, and doing more for British jobs by calming the situation down rather than stoking the fire, which he is actively doing?

Sir David Steel: I will come on to my suggestions about the best way of pursuing British interests towards the end of my speech. But if the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that deception, backhanders or anything of that kind should be part of British policy, let us have that stated as British policy. What I am complaining about is that the policy pursued in this case was different from the public policy that was declared to us in Parliament. More than that, Ministers constantly denied any link between arms supplies and aid in several answers to parliamentary questions. I shall give two examples. In November 1989, the then Prime Minister told the House:

> "Overseas aid is frequently used to finance civil engineering contracts ... It is not used in connection with sales of military equipment."—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *121*.]

That was already untrue by the time she said it.

In December 1991, the Minister for Overseas Development, the then Mrs. Chalker, told the House:

> "There is no question of linking aid and arms 'deals'".—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. *331*.]

But there was a question, and she had already been overruled in that instance.

The columns of *Hansard* are littered with such denials. As late as 26 January this year, when asked to confirm or deny the specific allegation that aid to Pergau was linked to arms sales, the Prime Minister wrote in a letter to me that the

> "Memorandum of Understanding did not cover aid."

I cannot accuse the Prime Minister of telling me a lie, because you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would rule me out of order, and he is technically correct. It is not there. But he and other Ministers have been miserly with their veracity, right up to Sunday, when the Foreign Secretary, in a phrase that ranks alongside "economical with the truth", told us that the two had for a time become entangled.

One of my conclusions is that, as in the arms to Iraq fiasco, the Government have become not only sloppy in their use of power but cavalier in their treatment of the House, and have sought to mislead us by concealing the truth until finally found out.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): The right hon. Gentleman will appreciate that some of us who are on the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs are in a difficult position. Indeed, I have just come from the Foreign Office, where I was looking through some of the papers. I ask him to accept that all these points will be looked into carefully by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. I think that he will perhaps want to reconsider some of the points that he makes when the whole story is known. I hope very much that that is so.

Sir David Steel: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have looked carefully at all the papers relating to this matter and am choosing my words extremely carefully. I believe that the House was misled in the parliamentary answers that were given, because it is undeniable that aid—

Mr. Harris: Has the right hon. Gentleman read it?

Sir David Steel: I have read the memorandum of understanding. Of course there is no reference to it, but if the hon. Gentleman had been following me closely, he would have heard that George Younger, as he then was, made it quite clear that a verbal commitment was given by somebody to promise the aid. I am asking the question that I hope the hon. Member will ask as a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs: Who was that person? I invite him to ask that question.

My fourth proposition is that the Pergau dam affair illustrates something that has gone wrong with our aid and trade provision. There has been a growing correlation between increased aid programmes to other countries and arms sales contracts. Malaysia is not a poor country; its gross national product per capita is $2,500. The amount spent on the Pergau dam project alone, every single year from now through to 2000, exceeds what we gave last year to the whole of Somalia or Ethiopia, each of whose gross national product per head is only just over $100.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that the kind of aid that is given to Somalia will not be under the aid and trade provision and therefore cannot be truly classified in the same way as the aid given on the Pergau dam?

Sir David Steel: I accept that it comes out of a different part of the ODA, but the hon. Gentleman will agree that the total, both the trade and aid provision and the ordinary aid programme, amounts to our overseas aid budget. They are together. I shall talk in a moment about the inadequacy of the total packages. Obviously, money spent on one is not available for the other; that is the point that I am making.

Even further removed from poverty is Oman, with a gross national product per capita of over $6,000—higher than the figure in Portugal, a European Community aid-giving country. Its aid from Britain has doubled during the lifetime of the present Government, and it currently ranks third in the list of purchasers of arms from Britain. For 1994, defence spending is planned to occupy 30 per cent. of Oman's national budget. Thailand and Jordan are other better-off countries with increasing aid receipts and growing arms purchases from Britain.

Most offensive of all, however, are the sales and aid programmes for undesirable regimes. Let us take Ecuador, for example. In comparison with neighbouring Colombia and El Salvador—which share the same level of poverty —Ecuador receives growing British aid. It currently amounts to 0.33p per head, as against 0.07p and 0.04p in the other two countries. The difference is that Ecuador is the fifth largest purchaser of British arms. In 1991, the Ecuadorian human rights commission registered 23 cases of unlawful killing and 38 of torture.

Even more striking is the case of Indonesia, where our aid programme has quadrupled under the present Government. It has become the fourth largest purchaser of British armaments. Since 1975, when Indonesia invaded its neighbour East Timor, a third of the population—some 200,000 people—has been killed. In 1991, the army massacred 100 civilians at a funeral in the East Timor capital. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has condemned Indonesia. Last year's Amnesty International report lists more than 180 prisoners of conscience, and states:

> "Torture and ill treatment of political detainees, peaceful demonstrations and criminal suspects were common and resulted in some deaths. Government forces extrajudicially executed scores of alleged supporters of independence in Aceh and East Timor."

Some countries, such as Belgium, have suspended their aid to Indonesia; others, such as the United States, have banned arms sales. Britain has increased both. I believe that most people in this country find that wholly unacceptable, and would prefer us not to sell arms to unsavoury regimes—and certainly not to lubricate those sales by using parts of our limited aid budget.

I agree with what Lady Chalker, the Minister for Overseas Development, said in a lecture a couple of years ago:

> "excessive military expenditure can create political and military insecurity. It can also seriously damage development by pre-empting resources."

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I am trying to follow the right hon. Gentleman's argument about the public policy of a political party, and what a party says when it goes overseas. Will he confirm that his own party was quick to congratulate the new Liberal Canadian Government on their economic policies, when they had just announced the cancellation of a helicopter project which would have been very expensive for the Canadian taxpayer? The Leader of the right hon. Gentleman's party, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), then told the local press that he had dispatched the right hon. Gentleman to ask the Canadian Government to reinstate the project.

Sir David Steel: With great respect, that has nothing to do with what I am talking about. I assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that I have indeed discussed the matter with Canadian Ministers. It is evident from the Canadian Liberal election programme, which is clearly set out, that it was designed to reduce the defence budget and increase the aid budget. I have been trying to argue that case here.

In a recent Foreign Office publication, the Government said that they attempted to promote good government through their aid programme. It seems highly selective. In the foreword, the Foreign Secretary writes:

> "The more open a society is, the more transparent the decisions of government, the more difficult it is to hide corruption and the abuse of human rights."

Those are fine words, but tell that to the Malaysians and the Indonesians!

My fifth observation relates to the connection between firms that benefit from the aid and trade provision, and donations to the Conservative party and its allied organisations. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) should listen to what I am going to say before intervening.

The fact is that companies linked by such donations have been the main beneficiaries of the aid and trade provision—to the tune of 42 per cent.—since the Government came to power. They include Cementation International—owned by Trafalgar House—Balfour Beatty, GEC, AMEC International, Biwater and Davy; not to mention the walk-on part of our old friend the privatised British Airways.

I am not alleging that there is anything as corrupt as a direct link between those companies' donations to the party in government and their receipt of aid and trade provision from the Government: perish the thought. It is just that the two have, in a somewhat unseemly manner, "become entangled".

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): May I return to the right hon. Gentleman's earlier point? He mentioned both GEC and Malaysia. No doubt he knows quite a bit about my constituency from his previous role as leader of the Liberal party; he will know that it contains four GEC companies, which employ people who have been hard hit by defence-related redundancies. Over the past week, those workers have become extremely nervous and concerned about the threat of trade with Malaysia, where they are involved in non-military contracts such as the airport project.

What would the right hon. Gentleman do if redundancies were announced in Chelmsford as a result of pathetic, naive debates of this kind? Will he consider reading an article in *The Times* by Peter Riddell, which puts the whole issue into perspective?

Sir David Steel: If any redundancies were declared in Chelmsford, I would say that the hon. Gentleman should look to his own Government, who got into this mess in the first place—unless he is seeking to defend the actions that I have described; I am not sure whether he is or not.

[Sir David Steel]

What are we going to do about all this? Let me take the last point first. Over the years, the House has on several occasions dodged the issue of the funding of political parties. I believe that such corporate donations should be outlawed. I am not in favour of state grants for political parties, but I believe that there is a case for examining a scheme whereby each individual citizen was allowed to donate a small fixed amount from his or her tax bill—say £50—to the party of his or her choice. That would provide an element of public subsidy for democracy, but according to the individual's choice—leaving space for the political parties to go out and get it.

That is my first proposal for a change in policy. My second is that we should legislate, as the United States Congress has done, against arms sales to regimes with appalling human rights records. I do not believe that the American action is foolproof, but at least it is a start in the right direction.

Thirdly, I am well aware of the argument—which appears to be supported by some Conservative Members —that, if we do not engage in arms trade sweeteners, payments to middle men or bribery, to put it crudely, others may nip in and secure the contracts. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is well aware of that, and has established a working party on illicit payments.

Mr. Burns: The right hon. Gentleman does not understand.

Sir David Steel: I am trying to tell the hon. Member for Chelmsford something. For more than two years, the working party has been battling against the indifference of the British and Japanese participants. I want an assurance from the Government that they will take the issue seriously, and help the OECD to reach an internationally accepted code of behaviour. In the meantime, we should look at the American legislation, which is punitive to the extent of imposing $2 million fines and five years in gaol for corrupt payments.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, but I think that he must agree that he is misinforming the House about that OECD examination. My understanding is that it is a proposition put forward by the United States, because of the stringency of its domestic law, but it is being discussed, debated and in some degree opposed, not only by Britain and by Japan, but by all our continental European neighbours, because they simply do not think that it is pertinent to their legislation. It is totally unfair, therefore, for the right hon. Gentleman, as it were, to put Britain alone in dock in that context.

Sir David Steel: I did not put Britain alone in the dock. I said simply that my information was that Britain and Japan had been dragging their feet in that working party, which has been going on, not for two months, but for two years. If the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) is suggesting that some of our European Community partners are also dragging their feet, I find that equally deplorable. I am saying that it is no good advancing the argument that if we do not behave badly someone elsewhere will, and therefore we might as well behave badly, which appears to be the case that Mr. Alan Clark and others have advanced.

We all know that our overseas aid budget, far from moving towards the UN target of 0.7 per cent. of gross national product, has been moving disgracefully away from it. Moreover, a large chunk has had to be devoted to eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, leaving a smaller proportion of the diminished budget for the desperately poor in our world. It is time that the overall budget was progressively increased towards our UN commitment and that the share-out within it was reordered to help the poorer countries. Perhaps we could be given details of the rethinking that has already taken place in the Overseas Development Administration on that last point.

Finally, I believe, as did our Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, that the aid and trade provision should be removed from the ODA and transferred wholly to the Department of Trade and Industry. There is everything to be said, of course, for assisting our industries to obtain contracts—that is not at issue—but that is not one of the declared aims of the ODA and, in the light of this sad episode, it should become solely that of the DTI.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley) *rose—*

Sir David Steel: No; I am concluding now.

The British are generous people and the response to the overseas development charities by the public proves that to be so. They have been appalled that their tax revenues, instead of going to the poor and the hungry, have been so misused in that way. The Government stand condemned and the scandal must never be allowed to happen again.

4.51 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

> 'strongly supports the Government's substantial aid programme aimed at sustainable economic and social development, particularly in the poorest countries, which draws on the skills and excellence of British institutions, companies and non-governmental organisations, and creates significant jobs and wealth in the United Kingdom.'.

I wonder, having listened to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), whether we are debating the same aid programme. I welcome the opportunity to remind him of the basic purpose of our aid programme and of the realities of the world. I doubt whether the dedicated people working in the field to implement our aid programme in a number of countries will take much encouragement from having listened to the right hon. Gentleman. I quote from the Foreign Office's 1993 departmental report,

> "The purpose of our overseas aid for developing countries is to promote sustainable economic and social development and good government in order to reduce poverty, suffering and deprivation and to improve the quality of life for poor people."

The best advertisement for increasing our aid programme is its effectiveness. Since 1987-88, we have increased the amount of aid that we give to developing countries by 10 per cent. in real terms. We have the sixth largest aid programme in the world. We remain committed to the 0.7 per cent. aid/gross national product target, but, like many other donors, we cannot set a timetable for reaching it. Levels of aid must take account of our economic circumstances. Those are realities which confront other donors. Some, such as Germany, have frozen their aid. Others—for example, Canada, Italy and Finland—have cut theirs. Our programme, meanwhile, continues to grow.

However, it is not just a question of how much money donors provide. The results of that aid are what count—how well the aid works. That is why the quality and effectiveness of aid are so important. We would not have provided more resources if we were not convinced that we would put them to good use in the interests of the recipient countries and of British taxpayers.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): What criticisms were expressed in what the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said last week to the British Government about the quality of our aid?

Mr. Goodlad: I was coming to that. The development assistance committee of the OECD has just completed a review of the United Kingdom aid programme, while the hon. Gentleman was on his travels in Africa. It is still in business—unlike, I regret to say, the hon. Gentleman, who has been shamefully let down by his own Front Bench—a case of serious injustice.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): When the Minister speaks about injustice to Front Benchers, does he agree that the biggest injustice this afternoon is that he should be put up to answer for the Government in this miserable situation?

Mr. Goodlad: On the contrary, I regard it as an honour and a privilege.

The development assistance committee of the OECD has just said:

> "The United Kingdom has a highly concessional, well organised bilateral programme based on substantial national expertise and largely oriented towards the poorest developing countries."

That conclusion from an internationally respected organisation hardly squares with the Opposition motion, but I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing the House's attention to it.

Far from being a misuse of funds, the aid programme is effective because it is well targeted. It is well targeted in where we spend our aid—on the poorest countries, especially in Africa and Asia. Seven of the 10 biggest recipients of our bilateral aid in 1992-93 were poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The other three were populous and poor countries in Asia—India, Bangladesh and China. It is also well targeted on clearly defined objectives. They were set out clearly in the speech of my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development at Chatham House last year. The aim is long-term, sustainable development.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the things that seem to have annoyed the Malaysian Government is the fact that commentators in the House and outside seem to be saying that they should not play a part in deciding where aid should be spent and that they do not have the ability to know where that is best used? Is not that appalling? Should not the British Government always listen to the Government of the country involved about where they feel that aid is best applied?

Mr. Goodlad: I think that my hon. Friend makes a very important point. We in government always listen, but I am quite used to patronising, condescending and neo-colonialist attitudes from Opposition Members.

What are the areas on which we spend our aid programme? Let us move away from the hysteria and allegations of recent weeks and take a cool look at what we are trying to achieve. We support economic liberalisation. Sustainable development needs sound economic policies, which encourage investment, give incentives to producers and improve the efficiency of public services. We promote the productive capacity of developing countries, improving management skills, encouraging more effective public expenditure programmes. We promote good government to ensure sound development policies, to improve legitimacy and accountability, to extend popular participation in the development process and to promote respect for human rights and the rule of law.

We are increasingly focusing our programme on the direct reduction of poverty. We promote human development, including better education and health and access to family planning services. We help poorer countries to tackle environmental problems and we have a record second to none in providing speedy and effective humanitarian assistance to the all-too-many communities struck by natural or man-made calamities.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that in 1991 the ODA published a series of reports which were independent evaluations into the use of the aid and trade provision? There were two sets of reports, carried out by academics. One set was for the ODA, and in that severe criticisms were made of ATP in relation to power projects in countries throughout the world. The criticisms of the use of the aid and trade provision were edited out of the set of documents that were published for public consumption, however. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that that was the case in 1991 and tell us what Overseas Development Administration practice is now?

Mr. Goodlad: I have not read the documents to which the hon. Lady referred, but we recommend constructive criticism from whichever quarter it comes, even from academics. An aid and trade provision review has just been conducted and a copy of it has been given to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It may benefit hon. Members to demonstrate the difference between the bilateral aid programme, which my right hon. Friend is describing very well, and the aid and trade provision, which is 9 per cent. of the total bilateral aid budget. The latter is covered by different rules and is designed to assist British companies obtain contracts overseas. The two things are not the same. The criticism of ATP has been published and ATP has been reviewed, which has resulted in tremendous changes in the way in which it operates.

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I shall talk about the aid and trade provision later.

Anyone can set out a list of objectives. The key is ensuring that funds are spent in pursuit of the objectives. Aid programmes do not stand still. They reflect a changing international agenda. They must respond first and foremost to the needs of recipient countries. The way we give aid —the form it takes, the channels that we use and the

[Mr. Goodlad]

countries that receive it—is under continual review to ensure that it is closely geared to the needs of individual countries.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in addition to using overseas aid to help to alleviate poverty and encourage development, we should link it far more closely to trade, so that we enable British firms to benefit and create more employment in this country? The 9 per cent. figure is far too low and we should increase it significantly.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is right. The aid and trade provision includes the objectives that he described, much as it sticks in the gullets of Opposition Members, especially Labour Members, who introduced the aid and trade provision, but do not like British businesses to be assisted.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The Government often proclaim the principle of promoting good government. Does not that principle also relate to the debate? In an answer to a written question on 10 June 1993, the Under-Secretary of State told me that the Government use their aid programme to improve the quality of government. He said that where standards were not met, for example, where human rights were persistently abused, the Government were prepared to withdraw or reduce their assistance. In view of events in East Timor, does not Indonesia come into that category?

Mr. Goodlad: As I have said, and as the hon. Gentleman has quoted, it is right that good government is included in the criteria that we take into account. I shall deal with East Timor later.

The ODA maintains rigorous economic, technical and environmental criteria to ensure the quality of the programmes and projects that we support with official funds. In particular, we have systems to determine accurately development needs, to design the aid to meet those needs in the most cost-effective ways, to develop ways to monitor performance and to feed the aid management lessons of each project into the design and management of future projects.

Our procedures for safeguarding proper use of aid funds are thorough. We and other donors require competitive tendering for procurement contracts. We continually monitor the implementation of our projects to guard against misuse of funds. We would have no hesitation in withdrawing support from a project where it was clear that aid funds were being improperly used.

We have heard a lot of misguided criticism about aid and trade provision. It is a long-standing part of the aid programme and was started in 1977 by a Labour Government. It enables us to promote development in sectors where British companies have a lot to offer. It is a successful scheme. Nearly £4 billion worth of British exports have been won through projects assisted by the aid and trade provision since the start of the scheme. That has involved more than 270 projects in 50 countries worldwide.

Let us not delude ourselves. Most aid donors have similar programmes. We estimate that all our major European partners have bigger and in some cases substantially bigger programmes than we do, as do the Japanese. Aid and trade provision was set up in response to moves by other countries to offer tied aid financing in markets in which we competed. Does anyone deny that our exporters should have a level playing field?

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Minister will recognise that I have been among those who have urged the Government to reach their agreed target of honour. While I recognise his arguments on the care with which we conduct our ODA policy, does he accept that we as a nation depend on our export business to raise money? Does he accept that because of the freedom of the press and its frailties, from which we often suffer, firms are being hit in regions of high unemployment, including Northern Ireland?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman has advanced an important argument.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that he is in danger of slightly misstating the origins of ATP? During my time at the Department of Industry, I was in charge of the power plant industry. We faced competition from the Japanese, who were giving aid to obtain power station orders, so we agreed to introduce a system whereby aid was supplied for projects for which construction was due to take place. The aid was intended for a specific power station project and not for ancillary deals—that was never envisaged. Given that the strict intention was that aid should relate to the project in hand, how does the Minister explain support of £234 million of soft loans, plus £46 million of Export Credits Guarantee Department support, making a total of £280 million out of a £308 million British content? That amounted to 90 per cent. of the cost of the project to a country that can pay cash on the nail for £1 billion worth of arms.

Mr. Goodlad: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman is loyal to the system that he helped to found. I shall come to the Pergau project later.

I should like to deal with the argument advanced by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale about the group of companies that have benefited from aid and trade provision. I am sure that he will confirm that all companies providing goods and services out of the United Kingdom have been, and are, eligible to apply for ATP. Without including consortium partners and sub-contractors, 141 companies have benefited from ATP-supported projects. Large overseas construction projects are very specialised and only a few UK companies have the expertise to act as the prime contractor. ATP is awarded to the recipient Government for a project and not to UK companies. The grant element of an accepted offer of ATP goes to the recipient Government. Of course, ATP support benefits many smaller sub-contractors and suppliers, whose customer is the prime contractor.

The suggestion by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale that there might be some connection between companies that have worked on ATP-funded projects and contributions to the Conservative party is unfair in two respects. It is unfair to the ODA officials who vet those projects and who seek to make no connection between the Conservative party and ATP. It is also unrealistic and unfair to the Governments who receive

ATP. Hon. Members would objectively have to agree that that is a classic case of the smear and innuendo that the Malaysians have found so offensive.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): For nine years, I worked for one of this country's largest investors in Malaysia and I believe that my right hon. Friend has shown commendable restraint in his remarks. The truth is that an absolutely nonsensical campaign, whipped up in the media by Opposition voices, has done incalculable damage to our trading relations with an important trading partner.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend speaks not only from knowledge but with ample justification from the heart.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend see the irony in the fact that, when unemployment rises, the Opposition parties pontificate and mouth platitudes about how disgraceful it is, but, when the Government are working to help British companies to win exports and to safeguard and create jobs, the antics of those parties destroy exports and jobs? They then have the nerve to complain about the unemployment that results from their disgraceful behaviour.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition parties are quite unashamed of doing what he describes.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I have a particular constituency interest in the aid and trade provision and the benefit that has arisen from it. Biwaters operates from Clay Cross in my constituency and was involved in the contract to provide rural water supplies in Malaysia. A contract for the refurbishment of the water supply, worth £1.5 billion, was ready to be signed but has now been lost. It has been lost not because we have a free press, but because of the link between arms and aid. The Government began something that might have benefited trade, but their action has resulted in my constituents facing unemployment.

Mr. Goodlad: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is living in a complete fantasy world and is compounding the problems that he rightly highlights. The atmosphere of innuendo has contributed to the unfortunate unemployment in his constituency and I hope that his constituents will notice his involvement.

I said that I would reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale about ATP for the Pergau project. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already made it clear that, in deciding to proceed with the Pergau project, he took account of our wider interests in Malaysia and of the consequences for the United Kingdom in 1991 if we did not go ahead with it.

The Pergau project formed part of Malaysia's diversification strategy for a new, urgently needed electricity capacity. Since it began, Malaysia's demand has increased even more than forecast. The Malaysian Government had decided that the project should go ahead as it was economically and developmentally in the national interest. We ourselves have a diversified energy policy. If we had not carried through our commitment to the Pergau project, our credibility as a trading and investment partner would have been seriously damaged and would have withered a wide range of British prospects for the future. We should have paid the penalty for a breach of faith.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend agree with the comments of Sir Tim Lankester which were not widely reported in the press? In his evidence to the Select Committee, he said that the project was proceeding very well and that it was likely to be finished on time and under budget.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right and he is also correct to point out those facts.

Mr. Lester: The Pergau dam is also part of Malaysia's regional policy, something which the Labour party should understand. The project is deliberately in the north of the country, which is the least developed part, and the intention was to bring electricity to a part of the country which does not have the sophisticated power stations that exist in the south. The Labour party is a great supporter of regional policy and should understand that the Malaysians were well within their rights to make that decision.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is knowledgeable about these matters and he is, of course, absolutely right.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale mentioned so-called links with defence sales and what, in his eyes, were the Government's attempts to conceal what has happened. I have been re-reading some parliamentary questions and found that in June 1989 the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), who is in her place, asked my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry about this matter. My right hon. Friend said:

> "Following the expression of Malaysian interest in United Kingdom overseas aid in early exchanges, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made it clear to the Malaysian Finance Minister that it would not be acceptable to Her Majesty's Government to link aid with the defence sales package."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1989; Vol. 154, c.*397-98*.]

In 1989, therefore, the matter was in the public domain.

Furthermore, on 25 January, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary of State gave a written reply to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is not in his place. He said:

> "During discussions in 1988 about the proposed memorandum of understanding on defence sales, the Malaysians had requested a reference to aid. A protocol was signed during a visit to Kuala Lumpur in March 1988 by the then Defence Secretary, my noble Friend, Lord Younger of Prestwick. This set out the Malaysian Government's intention to buy defence equipment from the United Kingdom, with the details to be elaborated in the later memorandum. The protocol included a reference to
> 'aid in support of non-military aspects under the programme'.
>
> After consultation with ministerial colleagues in London, the Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the Malaysian Minister of Finance in June 1988 to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales. As a result the issue was not taken up in the memorandum of understanding on defence procurement which the British and Malaysian Prime Ministers signed in September 1988, and which did not cover aid. Our aid programme is not linked to defence sales."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. *145-46*.]

The Pergau project was suggested after Lord Younger had made it clear that there could be no formal link between defence sales and development projects.

Let us examine the reality of the multi-faceted relationships that Governments enjoy with one another. It is ridiculous to suggest that a country that has a defence sales relationship with another should, because of that relationship, be ineligible for ATP. It is equally ridiculous to suggest that a company involved in an ATP relationship should, because of that relationship, be ineligible for defence sales involving British industries. Provided that

[Mr. Goodlad]

the two do not depend on each other and that aid is not used —it is not—to finance defence sales, it seems that that is the way in which countries will inevitably proceed.

Sir David Steel: I do not disagree with that general proposition, but, in this particular case, the Minister is not seeking to deny what Lord Younger has said, which was that someone gave a verbal assurance that the two would be linked in the way that the right hon. Gentleman has just said should not happen. He subsequently corrected that in the letter that was read out.

Mr. Goodlad: I do not know when the verbal assurances were given—whether it was before the memorandum of understanding was signed—but I have no doubt that the Select Committee will investigate all these matters.

Mr. Alan Williams: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Goodlad: No, I must make progress.

We agree with the development assistance committee of OECD that aid quality should predominate in decisions to fund projects in which there is a large commercial interest. ATP does precisely that. Our procedures ensure that ATP is spent on projects in creditworthy developing countries where there will be development benefit and where British firms have proven experience to offer.

Let us put ATP into a proper perspective, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said. It accounts for less than 5 per cent. of the aid programme, which, in 1992-93, meant just over £90 million. In the same year, we spent £290 million on humanitarian assistance. Expenditure on the Pergau project is to take place over 14 years and the peak expenditure in any one year is £27 million—less than 1.3 per cent. of our current but expanding aid programme—so much for allegations that the project is taking over the programme.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): Before my right hon. Friend moves on, will he comment on the long-term damage being done to our relations with Malaysia as it affects companies—one, for instance, in my constituency, where unemployment stands at more than 13 per cent.— that are engaged in trade related neither to ATP nor to arms sales, yet are in danger of losing product?

Mr. Goodlad: I have every sympathy with the people whom my hon. Friend is describing—and we know where the blame lies.

The allegation that aid to a whole range of countries is linked to arms sales, which has been made by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale and by others who clearly should know better, is absolute nonsense. There is no link between the provision of aid and the supply of arms. Some of the countries mentioned by ill-informed critics receive such a modest amount of aid from the United Kingdom that the whole idea is ludicrous.

Our aid is provided according to well-established criteria. Eighty per cent. of our bilateral aid goes to poor countries, with special attention being paid to progress in economic reform and to good government. Of course, we also pay particular attention to historical ties, especially with Commonwealth countries.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale mentioned the selective and misleading World Development Movement analysis and I shall deal with four examples from that. First, Jordan is a lower-middle income country with which Britain has close ties. We have a modest technical assistance programme spent mainly in the education and water sectors. Aid figures in recent years have been amplified not by the provision of more aid but by debt relief and by the inclusion of relief provided to refugees during the Gulf war. I presume that the right hon. Gentleman would prefer us not to have provided that relief.

In Oman, we provide only a small programme of technical assistance—a mere £750,000 in 1992-93. Our funds are spent on developing the country's human resources, which had been lagging behind its economic progress, and those funds have been put to good use. We are accordingly able to plan an even lower level of aid in future. Any attempt to link those tiny sums to Oman's defence purchases is laughable.

Contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman said, apart from investment by the Commonwealth Development Corporation—which, as he may wish to know, the Government do not control country by country—our overall assistance to Thailand, including ATP, has declined from about £5 million in 1989-90 and 1990-91 to a little more than £2 million in 1992-93.

Indonesia is not a rich country. Its income per head is only about $650 a year. It is internationally acknowledged as having an outstanding record of sound economic management. According to the World bank, the numbers living in poverty have dropped from 70 million in 1970 to 27 million in 1990. But, of course, that is not a matter of any interest to Opposition Members.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Having said that we provide some form of aid to Indonesia, the Minister told us the income per head there. Will he tell us the comparable figure for Oman, to which he said that we also provide aid? What is the income per capita in Oman?

Mr. Goodlad: Without notice I cannot give the hon. Gentleman figures for per capita income. However, I can say that our aid to Oman amounts to a mere £750,000—a derisory amount. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen are shouting that there should not be any aid. They obviously take no interest in the people of Oman, but others do.

As I said, the number of people living in poverty in Indonesia dropped from 70 million in 1970 to 27 million in 1990. That, of course, is not a development in which Opposition Members will take any pleasure, because they could not care less about the poor in Indonesia.

Our aid supports projects in sectors such as energy efficiency, communications, forest management, education and public administration. Total British aid last year was only 18p per head. By comparison, our aid to Mozambique was nearly £2 per head. Nor is there any truth in the allegations of links between our aid and the sale of Hawk or other defence equipment.

I said that I would mention East Timor. We take a number of important criteria, including human rights, into careful account when deciding aid allocations. We do not recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor and the Indonesians are well aware of the importance that we attach to human rights both in Indonesia and in East Timor, because we take frequent opportunities to remind them of it. Our aim is to influence, rather than to isolate, the

Indonesian Government and that is best done through dialogue. Suspending aid to Indonesia would not necessarily improve the human rights situation and could hurt those whom it is intended to help. However, I appreciate that the problems of those whom aid is intended to help are of no interest whatever to Opposition Members.

Ultimately, it is the policies of the countries concerned that will make the real difference. Let us applaud when poor countries become more prosperous through their own efforts, as many have done—or at least, let my hon. Friends applaud; I expect no applause from Opposition Members. Well-targeted and professionally managed aid has played a part in the success of such countries. But enterprise, entrepreneurship and sound policies play a greater part.

Aid will continue to be essential for the poorest countries, especially those unable to attract significant private resources. In delivering that aid, we shall continue to look for the best means available to achieve maximum impact.

We are now involving a larger number of British organisations, both public and private. The amount of official aid to be channelled through British non-governmental organisations, for example, has increased fivefold over the past six years and my right hon. Friend the Minister has just announced a further increase.

Our aid programme and its objectives are under continual review and it is right that that should be so. Our aid should be scrutinised. We welcome that, because we believe that we do an excellent job. There is no danger whatever, either in developing countries or in British industry, of Opposition Members being seen to take any interest in the alleviation of poverty, or to be batting for Britain.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Goodlad: I hope that at the end of the debate Opposition Members, while they may be none the wiser—

Mr. Beggs: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for permitting me to intervene at this point—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is not an intervention."] I do not wish my party or myself to be included in the remarks that the Minister has made—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I greatly deplore that intervention; it was not a point of order. If the hon. Gentleman has a genuine point of order, will he put it now to the Chair? Am I to take it that what he said was not a point of order but an interruption? That is greatly to be deplored.

Mr. Goodlad: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course, I except the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and his party from what I was saying.

5.27 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I warmly congratulate the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who opened the debate with an excellent, indeed an unanswerable, speech. The Minister who has been put up to reply is one of many Ministers who speak in the House on overseas aid. Another sign of how lightly the Government treat that crucial issue is the fact that, every day that aid is discussed, a different Minister appears. The Minister—

Mr. Goodlad *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way in a moment.

The Minister said that he was proud and privileged, yet he sounded lumbered and desperate, as well he should have done.

Mr. Goodlad: The reason why more than one Foreign Office Minister takes part in such debates is that we are all interested in the subject—unlike the Labour party, in which only one person, if that, seems to be interested in it.

Mr. Clarke: That must be an interest which has been hidden from the House hitherto—unless ATP stands not so much for aid and trade provision as for "assisting Tory paymasters". Many of us are beginning to see that that is what the debate is really about.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale has done the House a great service, because we discuss overseas aid and development all too seldom. It is staggering, but it is another sign of how the Government see such matters, that, although the debate is being opened by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it is apparently to be wound up by a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry. We now see how vested interests have deep control of the Tory party and little to do with the needs of the third world and the poorest in this universe. *[Interruption.]*

When the howling mob opposite reflect on the real problems of this debate, they will conclude that we are right to concentrate on the issue of the Pergau dam, even though the Minister left it almost as an aside towards the end of his speech. We are right to do that, not because criticisms have come from Opposition Members—which were wholly justified—but because criticisms have come from almost every quarter where people have been invited to consider these matters.

The Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office—which is not an affiliate of the Labour party—and many others have been invited to consider these matters. I do not think that *The Sunday Times* comes into the category of people who support my view. When the Minister failed to deal with the interesting exchange of letters in *The Sunday Times* last week when he was dealing with arms, he missed a crucial point in this debate. I shall return to that matter later.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Public Accounts Committee criticised the Government in this matter. Can he confirm that the Committee has published its report?

Mr. Clarke: As the House knows, the proceedings of the Public Accounts Committee were very public. The National Audit Office, to which I referred, has published a report. *[Interruption.]* If there is a little order in the House, I may have an opportunity to refer to that report later.

The Pergau dam project, which is one of the most shameful episodes among many in the history of this Government, represented not only one bad decision but three. It represented the link between aid and arms; it represented funding of a very bad project; and it represented a Government who, having decided to fund a bad project, then produced a system of financial control which cost the British taxpayer an extra £56 million, according to the National Audit Office.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: If hon. Members want to take up my limited time by intervening on jobs, I put it to them that £56 million would produce a great number of jobs in their constituencies, so they should support the view of the National Audit Office.

Mr. Hargreaves: The hon. Gentleman continues to refer to the Pergau dam project as a bad project. Nevertheless, can he state categorically whether he believes that it was the preferred site and the preferred project of the Malaysian Government?

Mr. Clarke: The Malaysian Government have a right to consider their priorities, as do British taxpayers and this House.

The Minister attempted to pretend that there was no link between the Government's obsession with Malaysia and blatant arms deals. I ask the House, as did the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, to consider the evidence. I welcome the fact that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs will be considering the evidence. I did not hear a similar welcome from the Minister.

We begin with the protocol of 23 March 1988, which is an extremely interesting document.

Mr. Goodlad *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: The Minister should allow me to develop this point.

Mr. Goodlad: To reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, we welcome the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee. We hope that it will clear away some of the sleaze and innuendo that has been propagated by Opposition Members.

Mr. Clarke: Having generously given way, I want hon. Members to know that I intend to continue my speech.

When the Minister, in one of his little asides, pretended that there was no link between aid and arms, that was blown apart by the letter dated 28 June 1988 from the then Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. George Younger, to the Malaysian Minister of Finance, which was mentioned in *The Sunday Times*. The letter clearly stated that

> "the linking of aid to projects was governed by international rules which would preclude the sort of arrangement which the Malaysian Minister of Finance had seemed to envisage at their meeting in March 1988."

Of course, the then Secretary of State for Defence was very much a part of that meeting. Any suggestion that he was not a party to the decisions and what was envisaged was totally removed on the same day in the letter from the British high commissioner to the Malaysian Minister of Finance dated 28 June 1988. In that letter, the British high commissioner said that the Government were

> "willing to offer further support for contracts... up to a total of £200 million for development projects to be agreed mutually between the two Governments".

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Last November, I asked the Secretary of State whether the decision to grant support for the Pergau project in Malaysia was linked to any bilateral trade agreement with Malaysia. The answer was no. When we consider the revelations of the past few days, does my hon. Friend think that I am too polite to accuse the Minister of being economical with the truth?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When the Minister and his sycophants pretend that the Government have been open and honest, even the most preliminary examination of replies to written questions such as that given to my hon. Friend show that the Government seek to hide from the truth time and again.

In the exchange of letters on 28 June, especially the letter involving the high commissioner, there is a firm indication that the Government were using the very limited overseas aid budget for the purpose of trade in arms. Not only is that unacceptable to the House, and not only has such a policy never been adopted or endorsed by the British people—it has never been the British Government's objective.

If the Minister says that it was the Government's objective, I invite him to produce one document from the Overseas Development Administration which says so. I am happy to give way to the Minister if he can produce it. Clearly, he cannot.

We then examine the role of the Foreign Secretary in this shabby affair. A telephone call from Portugal on Friday showed that the Foreign Secretary said that the business of aid had become entangled with arms. The question that we must ask today is, when will it be disentangled? We heard about the mathematical formula. We are entitled to ask who was invited to give a view on the mathematical formula—the Foreign Office, Downing street, the Minister's civil servants or the then Secretary of State for Defence. Above all, in the light of this debate, we are entitled to ask whether this was a one off.

My hon. Friends are perfectly entitled to draw the attention of the House and the Minister to what is taking place in East Timor, and the Government's involvement with Indonesia. Time and again, as we saw in Iraq, the Government have been involved in shady arms deals, only to find that our troops have been on the receiving end.

Would it not be ironic if we found that Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam were in a dispute over the islands in the South China sea and a Foreign Office Minister then came to the House and apologised for our role in providing the arms for such a conflict? Worse still, would it not be ironic if that were associated with our limited overseas development budget? *[Interruption.]* When the Minister sought to justify the Government's shady deals—

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham) *rose—*

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I am happy to give way to the Minister or to the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day), who is trying to intervene from a sedentary position, if he will have the decency to put his point.

Mr. Day: My constituents who work in the defence industries would be interested to hear how many people the hon. Gentleman is prepared to see put out of work. He seems to have taken upon himself the high moral ground. Is he somehow saying that there is something morally wrong in working in the defence industries?

Mr. Clarke: No Opposition Member should take lectures about jobs from members of the party which is responsible for 2.8 million people on benefit, and a party which endorsed the view of a previous Chancellor of the

Exchequer that unemployment was "a price worth paying". I do not remember the hon. Gentleman objecting at that time.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I will give way later, but I am entitled to get on with my speech. It may be that Conservative Members agree with the Malaysian Prime Minister that we should not have a free press in this country, but we do have a Chamber where we are entitled to express our views. I shall endorse that privilege. I shall give way for the last time to the Minister.

Mr. Needham: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I am grateful for the fact that this will be the last time he will do so, as we want to get on.

The hon. Gentleman commented about Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia perhaps having a fight over the Spratley Islands. What would happen if China were to get involved in that fight? Who then would provide the arms to let those countries legitimately defend their national interests? Would the hon. Gentleman deny them that?

Mr. Clarke: The House is entitled to know what would happen, and that is precisely the point that we are seeking to make.

Ministers have come to defend the indefensible, and they have told us that our case is merely political smearing. We are entitled to remind them that the dam was well and truly breached by a Lankester bomber of the old school. Some of us listened to the evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, and we heard Sir Timothy Lankester explain that the project was uneconomic. He was certainly in a strong position to do so, because he had forced them to produce the first ministerial direction since the Government came to power in 1979. He had forced the National Audit Office investigation, and he described what took place in Malaysia as an abuse of the aid programme.

The onus is on the Government. A senior and respected civil servant—so senior that he has now been put in charge of the whole Department for Education—has taken the view that it was an abuse of the aid programme. The Government ought to have put a stronger case than they have managed today. What Sir Timothy said was fair comment. After the appraisal in 1989, the price went walloping up, first by £81 million and then by another £20 million. It was indeed a bad buy.

We are told that the decision was taken against the advice of many people and organisations. Those included the World bank, which took the view that the project should be gas-powered and not hydro-electric. When the matter has been subjected to any reasonable examination, such as by the National Audit Office, it has been found faulty in the extreme.

In the light of all the evidence, Conservative Members are belatedly screaming about jobs. That is not a subject to which they have been hitherto terribly committed. If the Government had taken the right decision on Pergau, and had concluded on the evidence—as they were entitled to do—that it was not viable, the worst that could have happened was that we lost Malaysian contracts. Is that not what happened in any case? The loss of jobs is the responsibility of the Government, not of any Opposition Member.

What did the Government spend £230 million of taxpayers' money on? They did not give a damn for the starving poor: they gave a dam for their business friends. That is a reflection, not only on the way in which the Overseas Development Administration has been abused, but on the way in which our trade policies are conducted. It is a reflection on the Foreign Office that it was prepared to see such things taking place.

If there are difficulties between Malaysia and Britain, the responsibility lies as much with the Foreign Secretary, who overruled Sir Timothy Lankester, as it does with the Minister for Overseas Development, who apparently advised against the project but did not take action to follow through what appeared to be her convictions.

Mr. Wells: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: I will not give way, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind. I have been generous in giving way hitherto.

The mess that the Government have produced in respect to the Malaysian project has most unfortunately put a question mark over the whole concept of overseas aid. Would it not be so much better if we had a Government who were really concerned about the British taxpayers' money and about a strategy for aid and development? Would it not be better if we had found the opportunities that exist in Africa, Asia and central America, where there are examples of the most crass poverty?

Those opportunities call for a change in the way in which aid is administered—there should not be a reduction in overseas aid, and it should not be abused in the way it has been on the Pergau project. How much better would it be if the Government took the policy back and made it work for people who are genuinely in need? Would it not be better if the Government placed the administration of those crucial policies at the heart of government, with a proper recognition of the full departmental status which overseas development should have?

Would it not be better if the Government accepted their responsibilities for the poorest people in the poorest countries, and if the Government managed their spending policies with proper openness and accountability? Above all, should not the Government accept the need, not to downgrade, but to upgrade the ODA?

Is it not absurd that, on the few occasions on which we have these debates, the Minister is not here? Baroness Chalker interrupted her trips abroad for a brief stopover in Wallasey, where she was rejected at the ballot box. She now pops up again at the House of Lords Dispatch Box, and we are supposed to accept that that is democracy in action in modern Britain.

As we have seen throughout the debate, the Overseas Development Administration has been treated with contempt by the Government. If we are not careful, the ODA will receive the same fate as the Department of Energy, which is sadly no longer with us. Should there not be a Department to deal with the crucial issues of world poverty? That Department could have a real say in foreign policy, an influence in the Treasury and an influence in the crucial problems of debt and refugees. What we have seen today is totally unacceptable to the House and to the British people.

In contrast to that sorry mess, the Labour Government will re-establish the essential humanitarian core of our aid policy. We shall do so in a way that is consistent with our

[Mr. Clarke]

wider principles of openness, responsibility and accountability. We shall restore the good name of Britain's aid programme, and the moral authority which this country once enjoyed.

5.48 pm

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I found the speech of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) utterly despicable. He made a personal attack on Lady Chalker, who has given years of her life to working for the Overseas Development Administration. He talked of shady deals, Tory paymasters and the Pergau dam. What on earth does the hon. Gentleman know about the ODA and its work?

I declare an interest, as an unpaid vice-chairman of the British Council, along with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I am sorry that he is not sitting on the Opposition Front Bench today, because I think that he would have been as horrified as I was, and he would not have recognised the work of the ODA from what the hon. Member for Monklands, West has just said.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West recently lost his seat on the shadow Cabinet. I now see why, and I hope that he soon loses his responsibility for the ODA also.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Renton: I am not going to give way.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: I will give way to hon. Gentleman, as I have just named him, but not to anyone else.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman ought to calm down. There were times when he ought to have told us that he was a moderate Tory. Could he please rely on the facts? One of the facts that he might wish to consider is that I was not only re-elected to the shadow Cabinet, but I increased my vote and moved from 18th to 13th place.

Mr. Renton: I know that the hon. Member for Hamilton has taken the hon. Gentleman's position as shadow Secretary of State for Scotland. I assumed that the hon. Member for Monklands, West had lost his seat altogether. If I was wrong about that, I certainly apologise to him.

Let me remind the House of a little history. In 1987, as a Foreign Office Minister, I visited Malaysia. It was one of the last trips that I made as Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I stayed with the high commissioner, Sir David Gillmore, now the civil servant head of the Foreign Office. That visit came at the end of six years of patient hard work in rebuilding the relationship with Malaysia after it had been broken when the Conservative Government decided, for good economic reasons, that overseas students had to pay full university fees.

The high commission, the Ministers involved, and I too, played a part in the slow process of re-establishing a cordial relationship with Malaysia. The position is inevitably difficult with a country that was once a colony. Britain regarded Malaysia as a source of rubber or tin. As a country comes into full independence as a member of the Commonwealth, it can have a touchy relationship with what one might call its previous matriarch, expropriator or coloniser, depending on the view that one takes. Over the years, we have had exactly the same difficulties with India.

It is tragic for Malaysia, for Britain and for industry in Britain that the careful rebuilding work has been temporarily jeopardised by the publicity surrounding the Pergau dam and the arms deals. I stress the word "publicity". The Malaysian Government have time after time made it plain that their objection and the reason why they have returned to a "buy British last" policy is not the arms deals, if they existed, or the dam contract, but the media interest in Britain, which has, of course, been stoked up by Opposition Members.

I shall not rehearse the arguments. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office has rehearsed them well this afternoon, and he did so in the House last Friday. Although I was not in the House last Friday, I read the comments by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I thought that they were disgraceful, coming from someone who pretends to be a shadow Foreign Secretary. His comments were dishonourable and bad for the reputation of Britain.

Malaysia is undoubtedly the most successful market in south-east Asia at present. One fully understands why companies such as BICC, P and O, and Trafalgar House are anxious to build up their contacts there. I must say in response to some of the comments of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) that if one wants to trade with an overseas country, one has to trade according to its manners and customs, not one's own. We may sell on the basis that British goods are best, but we cannot sell on the basis that the British way of doing business is best. In my judgment, it is arrogant to try to do so.

There are instances in which our way of business is not very good. For example, our major companies are often slow payers. The Government are slow payers. Local authorities are slow payers. That would not be acceptable in Germany. The Germans would find it unbelievable that major companies do not pay a 30-day invoice for 90 or 120 days.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: No. There is little time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his own remarks, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Before I entered the House, I spent 20 years with an international commodities firm. We sold commodities around the world. If our chairman of the day did not like the way of doing business in one country—for example, because it was necessary to pay an excessive commission or agency fee to our agent to get the order and we had to look the other way and not inquire too much where it was going—we simply did not go into that country. But someone else got the business.

We did not try to change that country's ways, because we knew perfectly well that it would be a waste of time. We were a private company, and those were decisions that we could take, but in overseas trade one must do in Rome as Rome does. If people do not like it, they should not go to Rome.

Sir David Steel: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: I give way to the right hon. Gentleman simply because I referred to him.

Sir David Steel: I should genuinely like to know where the right hon. Gentleman would draw the line between payments to agencies and backhanders in Swiss bank accounts, open bribery and so on.

Mr. Renton: The right hon. Gentleman cannot possibly expect me to pursue that line. I am not saying that I approve of such things, condone them or wish to make them legal. I am simply saying that, in the world as it is and has been for a long time, if people wish to sell overseas they will sell in the manner that is acceptable to that country. If they do not like it, they should not try to get into that overseas market, because they will simply waste their time.

Miss Joan Lestor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: No, if the hon. Lady will forgive me, I will not give way. I hope that she will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I hope very much that relations will very quickly return to normal between the United Kingdom and Malaysia. Both countries have a real interest in that, because they have a lot to offer each other.

There are about 12,000 Malay students in Britain at present. After years of repairing bridges, we now have more Malay students in Britain than students from any other place except Hong Kong. It would be tragic for Malay students and for the United Kingdom if their education here were interrupted. When former students return to their country of origin, they usually—I stress the word "usually"—prove to be sympathetic, understanding, sometimes critical, but friends of Britain, to our political and commercial advantage.

I have already declared an interest as a vice-chairman of the British Council. The House should know that the British Council regards itself as a partner of the Overseas Development Administration. Not only does the ODA provide about a quarter of our grant in aid each year—some £32 million or £33 million—but the British Council acts as agent for the ODA on technical development contracts, to the extent in the last financial year of a declared figure of £127 million.

The ODA acts as our agent in all human development matters, such as small hospitals, development of small companies and education—the list is endless. If people want to learn more about it, I strongly recommend to them the last British Council report.

Over 30 years, the British Council has worked with the ODA. It has been a successful co-operation. Increasingly, thanks to Treasury rules, we secure the agency work through our success in the competitive bidding process. We reckon that we win the bids because we have the necessary project management skills and a great deal of local knowledge.

In order to maintain those skills, we should like to have much more ODA work, because we need a necessary basis of work from the ODA to be successful in bidding for project work that is funded by the multilateral agencies, such as the European Community and the World bank. Here I am certainly making a point on behalf of the British Council.

The British Council would like to see the approach to the work done with the money made available by the diplomatic wing of the ODA as a seamless robe in which diplomatic posts, bilateral overseas aid and British Council know-how funds all had common objectives and a common agenda. That objective would be improvement of the human condition of the recipient country but also, humanitarian aid apart—that is approximately 15 per cent. of the ODA budget—consideration of furthering British interests.

I have spoken about the growth of the multilateral agencies and of projects that could come to the British Council through the World bank or the European development fund. That is a point which the hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale ignored. Of the total money now available to the ODA, approximately half already goes to multilateral agencies over which the ODA effectively has little control.

If the figure is 50 per cent now, it is likely to rise to nearly 60 per cent. by 2000. Those are the contracts that the British Council wishes to win on the back of a regular, steady bank of experience as agent for the Overseas Development Administration. We must get closer to the European development fund—in order to ensure that many more of its funds are invested in education and training, which are particularly important for us and in health—and, more generally, to the Anglophone countries.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale gave the impression that he saw a slant in our bilateral aid towards countries to which we can make arms sales. To be fair, he should have looked at the programme of the European development fund. He would have seen that more than 50 per cent. of its fund goes to Francophone countries, which is a far higher percentage than can be justified on the grounds of their population or gross domestic product.

Some 28 per cent. of the European development fund is spent on exchange stabilisation. The major beneficiaries of exchange rate stabilisation were—surprise, surprise—Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal and Papua New Guinea. Cote d'Ivoire alone received more than twice the total African, Caribbean and Pacific expenditure for exchange stabilisation.

The House should look at that area—it is where the great growth of the future lies and where we must have more influence. It is where we in the British Council are interested in winning jobs to provide income and experience for British training and education. We must increasingly look to that area for our future work.

Mr. Riddick *rose*—

Mr. Renton: I shall not give way, as I am about to conclude.

I was delighted to catch the eye of the previous occupant of the Chair, as today happens to be the 20th anniversary of the day that I was elected a Member of Parliament for Mid-Sussex. My majority then was 12,000, and it is now more than 20,000—things seem to be going in the right direction.

Over those 20 years, I have learnt that politics is not a simple business. In the past 10 years, I have been at the Foreign Office, two of my daughters have been working for aid agencies that are partly financed by the ODA, and now I am at the British Council; and I have learnt that aid is not a simple, purist business.

To win overseas contracts, we have to fight with all the means and vigour in our power against industrial

[Mr. Renton]

competitors from all over the world. I hope that we continue to do that for the benefit of the third world, the developing world, overseas countries and, certainly, the benefit of this country.

6.5 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) on his 20 years in the House. He used the term "majority"—he has not yet reached that. We hope that there will be an election that will prevent him from reaching his majority.

I think that, surprisingly, there is some general agreement on both sides of the House that we are in a mess over the issue of aid. There is fear at the effect on jobs of the problems in our current relationship with Malaysia. We are concerned at the way in which the aid for trade provision has been used. The use of that provision has been heavily criticised by the Overseas Development Administration, the senior civil servant within it and, we believe, the Minister within it. The National Audit Office has also criticised the abuse of the aid budget. The criticism has been internal—from within the ODA—and external and objective—from the National Audit Office.

The abuse of the aid for trade provision has consequences throughout the House and in my constituency. The fine firm of John Brown produces gas turbines. It has provided a bedrock of stability in Clydebank when all else has collapsed around it. It has competed all over the world in difficult markets. It has competed in Malaysia, where it has won contracts for about £185 million worth of gas turbines without aid and trade provision and without subsidy. It now fears that it will be cut out of further markets to the value of £250 million due to the consequences of the use of the aid and trade provision.

The Government sponsored the Pergau dam project by Balfour Beatty-Cementation despite the fact that the National Audit Office report criticised it for being bad for Malaysia and the consumer, and for being expensive. The Government sponsored the project despite a World bank report that said that gas turbines should be used in Malaysia. By sponsoring that project, the Government have removed any chance of jobs for my constituents who work in the gas turbine industry.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Malaysian Government have the right to decide their priorities and to decide which infrastructure project they want to support in their own country?

Mr. Worthington: Of course they do—but it is an easy decision to make when another Government approach the Malaysian Government saying that they will pay for the project. The Government told the Malaysian Government, "You have a free choice, but we will pay for this option." That is what happened with the Pergau dam.

We are faced with the problems of a Government who have never regarded their aid budget with the long-term aim of developing the poorest parts of the world—as my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr Clarke) said. That is the purpose for which an aid budget should primarily be used. The Government have always seen the aid budget first and foremost as an instrument of trade. There is some legitimacy in that, but it means that the Government always put issues such as poverty reduction and human rights on the back burner if they get in the way of other issues, particularly the arms trade. We are faced with the hypocrisy of the Conservative Government who criticise developing countries for devoting too much of their budget to arms, but rush to sell arms to those countries. Britain preaches that the countries of the developing world should spend more of their budget on health and education but seeks at every opportunity to sell them arms.

In a parliamentary answer, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said that we did not allow the export of arms and equipment that was likely to be used against the civilian population. We must have a much more serious answer from the Minister of State about what has been happening in East Timor. According to the figures given by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), 200,000 of the 750,000 people of East Timor have died since the illegal occupation of that country by the Indonesians in 1975. How were they killed and what was the role of British arms in that? Even the Americans have cut aid to East Timor.

I was told in a parliamentary answer that the European Union does not regard Indonesia as somewhere that should be given significant amounts of aid. We have shovelled arms and aid towards Indonesia whereas, considered objectively, our aid budget to that country should be falling. I cannot remember whether it was the Minister himself who said that, according to Baroness Chalker, the numbers living in absolute poverty in Indonesia fell from 70 million to 27 million between 1970 and 1990. When there is rising poverty in the rest of the world, there is at least a case for priority to be given there.

The diversion of funds that links arms and aid is pretty massive. The £234 million for the Pergau dam is three times the aid for any other capital project. We are spending £234 million on Pergau. In 1991-92, we spent a total of £236 million, £2 million more, on all the 47 least developed countries in the world. That is the scale of the commitment to Pergau. The £56 million—the loose change of the Pergau deal—to find the least efficient way of paying for it, is twice what we have given to Somalia.

Let me give another example of the diversion of aid to countries that use arms, which increase their use of arms and which buy arms from us. In the Foreign Office's list of capital projects of over £20 million in value—there have been only 18 in total—four have gone to one country, Indonesia. By contrast, in the whole continent of Africa there is only one project of over £20 million, and that is in Egypt.

Last year, a huge amount of soft loan money went to Indonesia, so soft that nothing need be paid back for seven years. Last year, at very much the same time—I hope that the Minister will tell us the purpose of these visits—the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Defence went to Indonesia. We clinched a deal for £500 million worth of Hawk aircraft, and the amount of assistance to Indonesia in soft loans and other facilities went up rapidly as well. Were those negotiations on arms and aid linked or were they, to use the jargon of the day, in parallel? And what does that mean, in parallel? Or, again using the jargon of the day, was it just done on a "nod and a wink" basis?

Perhaps the Minister will give me another answer. Will he, either now or in a letter, comment on the press report that negotiations are going on for the release of Xanana Gusmao, the East Timor leader, who was imprisoned after an appalling trial? Are the British Government and their European partners negotiating his release to Guinea-Bissau—

Mr. Needham: Perhaps I can answer the hon. Gentleman's first question about Indonesia because that is an important part of my remit. The hon. Member knows that we decided to concentrate aid and trade provision on the poorest countries of the world, with incomes of less than $700 per head. That includes Indonesia, which is one of the poorest countries in the world. We are giving the people of Indonesia worthwhile infrastructure projects which will lead in time to increased trade. We have done exactly the same in China, but the hon. Member will use only those examples that suit his argument.

Mr. Worthington: When I looked at the list of very large projects, I wondered whether to draw attention to the fact that there were two projects of over £20 million for China and to ask where human rights came into them.

The Minister interrupted what I was saying. I wonder why he interrupted at that particular point. Is any negotiation going on at present between the British Government and their European partners for the release of the East Timor leader? Is his release to take place to Guinea-Bissau so that the European Union will moderate its criticism of Indonesia at this month's meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and so that Britain and others can continue arms sales to Indonesia? We shall watch that with great interest. The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) is present and could seek to deny that right now if he wished.

The pause is interesting. The Government seem to have commented already.

We must remember also the hidden victims of the Government's use, which I would call a corrupt use, of the aid budget—the Governments of the world who would otherwise benefit from that assistance and the countries that cannot benefit from aid and trade because they have no money with which to trade.

We must also ask whether this provision is really necessary. It is a complicated issue because hon. Members in all parts of the House realise that we need to stimulate British industry because of its run-down over recent years. The Government boast that British firms benefit enormously from the aid budget. They legitimately boast that, for every £1 of aid, British industry receives £1.40 worth of orders from overseas. The information that I recently received from the World bank was that, for every £1 that Britain puts into the World bank, British industry receives £1.85 worth of British contracts. That raises the issue of how the World bank conducts its business. If it is done on a perfectly fair basis, it seems that British firms benefit more from our putting money into the World bank than from our aid and trade provision.

The appalling thing is that Britain's aid budget is falling. The Minister, with his selective—

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend is dealing with a very important subject when he mentions the World bank and its policies. Will he reflect on the lack of democracy in the make-up of the World Bank's board and its decision-making process and on the way in which it tranfers a large amount of wealth from the poorest countries to the richest?

Mr. Worthington: I am not in the least grateful for that point because it would lead me, in the concluding part of my speech, right up another avenue that I do not want to explore at present, because I want to concentrate on what I am saying now. But the openness and accountability of the World bank are legitimate concerns. Perhaps one of the reasons why we found out about the Pergau dam was that here we have instruments such as the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee to find out these things. The problem with the World bank is that if similar events were occurring in its business we would have no mechanism with which to find out.

Our aid budget has fallen and is still falling. It has gone from 0.51 per cent. of gross national product in 1979 to a figure that we do not now know. We do not know it because the Government are fiddling the aid figures in the same way as they fiddled the unemployment figures. They have put the traditional overseas development budget in with central and eastern Europe, and they will not now tell us the figure for our aid budget.

The tragedy of the Pergau dam affair is that the relatively poor people of the world are being shrunk out of the aid budget by considerations other than their particular needs. The needs that have been met have been those of the Government to stimulate the arms trade, in the case of the Pergau dam. Who can now doubt that the reason why the Pergau dam went ahead was that, alongside it, in parallel and entangled with it, was the need to procure very large arms orders for this country?

That is that is wrong about this, and it is why I congratulate the Liberal Democrats on raising the issue in this debate.

6.18 pm

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): As a civil engineer, and one who was responsible for overseas work in Iran—the joint venture of Laing and Wimpey in 1975-77—and as unpaid parliamentary adviser to the Export Group for Construction Industries for the past 12 years, I express my interest, but I have no paid interest to declare. So here are my own thoughts and comments on tonight's debate, a debate which shows a lack of appreciation on the Opposition Benches of how business is done in overseas territories.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) pointed out the need to pay people in those territories for introducing work. Would any Opposition Member not pay an estate agent for finding somebody to buy his or her house? We have agreed reasonable operating fees in overseas markets and we need to grab the work, in fierce competition with our overseas competitors such as Germany, France and Holland.

It is alleged that the Malaysian Pergau dam project has received some grant. If it has not, there is no onus on Malaysia to repay that in terms of a defence contract. All that we have given are soft loans, which means a reduced interest rate on the repayments which the Malaysians must make for that project, as well as reduced export credit guarantee rates of cover. No money has been put into the project by the Government. We are simply giving reduced

[Mr. Den Dover]

interest rates. Why is there, therefore, an onus on Malaysia to place defence contracts with British suppliers of armaments?

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is clear evidence that there was no linkage? The defence agreement reached with the Malaysian Government changed from an agreement to supply Tornados to an agreement to supply Hawk aircraft. If there had been a link, one would presume that it would have had a consequential effect on other projects such as the Pergau dam. There was no such effect, which is clear factual evidence that there is no such link.

Mr. Dover: I entirely agree that there was no such linkage.

I welcome the Foreign Affairs Select Committee investigating this matter in great detail. I shall listen carefully to what is said there and look carefully at the record of the discussion and investigations.

The Pergau project is exactly what the Malaysian Government wanted. That fact is extremely important. *The Sunday Times* said that the project is no good as it is producing electricity for only a few hours a day. However, the dam is to meet peak demands and it can cost an enormous amount to build enormous power stations or gas turbines to fill that peak demand of electricity. It is far better to go along with a project that the Malaysians wanted and were willing to pay for over a long period.

The media also tried to show that the 12 or 14 years project is a long period. But it is on programme; it is only a five-year programme; and it is working within budgets.

Another point of correction is that, as my right hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, the aid-trade provision is only 5 per cent. of the Government's total overall aid budget. I welcome the fact that, under the aid-trade provision, jobs and the provision of equipment from the United Kingdom flows out to those countries; they paid good hard currency for those exports, which results in jobs in the United Kingdom.

A lot of misrepresentation and misinformation about the project has been rife in the media. I am delighted to have this opportunity briefly to correct one or two points. We must press, in fierce competition, for such projects. We must do everything possible to get future Malaysian contracts back on the road, and I deplore the possibility of losing the international airport project because of stupid media hype, which has done the United Kingdom no good whatever.

6.23 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Because of the comprehensive job that was done on the negative aspects of the motion by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), I need not dwell long on them, save to make a few comments about the remarks by the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) and, more recently, by the hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover).

I have considerable practical experience of firms trading overseas and of overseas aid, which is why I was surprised that the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex got wrong the way in which the European budget works. If we are to affect the European budget—it is important that we do—it is crucial that we understand the instruments properly before we start to criticise them.

On the question of currency, the Minister's speech on the Government's positive amendment to the motion was disappointing. He said what far-sighted chaps they were, looking forward to a fine future and concentrating on aid to the poorest, but not once did he mention sub-Saharan Africa or the Government's policies to be pursued there. Given that the Government amendment contains some important, positive aspects, that was the least that he could have done. It was a shame that his entire speech consisted of petty, party-political sniping when something important should have been discussed.

To take up the comment by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), we might have heard something about the World bank, for example. We are experiencing real problems with the relationship between the World bank, the International Monetary Fund and a variety of UN institutions, which need to be more integrated in their approach; the Government should recognise that they are not operating in isolation. They should consider what policies their partners within the European Community and the United Nations are pursuing. As the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex mentioned the British Council, it might be worth looking at what the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is doing. I know from personal experience that it is doing some first-class work in basic linguistics, which would be assisted by co-operation with the British Council.

Given the Government's positive attitude, they might consider funding UNESCO again. It is important that they look at it afresh and see whether they can mingle with the British Council. We can be proud of what the British Council does and I pay testimony to the superb quality of its staff, but it is totally out-gunned by Germany and France, which put far more resources into such work and carry it out in many countries other than the ex-empire.

In Guinea-Bissau, for example, which my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) mentioned, the British Council regularly refused to do anything except pay an occasional visit because it did not have the resources, whereas similar institutions in Germany, France and Portugal were doing a considerable job. The aid that the United Kingdom gave to Guinea-Bissau during the three years in which I was there consisted of a set of football shirts. Although they were welcomed by the football team that received them, they did little for development. Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in Africa, yet it was given no money whatever.

My next point impinges slightly on the Malaysian issue and concerns the coal operation business and the effective use of money, particularly that spent on energy. If money is to be spent on energy, be it on a dam or whatever, it should be spent effectively, economically and in a sustainable way. I understand that, technically, that is not necessarily the case with Malaysia as the money could have been spent more economically, although the contract would then not have gone to the company to which it went. It is certainly true elsewhere that, when electricity generators are given, which admittedly produces jobs in this country, the power station can use that electricity generator for its quarter lifetime but it is then incapable, because they go to the poorest countries, of paying for the spare parts and repairs required. One has only to go round

Africa looking at machinery there to see that it is disused, and for one simple reason—there is not sufficient hard currency to buy the spare parts.

I return to the problem of the World bank, the IMF and the United Nations and to the point made by the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex about more money from the European development fund going to French countries than to others for the stabilisation of their currencies. That shows that the right hon. Gentleman does not understand that the French franc is used on the Côte d'Ivoire as a basis for the common currency, which is a semi-hard currency. If those who live out there cannot get a dollar or a pound they are very pleased to get francs CFA. The currency is backed by the French and provides a semi-hard native African currency with some purchasing power. The ability to continue to buy is crucial to some African countries. Not one of those problems was mentioned by the Minister.

At Question Time on Monday, I put some of the problems to the Minister. He had notice of my question, but ducked it completely. Currency in Africa is important for its survival and development and it is about time that a real effort was put into addressing the problem.

Turning from the World bank to financial development, the most successful lending projects in Africa, South America and, indeed, Indonesia, have come not from the World bank but from small credit lines. There are credit lines in Africa set up by African women and primed by European money, that have a rate of return which would be the envy of the greediest capitalist.

Those projects are doing something truly effective in agricultural production. They are renewing tools which do not necessarily come from Cheltenham or from the constituency of any other hon. Members who scream about the loss of jobs that will occur if we do not dump on other people unsustainable debts through selling them arms and other such large-scale projects. Those credit lines are producing the small developments which are crucial. That grass roots development should be sustained.

The hon. Gentleman talks about British people getting jobs directly because they make arms in Cheltenham. I invite the hon. Member for Cheltenham—

Mr. Burns: Chelmsford.

Mr. Enright: I apologise for lumbering the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) with Cheltenham. Even representing Chelmsford, the hon. Gentleman should visit my constituency in Hemsworth. He can come to Featherstone, South Emsell and South Kirby and see the pits that have been destroyed directly by the Government. The pits did not depend upon foreign trade, but were closed directly as a result of his vote.

The hon. Gentleman stands up and says that we do not want to lose jobs, having said that losing jobs in Hemsworth represented the harsh light of real economic facts, whatever they are. I will not accept the crocodile tears of Conservative Members until they have stopped the direct loss of jobs as a result of the Government's actions. I am delighted to see at least one Conservative Member who abstained on the vote on the miners.

Mr. Burns: With regard to the crocodile tears, I will not take any sanctimonious lectures from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Enright: I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. I look forward to the speech by the hon. Member for Chelmsford and I hope that he will give way to me.

The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex rightly said that bribery often occurs, but it is wrapped up. It is not called bribery; it is called commission. That indeed happens. I do not see why we should call foreigners people who take bribes when we call Mark Thatcher and his partner people who take commission for performing exactly the same job of selling arms abroad. That simply will not do.

I leave the Government with one thought, and the Minister for Trade has direct responsibility for this matter. The greatest thing that we can do for development in Mozambique, which was mentioned earlier, is to prevent the export of mines from Britain. Will the Minister ban the export of mines unilaterally?

6.36 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, not least because I have worked with three different financial institutions that have had extensive dealings over the years with Malaysia.

During today's debate and others, hon. Members have mentioned the Pergau dam. I should like to reiterate one point that Labour Members underestimate. There is a staggering intellectual, patronising arrogance when British civil servants or hon. Members tell the Malaysians that they have accepted a dam in the wrong place. If it is Malaysian policy to have a regional spread of such projects and they want energy provided in a certain area for regional development, as well as for the purely and strictly economic benefits that such a project may bring to that area, they are within their rights in standing their ground and saying that they want the dam in that particular spot and prefer it to another type of project elsewhere.

When the British Government are criticised for having underwritten the financing of the dam, it is unjust to call it shabby or, as some Opposition Members have suggested, the corrupt use of the aid for trade provision.

"Aid for trade" should be exactly that. Some Conservative Members would disagree profoundly with Opposition Members about the whole nature of overseas aid. Some Conservative Members would say quite openly that they do not believe that our overseas aid should be distributed to foreign countries unless it goes either directly towards humanitarian aid in the poorest possible countries, or specifically where there is some benefit to British interests.

I support entirely the decision of my right hon. and hon. Friends who were originally involved in the project. In the case of Malaysia, they did exactly what they thought was in the British interests. In the harsh light of day, there may have been economic arguments against putting the dam in that particular place or against there being a hydro-electric project as against a gas-fired project. However, that was the Malaysian preference and it represented an effort to restore our diplomatic and trade links with that country; that was in the British interests.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is so disturbing about the whole affair is that the article in *The Sunday Times* about alleged corruption in the Malaysian Government was published with a picture of the Pergau dam underneath it, despite the fact that the story was more than nine years old and in no way related to the Pergau dam? That is what the Malaysians were complaining about and why they took the action they did, which proves

[Mr. Mans]

conclusively that their action had nothing to do with the project or the arms sales that took place at about the same time to Malaysia.

Mr. Hargreaves: I am grateful to hon. Friend, as I can now foreshorten my remarks. I was about to come specifically to that point. What aggrieves me and my hon. Friends is that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) did not take that into consideration. In an uncharacteristic fashion, the right hon. Gentleman went down a route of what can only be described as rather shabby smearmongering.

Mr. Burns: But that is characteristic.

Mr. Hargreaves: No, I disagree. I believe that such smearmongering appears to have been promoted by one or two individuals here, perhaps with senior editors of certain Sunday or other newspapers, carrying out a distinct campaign or vendetta, particularly against the Prime Minister, but also against the Foreign Secretary.

It is sad when British interests and jobs—in companies such as by Biwater or PowerGen, which are in neighbouring constituencies to mine, and in which my constituents work—are put at risk by other people's political smearmongering and by the vendettas of one or two editors against Ministers or against the Prime Minister himself. That is extremely regrettable and I urge Opposition Members to refer their remarks strictly to the appropriateness of the dam and the Malaysians' choice of that project, rather than trying to obtain some cheap political capital out of smearmongering.

6.40 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On the basis of the old military adage that attack is the best form of defence, I expected the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to wind up. He could then have said to us, "If you think that we are bad, look at all these other chaps; they are so much worse."—[HON. MEMBERS: "Foreigners."] Who can speak about foreigners with more knowledge and certainty than those with foreign blood in their veins?

In his opening speech, my right hon. Friend the former Liberal leader, set out our criticisms and specific recommendations. With respect to some of the reactions that we had from Conservative Members, he was restrained.

Mr. Burns: Sleazy.

Sir Russell Johnston: I know that the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) virtually frothed at the mouth at one stage.

Mr. Burns: It was sleazy, innuendo and rubbish.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman obviously believes that shouting at people is good for his soul, but it does not advance rational argument. I am saying that my right hon. Friend advanced a rational argument which is also demonstrated in many other places. There is no doubt whatever that these are matters of public concern. They have attracted particular attention in a number of newspapers. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) indicated that if matters were raised in *The Independent on Sunday*, the *Observer* or *The Sunday Times* it is media hype. Other hon. Members said the same. That is quite a surprising view to take of newspapers that attempt—*The Independent on Sunday* and the *Observer* certainly do—to maintain intellectual standards of journalism.

Mr. Mans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the article that caused such offence to the Malaysian Government had nothing whatever to do with the Pergau dam, despite the fact that the newspaper published a picture of it below the article?

Sir Russell Johnston: I suppose it was triggered by it, but I am not arguing with the hon. Gentleman about that. As some quick-witted chap—quicker witted than I—said earlier, perhaps the Government should do something about Murdoch. That perhaps was quite a good point.

Mr. Corbyn: It was me.

Sir Russell Johnston: There is no doubt that the non-governmental organisations are deeply unhappy about certain developments in the British aid policy and programme. That also cannot be denied by Conservative Members. We can always argue about the size of the aid budget, but the House should not forget that the Conservative manifesto of the previous election contained a commitment to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. of gross national product, and that the Prime Minister renewed that commitment in the run-up to the Rio summit. That is on the record. Yet, under the Conservative Government, whatever words are written or spoken, the proportion of GNP has declined from 0.51 per cent. in 1979 to 0.31 per cent. in 1992 and is projected to fall to a record low of 0.26 per cent. next year. That is a very bad record.

The Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), chided my right hon. Friend. In my opinion, the Minister is usually amiable—sometimes a little deadpan, but certainly amiable. But on this occasion he said, rather uncharacteristically, that my right hon. Friend was unhelpful to those working in the field. I do not accept that at all. Indeed, both Ministers know that the opposite is true. The NGOs have been in touch with my right hon. Friend and me in advance of the debate, expressing views, many of which he articulated. There is no doubt that the leading NGOs in the aid field are concerned about not only aid quantity, but aid quality; whether it is rightly focused, as the Government continually claim; tied aid; and the role of the aid and trade provision and so on. Therefore, it is not at all fair for the Minister to attack my right hon. Friend on that basis.

The Minister also seemed rather reluctant to engage in a debate on that question. His speech was rather spattered with phrases such as "they could not care less about the poor in Indonesia." He was referring to the collectivity of Opposition Members. What he said was totally untrue. It was quite ridiculous to suggest such a thing. There is a legitimate cause for concern about the treatment of East Timor. He did not respond to that. He said:

> "Our aim is to influence rather than to isolate Indonesia."

What influence have the Government had in East Timor? It is not an easy issue. I am not trying to pretend that it is or that we have some great simplistic solution. One might say that cutting aid will hurt only the helpless, who are not responsible for these human rights infringements.

One could equally say that sanctions on Serbia are undoubtedly harming a great many totally innocent people who have nothing to do with the adverse side of Serbian policy. But knowing that should not lead us to ignore the problem or not to be willing where necessary to face up to those things. What concerns us is that the Government, so far as we can judge, and I agree that the evidence is circumstantial, are not wrestling with those admittedly difficult problems, but are allowing their judgment to be over-influenced—I put it no stronger than that—by the market for arms. That might be resented by Conservative Members—and is in some cases. That has been consistently denied—I recognise that—but it is widely believed, not for any sleaze reasons, among commentators and the NGOs.

On Malaysia, no one has explained what the Foreign Secretary meant when he talked about the aid and trade being "briefly entangled".

Thailand has benefited from a 624 per cent. increase in United Kingdom aid between 1980 and 1992-93. It was also the fifth largest buyer of British arms; Indonesia was the fourth.

There is clearly a difference within the House, not always simply on the basis of the two sides on the issue, because it is difficult. It also relates to constituency problems. That is undoubtedly the case. But surely we should have some policy on aid, some view of what Government should do. For example, both Japan and the Netherlands have decided to adopt an aid policy that consciously favours countries that renounce the arms trade. Many countries are not subject to any perceptible exterior threat.

Mr. Duncan: Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that most of our major competitors see their aid programmes as part of their foreign policy? Does he not accept that most companies should adapt their business practices to suit the markets in which they are working? Is Liberal Democrat policy now "When in Rome, be British"—or, to put it another way, "Always play the game, and always lose"?

Sir Russell Johnston: The short answer is no. I do not think that I need expand on that very much.

The Government have not been terribly persuasive today. Will the Minister please try to tell me what sort of guideline suspends aid in the case of Kenya—probably quite properly—but does not do so in the case of Indonesia? I simply do not follow the logic. Certainly, the Government themselves would always say that they have a logic, and have sustained it; but I do not see any consistency.

The right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), a former Conservative Chief Whip, has graced the Chamber with his presence for 20 years. He said that we must adjust to ways of doing trade—as did the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan)—and that we could not tell other people how to trade. There is a good deal of truth in that: I follow the argument. It is, of course, not always corrupt for some enabler to get a commission—but it can be corrupt.

It seemed to me, sadly, that the ultimate logic of the right hon. Gentleman's argument was that any illusions about a good governance concept operating in aid policy should simply be dumped, because Governments would simply conform to local conditions. If local conditions mean a few pounds here and there—or whatever currency obtains; rupees, perhaps—that is the way life is.

As I have said, it is not easy. I am annoyed, however, when people say, "We have a good governance clause", and then do little about it. Conservative Members may say that Liberal Democrats, or even Labour Members, are being naive; I heard that word once or twice. But we must have some bloody ideals, must we not?

Hon. Members will be relieved—as will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to learn that I do not intend to go over the Pergau dam affair again; it has been dealt with at length by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and the hon. Members for Monklands, West (Mr Clarke) and for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington).

I want to make two more short observations before concluding on the controversial issue of political contributions from companies, which will allow certain hon. Members to froth at the mouth again. First, the Government continually claim that 80 per cent. of British aid goes to the poorest countries. I am afraid that that does not mean that it reaches the poorest people. An OECD report on international aid to basic education found that only three donors in the world spent more than 25 per cent. of their educational aid budgets on basic education and adult literacy—New Zealand, which spent 63 per cent.; Sweden, which spent 53 per cent.; and the United States, which spent 42 per cent. We spend 5 per cent., which is not enough.

Secondly, it is worth reminding the Government that the non-governmental organisations—virtually unanimously, as far as I know—are not in favour of tied aid, considering it in the main more expensive and less effective. They think that it tends to concentrate on large projects which may often be inappropriate. I shall not go over the appropriateness of the Pergau dam project again, but there are other examples in the world: large capital projects have been chosen, not primarily because of attitudes to aid but because the action was commercially driven by the donors, who wanted the work connected with the construction of a large project.

Let me say a little about the question of "sleaze". Conservative Members took great offence from the comments of *The Independent on Sunday*—

> "Clique makes millions from aid...Five companies led by Tory loyalists pick up half the cash...System hurts countries most in need".

The simple answer that the Minister would give is to say that those are the best companies anyway; that there are relatively few companies with the expertise, the knowledge and the track record to undertake such large capital projects abroad. Other Conservative Members will add that, if those companies give money to the Conservative party, that is only their common sense coming to the surface; they would do that naturally.

The Government, however, really must address the problem of patronage, and the link between action and "who you know and who you don't". It is true that most companies would rather give money to the Conservative party than to Labour or the Liberal Democrats; but it is also true that, as a consequence, they have a certain influence with the Government. That was, perhaps, more true for the Labour party in the old days, when it was certainly true that the trade unions—as the Labour party's paymasters—had a certain influence with that party.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): What about the British School of Motoring?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am very pleased that the hon. Gentleman is happy with his humour. It is always a good thing to be happy with one's humour. Unfortunately, I did not hear what the hon. Gentleman said, but I ask him not to repeat it.

My right hon. Friend made the important point that it would be a good idea to review, or reform, the financing of political parties. That would be for the good of our democracy, and would avoid accusations which, in this case, do not add up to a great deal, but do not look at all good. I think that state financing of political parties lifts suspicion and makes everything clear and above board; that is the case in most of our colleague countries in the European Union.

The Government would be foolish to ignore the unhappiness and concern that exist widely among people who are knowledgeable about, interested in and concerned with overseas aid. I do not think that our record is as good as it should be, and to defend it blindly will get us nowhere.

6.57 pm

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) made five points, and I shall do the same. I shall talk about the aid and trade provision and arms, the Liberal party and the ATP, alleged company support for the Conservative Government to sweeten aid deals, the behaviour of some of the press recently—particularly as that issue deeply concerns the Malaysian Government—and the lessons to be learnt.

I shall concentrate on the ATP. As many of my hon. Friends have said, it amounts to only 5 per cent. of our total aid budget, but it is a very important 5 per cent. Aid leads to trade, and trade leads to an increase in manufacturing exports. As Minister for Trade, I am responsible for trying to help British manufacturers to compete around the world.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will have noticed one aspect of the speeches of Opposition Members. Not one —apart from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) mentioned what our competitors do. What happens to the French, the Germans, the Italians, the Japanese and the Americans is of no concern to them. Their aims were summarised in the clever, dissembling speech of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale.

I go round the world with the right hon. Gentleman, and when he is cleverly dissembling on behalf of Britain I will be on his side all the way. I have to say, however, that I think that what he said tonight in terms of innuendo, assertion and suggestion was a disgrace. We are not, in the debate, taking part in some university debating society game about what happens with the major markets for our economic potential. As the hon. Members for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said, we are speaking about thousands of jobs and billions of pounds' worth of business. The right hon. Gentleman lambasted the Malaysians and castigated the Indonesians. Other Opposition Members had a nice little go at Thailand. They are the major markets for British increased exports and trade for the future.

If we wish to get into those markets with our competitors, what do we have to do? We have to establish trust. We have to establish friendships. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke about a cosy friendship between British Ministers and Malaysian Ministers. I do not know what he meant by that. I spend most of my life trying to make cosy friendships with buyers overseas. That is what I thought my job was.

Mr. Beggs *rose—*

Mr. Needham: I will give way in a minute.

One of the ways of doing that is to ensure that aid and trade provision is available to assist infrastructural development. That infrastructural development is so vital to those countries and so vital a base for our manufacturing industry to build on.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister confirm that we in Northern Ireland especially are very dependent on export orders, that those people responsible for careless talk can damage both trade and aid, and that this country would be done a great service by those people who have made unfounded allegations if they would withdraw them and apologise?

Mr. Needham: The hon. Gentleman and I spent many months trying to save GEC Larne because of the problems with Rihand II in India. No one has yet spoken about India or China, by the way. That factory was being taken over, as he knows, by F.G. Wilson, now the largest manufacturer of small generators in the world. Where will it be in the markets that it is trying to sell in, if we continue to suggest to the Governments, and to the people who are doing business, that somehow most of them, if not many of them, are involved in some sleazy, underhand dealing?

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale asked, quite rightly, what the British Government's view is about underhand dealing. That is a perfectly fair question. We do not support underhand dealing. We do not support bribery. We are perfectly sure that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development working party, which is working towards ways of getting rid of corrupt practices, should be supported, but there is no point in our singularly summing up with a solution that is neither workable nor realistic. That simply makes no sense.

What we have to do, as our first and foremost principle, is to ensure that the interests of our aid budget, and the trade that follows from that under the aid and trade provision umbrella, are properly protected in the interests of this country.

If we take the line of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale, which is to say that there is a linkage between the ATP budget and the arms sales that we make in those countries, when will we make arms sales to those countries? Should we not give the Indians, the Indonesians, the Malaysians and the Thais the right to self-defence?

Is the argument of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale that we supply arms or that we supply ATP? We cannot do both, because if we do both, the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends will link the two. What will be the effect then on the countries to which we are trying to sell? Will they again come to us and give us orders if they are going to be slated and slandered in the press of this country and on the Floor of the House of Commons? Of course they will not.

That brings me to the subject of the Liberal party and arms and ATP. There was an advertisement published this weekend in the national press which said,

"We are proud to work in Malaysia."

One of the companies that was advertising was the

Westland Group. What is the view of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale and his right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party when it comes to selling helicopters to Malaysia? He is perfectly happy to sell helicopters to Canada. Gracious me, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) was shoved off to Canada to speak to his Liberal Democrat friends to save the Westland deal. Of course he did not do it. He did not save it. Then he denied it, but he did not do it. What is the view of the right hon. Member for Yeovil about the selling of helicopters to Malaysia? That is the question to which the people of Yeovil would like to know the answer.

I will tell the House why the people of Yeovil would like to know that. Members of the Liberal party are champions of the defence cause in the constituencies—champions of the defence cause in my constituency—but in Westminster they are champions of the World Development Movement. The Liberal party, as it always does, tries to do one thing in the constituencies and another thing in Parliament.

Let me just say to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale that if, in a few months' time, some of the workers of Westland walk out of the gates on a Friday evening, not with their wage packets but with their P45s in their pockets, they will know where the blame lies.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister knows well the answer that my colleagues would give to that question, which is that it is perfectly proper to seek business overseas, including in defence-related industries, if one is clear about what one is doing, not underhand and not tying it to other secret deals.

The Minister has not answered the question that my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) asked, which is how this weekend the Foreign Secretary admitted that there had been an entanglement between, on the one hand, defence contracts and, on the other hand, aid, while for the past five years in this place and the other place, Ministers have said that there was no link at all. That is the question which he has not answered.

Mr. Needham: I do not think that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was here for much of the debate when those issues were mentioned. I can say one thing to the hon. Gentleman: it is perfectly true to say that the Liberal party is never clear about anything.

The third point that I wanted to make, which leads on from the remarks that I have just made about the Liberal party, arms and ATP, relates to the issue that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber mentioned at the end of his comments, when he showed us that heading from *The Independent on Sunday* dated 13 February. The article is headed:

> "Clique makes millions from aid."

I should like to read it to the hon. Gentleman so that we cannot make any mistake about it:

> "A handful of leading building and engineering companies with close links to the Government and the Conservative Party have been the main beneficiaries of Britain's industrial overseas aid programme, picking up nearly half of the £1.4 bn dispensed since 1978...
>
> The companies with an inside track on aid are led by Balfour Beatty, the joint contractor on the Pergau dam project in Malaysia. Its parent company, BICC, has since 1980 given £90,000 to Arms for Industry, British United Industrialists and the Economic League—all right-wing groups closely allied to the Tory party.
>
> Over the same period, Balfour Beatty received 21 per cent—nearly £300m—of the Overseas Development Administration's Aid and Trade Provision."

Well, £90,000 over 14 years to three small pressure groups? That works out at £2,000 per year in return for £300 million-worth of business. My goodness—that is value for money.

Perhaps the chairman of the Conservative party should go down to Transport house, speak to Bill Morris and tell him that if he were to cut the millions that he now gives to the Labour party and instead give £2,000 a year to the Fabian Society, the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, he would lose no influence. He could give the money instead, as one hon. Member said, to John Monks to fund his new Trades Union Congress search for influence. What a ridiculous argument. What a ludicrous argument. The best thing that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber can do is to quote from *The Independent on Sunday* of two weeks ago about £90,000. What an insult to the Overseas Development Administration officials who are responsible for the way in which the budget is administered. The correspondent involved, Mr. Blackhurst, wisely went to Kuala Lumpur last week to see what effect his article was having. He filed a story this Sunday which stated:

> "British companies in Malaysia will be starved of business and forced to close their operations down in the years ahead."

Well done Mr. Blackhurst.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Minister talked of the insult to ODA officials. Does not he recall that the principal accounting officer at the ODA, Sir Timothy Lankester, said that the proposal was not economically viable and was an abuse of overseas aid? Will he therefore explain how £56 million of British taxpayers' money can abused in that way? How can that be justified?

Mr. Needham: I shall come to that argument. The hon. Member has advanced that argument about five times and he repeated himself in his speech.

Mr. Blackhurst may have learnt his lesson, but the editor of *The Sunday Times* has not. On Sunday, as the editor sat on David Frost's sofa drinking his freshly squeezed orange juice, he said:

> "I mean, just remember in the 1930s in this country, newspapers did not tell the truth about Nazi Germany because we were told not to upset nice Mr. Hitler".

The one sure way to obtain an order is to compare your client with Adolf Hitler. The editor of *The Sunday Times* continued:

> "So, I think we've just got to be careful on this and the fact is that in building this dam in Malaysia a quarter of a billion pounds worth of British taxpayers' money was used as a sweetener to then get the arms deal for 1.3 billion."

The hon. Member for Monklands, West made an effort to make the best of a bad show and referred to a letter from Lord Younger in June 1988. That letter formed no part of the arrangements thereafter between the British Government and Malaysia. That is not the point, however. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State showed that only 1.2 per cent. of the aid budget will go on the Pergau dam in any single year.

The editor of *The Sunday Times* continued:

> "Now, there is a legitimate matter of British taxpayers interest in this. Was this the proper use of money, especially when all the technical advice from our own officials said this dam was useless".

Even the hon. Member for Monklands, West did not go so far as to say that the dam was useless. There is nothing

[Mr. Needham]

more patronising or arrogant than for Opposition Members to suggest that the Malaysian Government and people are so foolish that they have no idea what they need and want. The hon. Gentleman said, "Ah, but we could have got a combined cycle gas-fired power station if we had not done this." But that is not the case, because, as my hon. Friends have said, the Malaysian Government would not have accepted such a power station. As one of my hon. Friends said, they would not have accepted it because they wanted to build the dam in a part of the country with little development, and because combined cycle gas-fired turbines would have involved more imports of goods and materials, whereas the building of a dam involves much more local labour and local content.

If we do not want the business, it is no good then saying, "If they had done what Sir Tim Lankester said, we could have determined that the Indonesians would give us what we want". As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said, that is neo-colonialism of the worst sort.

The editor of *The Sunday Times* said not only that the dam was useless, but that it would

> "produce electricity for only two hours a day."

That would make it the biggest lavatory bowl in the world: it would flush for two hours and take 22 to fill up. That is a ludicrous comment on the workings of hydro-electricity. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, the dam was designed for peak load at peak hours. The editor continued:

> "it would actually increase the price of electricity to ordinary Malaysians".

How could it do that when it was powered by water and the British Government were providing the aid for it? He went on to say:

> "Why in our overseas defence ... budget are we giving aid to Malaysia? I mean, the budget's meant to be for the poorest countries in the world. Malaysia's one of the booming tiger economies of the Pacific basin."

The income per head in Malaysia in 1988 was $1,780 a year. That was well within any limit on aid to developing countries. It is one eighth of the income per head that this country enjoys. Are the hon. Member for Monklands, West and the editor of the *The Sunday Times* saying assistance to Malaysia was provided when it did not deserve aid? Every other country in the world was supporting Malaysia.

Sir David Steel: The Minister does not have much time, so if he wants to reply to the editor of *The Sunday Times* he should send him a letter and reply to the debate in the House.

Mr. Needham: My reading of the newspapers and the reports from Malaysia suggests that the comments and reports of the editor of *The Sunday Times*, backed up by the right hon. Gentleman and Opposition Members, have led to the break-off of relations with Malaysia, threatened our relations with Indonesia and Thailand and could put a vast number of jobs and industries in this country at long-term risk.

I had always accepted that we had to compete with the Germans, French, Italians and Japanese. I had not realised that we would at the same time have to deal with the distortions of some sections of the press, the hypocrisy of the Liberal party and the patronising neo-colonialism of the Labour party. The Conservative party is the only party in this country that represents the interests of our trade and industry and British jobs in British factories. I ask the House to reject the motion.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 159, Noes 305.

Division No. 149] **[7.17 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Betts, Clive
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'I)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*

Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*

Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the Main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House strongly supports the Government's substantial aid programme aimed at sustainable economic and social development, particularly in the poorest countries, which draws on the skills and excellence of British institutions, companies and non-governmental organisations, and creates significant jobs and wealth in the United Kingdom.

Investment in Education

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I must inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.28 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I beg to move,

That this House, recognising the importance of high quality education provision to all, regrets that, as a result of the policies of Her Majesty's Government, there is growing chaos and division within the education service; is saddened that one of the many adverse consequences has been reduced morale and increased stress among those working in schools; deplores the growing backlog of repairs and maintenance of educational buildings, the increased drop-out rate of students in higher education and the erosion of democratic accountability for education; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to increase investment in education by at least the equivalent of one penny of income tax, and to reconstruct the partnership of parents, teachers, governors, local education authorities and central government as an essential ingredient in achieving high quality education.

This is the second time since Christmas that the Liberal Democrats have initiated a debate on education, and that is a reflection of the importance that we place on it. Investment in the education and training of the nation's citizens is the most important investment that we can make to ensure a successful future for our country. We want an education service that enables each individual to achieve his or her potential, by providing a first-class education for all, in which quality is the key.

To that end my party, despite the accusations in the Government amendment, has a well-developed and well-defined set of education policies, which are to be found in our document, "Excellence for All". Our top priority for additional education spending is a significant expansion of nursery education. As other recent debates have highlighted, investment in nursery education makes sound educational and economic sense.

Our policies cover all aspects of the education service, including, for example, radical policies on the development of a curriculum for people between the ages of 14 and 19, an alternative to the Government's testing and assessment regime, the establishment of a general teaching council, and much more.

The expansion of nursery education will have an initial cost, as will our plans to increase the availability of books and equipment in our schools, and to provide more support for special educational needs. I do not deny—no doubt this will be stated by Conservative Members—that in recent years the Government have increased expenditure on education. However, we believe that much more is needed. That is why my party is pledged to invest an extra penny of income tax on education to pay for our plans. The use of that increased investment will be clear for all to see.

Our policies to ensure excellence for all are in marked contrast to Government policies. Our motion addresses the two key crises facing the education service—the failure to invest sufficient resources in education and the break-up of the partnership established by the Education Act 1944.

I hope that the Secretary of State and other Ministers will wake up and notice what is going on outside their comfy sanctuary in Sanctuary buildings. From those buildings, and from their previous offices in York house, Ministers' actions have led directly to the chaos and division in our education service. The 17 major education reforms that have taken place over the past 15 years—yet another is on its way—coupled with a failure to make the necessary investment, have created a complete mess, for which the Government alone are to blame. That mess has led to the lowering of morale throughout the service, and to a loss of direction.

The House does not have to take my word for it. Last week, a committee member of the Oxford University Conservative association said in a letter to *The Daily Telegraph*:

> "Mr. Patten's attitude to education has betrayed a staggering capacity for incompetence and ineptitude".

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): Just for the record, I should make it clear that the letter was written by somebody claiming to be a member of the Oxford University Conservative association, but that the chair, chairperson, or chairlady of that organisation and other responsible officers subsequently wrote and corrected the record.

Mr. Foster: The letter stands on the record as coming from that individual, and it is known to be well supported by many other people in Oxford university, as demonstrated by recent statements about the Secretary of State's fellowship.

In response to a recent National Association of Head Teachers survey covering almost 200 schools, one head teacher said:

> "resourcing is but one aspect of a deteriorating situation. Teacher morale, public respect, a sense of partnership with DFE, the wondering whether anyone in high places has ever been inside a state school are all major factors which, unless corrected, will see the education system in this country in terminal decline."

Let us consider the effects of underfunding. Nearly two years ago, in my maiden speech, I said:

> "Schools must choose between sacking teachers and doing without books, colleges must choose between decent accommodation and up-to-date equipment and universities between overcrowded lecture theatres and empty bank accounts."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 522-23.]

Since then, much has changed—sadly, for the worse. Never has there been greater need for increased investment in our education service.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): What would the hon. Gentleman say to Dorset county council, whose members said exactly, almost word for word, what he has just said about educational investment? But as soon as they got into power, they cancelled a new school in Crossways, in my constituency, for which £800,000 had already been found by the Conservative administration, cancelled the expansion of Wey Valley school and of Purbeck school, and broke all their promises to the electorate.

Mr. Foster: I do not know all the details of Dorset's education policy, but I can be certain that the members of my party on Dorset county council will do everything they can to increase educational provision in that county—unlike the Conservatives in Suffolk, for example, who only last night proposed in their budget debate the abolition of all nursery education and a cut of £1 million in their capital education programme.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) has already mentioned nursery education three times, and said how much importance he places on it. Does he not agree, however, that the words often uttered by Liberal Democrats in the House are not matched by action in the local authorities that their party controls?

Can he explain why Liberal authorities appear three times in the bottom 18 local authorities for the provision of nursery education, why Gloucestershire, where Liberal Democrats share control with Conservatives, is at the bottom of the table, and why, in the Isle of Wight, which the party has controlled for years, only seven children in every 100 are offered a nursery place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. There is not a great deal of time left for the debate, and many hon. Members want to catch my eye. Long interventions do not help.

Mr. Foster: If the hon. Lady were to examine the press release on nursery education by her party, she might update her figures a little for the past 12 months. If she did that, she would discover that the Liberal Democratic party's position on support for nursery education has changed dramatically. She should also bear in mind the fact that, in many of the authorities to which she has referred, Liberal Democrat influence is relatively recent.

Liberal Democrats have had to pick up a considerable amount of mess and a number of problems. The hon. Lady represents a Birmingham constituency, so it is a bit rich for her to talk about education expenditure, because her local education authority has diverted £40 million from education funding to prestige buildings.

Never mind that; the argument about the need for increased investment has never been more urgent. That was demonstrated only last Friday, when the headline for the front-page story in *The Times Educational Supplement* was:

> "Schools caught in the jobs-or-pay trap".

Even this year's modest teachers' pay award—

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not customary for Members to declare their interests in connection with a subject before launching into their speeches? Is it not remiss of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) not to declare his interest in two specific items that are declared in the Register of Members' Interests but have not been mentioned in the Chamber?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members are quite aware of the rules of the House, and that is a matter for them.

Mr. Foster: As I did not intend to promote the claims of either of the two teacher unions that I serve as an adviser, and as I have already made clear my involvement with the two unions on previous occasions, I did not think it necessary to restate my interests. However, if it will help the hon. Lady, I am more than happy to put on the record yet again my involvement with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers and the National Union of Teachers.

As a result of the Government's unwillingness to fund the latest pay round, *The Times Educational Supplement* contacted 50 local education authorities. Of those, only four are now able to increase their budgets. Those authorities able to fund the award in full will have to do so by cutting other departments and services, but in many authorities it will be mean cuts to the schools' budget.

For example, in Leicestershire, schools will have to find £1.6 million to meet the pay bill, and in Shropshire they

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will have to find £200,000. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that another head teacher said recently in the NAHT survey:

> "We are running a medium-sized business on peanuts and goodwill."

It is interesting that, when the Government want to find money to suit their own purposes, they are perfectly able to do so. We know about the increased funding to grant-maintained schools, we know about the £200,000 spent, for instance, on advertising grant-maintained status. It is also strange to note that, in February, Buckinghamshire faced cuts of more than £2 million to its education budget, and head teachers were warned to expect cuts of 2 per cent. to their school budgets. Now, the only Tory—

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury) *rose*—

Mr. Foster: I shall finish the point. Now, the only Tory shire county left since the election in the past May has, surprise, surprise, a

> "better-than-expected spending limit set by ministers."

Mr. Lidington: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept that standard spending assessments in England and Wales are not skewed simply to benefit Buckinghamshire. The county council simulated—prudently, as it does each year—a series of analyses of what grant might be forthcoming from Government, so that it plans for a good outcome and for a bad. It is sensible stewardship—exactly what one would expect from a prudent county council such as Buckinghamshire.

Mr. Foster: On the basis of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, Buckinghamshire is also an authority which goes round scaremongering all those involved in the education service—hardly in the best interests of that service.

I have referred twice already, and I shall again, to the NAHT survey, because it brings to light perhaps the most up-to-date evidence of the physical impact of continued underfunding in our schools. Almost 70 per cent. of schools from that survey were planning to set aside less money for capitation in 1993-94, over half were putting off decorating buildings, and two thirds were planning to minimise spending on repair and maintenance. That backlog of repair and maintenance to school buildings across the nation is estimated to be more than £4 billion, with another backlog of £1 billion in further education.

The picture in higher education is especially grim. If one updates the information from the Pearce review for universities and the Hunter report for the former polytechnics, it reveals a need for £2 billion-worth of capital investment in our higher education institutions. There is an urgent need for £400 million to be spent solely on health, safety and legal requirements. That £400 million alone—not the £2 billion—will not be covered by the increased capital expenditure of £322 million announced by the Chancellor for next year.

Even the greater increase of 20 per cent. over the next three years is too little and too late and, of course, does not take into account the capital repair needs in Scotland or Wales. The repair and maintenance backlog seems set to grow.

The House will recall that, in December, the Secretary of State boasted of the expansion of the number of students in higher education. He told us that it was equivalent to 12 new universities. Yet, when pressed to explain whether the equivalent amount of capital investment had been made, answer came there none—hardly surprising when one considers that the expenditure per student in further and higher education has fallen by 22 per cent. since 1979.

The result is clear for all to see—overcrowded lecture theatres, inadequate supplies of books and equipment, a growing backlog of repair and maintenance, falling morale among lecturers and high drop-out rates among students.

As I have said, it is not only the failure to provide sufficient investment that has led to a crisis in education. The Government have systematically torn up the education partnership created by the Education Act 1944, and have put in place the flawed dogma of the free market, setting school against school, teacher against teacher and parent against parent.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Leeds, the Rt. Rev. David Constant, said in a letter to governors of his diocesan-maintained schools in the past month:

> "Sustaining education partnerships at local and national levels is of great importance. At present it is not clear how that can be achieved with the new funding agencies in place of the elected local authorities. Moreover one policy clearly underlying current Government thinking is that market forces are intended to regulate the pattern of education provision. The Bishops' conference has consistently warned against such an emphasis because it considers regulation by market forces to be quite wrong for a service like education...I continue to have certain reservations about GM schools, arising from inequalities of resourcing, from the emergence of a two tier system of schools and from the loss of democratically elected local regulatory and planning bodies."

That goes to the heart of Liberal Democrat concern over the break-up of the partnership in the education service. How can there be an effective education service with 24,000 quasi-independent schools all vying with one another in the marketplace?

Liberal Democrats do not accept as the basis for an education service one which has at its heart the assumption that some children will fail. We find it difficult to accept the concept of market forces applying to education, when we know that the practical reality is that the vast majority of children have no choice whatever about the school that they will attend.

Mr. Lidington: The hon. Gentleman is making a serious point. May I take it from his criticism of the operation of market forces in education that his party is committed to getting rid of the policies of open enrolment and local financial management, which, far more than GM schools, have given rise to that operation?

Mr. Foster: We have clearly said, as I shall outline in a little more detail in a second, that we believe that there is a great deal of merit in giving more power and responsibility to individual schools—but not to the point at which all the decisions are made by them. That is why we resent the break-up of local government, which has, and should have, a responsibility in determining strategic planning matters, for example, which would take into account the issue of which pupils go to which school and so on. Those are the issues which should be determined by more people than those at the individual school.

Another aspect of the break-up of the educational partnership is the erosion of democratic accountability, not least through the continued attacks, as I have mentioned, on local government, but through the centralisation of power into the hands of the Secretary of State.

The most obvious manifestation of that is the growing frequency with which it is impossible to find out who is in charge and who should take responsibility. Many hon. Members will be increasingly familiar with the answer to parliamentary questions, in which a Minister replies that the issue is no longer a matter for him, but for some, usually unelected, body. For example, try to get a Minister to answer a question about the Office for Standards in Education.

To give another example, when some lecturers at a further education college in my constituency recently went on strike over new contracts of employment, I asked the Minister to intervene to establish a process of arbitration. He said that he was unable to do so and added:

"You don't pay a dog and then bark yourself".

The Further Education Funding Council also said that it had no powers to intervene. That is strange when one considers that, when it suits him, the Minister can announce a massive holdback of £50 million-worth of grants to colleges, unless they introduce new or flexible contracts for new staff.

In the new mess and uncertainty created by the Government, even the appointment and dismissal of head teachers is confused. School governors have all the power, but no responsibility, while local education authorities have all the responsibility, but no power. More and more power is being delegated to quangos. We all recall the debate a few days ago.

I was able to reveal in the past week that, in the current year, more than 55 per cent. of the Department of Education's spending will be through undemocratic and often remote quangos. That is set to increase at an alarming rate, as the Funding Agency for Schools assumes responsibility for GM schools. All too often, those Government quangos are an opportunity for the Tories to featherbed their friends, as the debate last week showed.

I give the example of the Funding Agency for Schools, whose membership was announced last week. The chairman is Sir Christopher Benson, who will be on a salary of £34,430 for two days a week. Sir Christopher is also the chairman of Sun Alliance, which has reportedly given £280,000 to Tory party funds over the past six years. That is bad enough—I suppose that we are getting used to the Tory party rewarding its friends—but I can also reveal that Sir Christopher's company will benefit from the grant-maintained sector.

Sir Robert Balchin, another member of the Funding Agency for Schools, as well as being the Tory party chairman for south-east England—clearly, he is fond of lost causes—is also the chairman of Grant Maintained Schools Mutual, an insurance scheme for grant-maintained schools. Who will provide the insurance for members of the mutual scheme? None other than Sun Alliance International. Clearly, Sun Alliance's contributions to the Tory party have had the desired effect. The chairman of Sun Alliance has been given a lucrative part-time post on a new quango, and his company is set to make more money.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton) *rose*—

Mr. Foster: I shall finish my point and then give way. That is further evidence of the Government greasing the palms of their friends with taxpayers' money. But Sun Alliance shareholders should be warned, because grant-maintained schools are not a safe bet.

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and for reading the National Union of Teachers briefing note to the House. Does he accept that, with local management of schools, 85 per cent. of budgets are delegated to schools, giving them power and responsibility? Does he accept that, with grant-maintained schools, we are giving power and responsibilities to parents and governors? Perhaps the fact that we have deprived the hon. Gentleman's pet teacher union of power in the past 15 years is making him bitter. Is he bitter because the Government have rightly broken the partnership that existed between teacher unions and the Government when Labour were in government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat for the last time that there is limited time available. Many hon. Members want to catch my eye, and long interventions do not help.

Mr. Foster: I shall respond briefly. The hon. Gentleman is incorrect when he quotes the figure of 85 per cent. The Government intend to increase delegation to individual schools to 90 per cent. In response to an intervention by the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), I made the point about our view of the role and importance of local democratically accountable bodies—the local education authorities.

As I said, Sun Alliance shareholders should be warned that grant-maintained schools are not a safe bet. That is certainly the case because, as everyone now knows, the policy is failing. The evidence is not simply in the latest opt-out figures which show that, of 13 ballots in the past month, only four schools voted to place themselves in the hands of the Secretary of State and the Funding Agency for Schools.

More immediate evidence can be seen in the wording of the Government's amendment, accusing my party of underhand campaigning against grant-maintained school ballots. The Secretary of State claimed exactly the same thing at the Tory party local government conference at the weekend. He even quoted one of our campaign packs, which said of the campaigns against opting out: "Give open Liberal Democrat support". In accusing us of being underhand, the Secretary of State quoted from a document that clearly contained that phrase. The signs of desperation are everywhere.

As I explained in a letter to the Secretary of State last week, Liberal Democrats do not believe that opposition should be merely party political. The issue not only crosses party lines but involves the whole community. If the Secretary of State wants examples of underhand tactics during a grant-maintained school ballot, perhaps he should consider what happened in my constituency.

During a parents' meeting, a governor in favour of opt-out told the parents that, without grant-maintained status, the school would have to lose three teachers, and he even went on to name them. It was only after the ballot was over—fortunately, with a large no vote—that the governors admitted that they were talking through their hats and that no redundancies would be needed while the school was still within the local education authority.

Clearly, the Government have lost the argument over grant-maintained schools. Despite an expensive advertising campaign, double funding, and an offer of technology status, the Secretary of State is beginning to talk about forcing secondary schools to opt out, even against parental

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wishes. So much for his much-vaunted parental choice. Frankly, the only person guilty of underhand tactics is the Secretary of State.

I hope that I have demonstrated the way in which Government policies are leading to chaos and division in our education service. I have outlined ways in which Liberal Democrats would set out to reverse the current situation. I have also referred to our belief in the need for increased investment in the education service.

Of course, I have acknowledged that the Government have increased expenditure on education. However, the National Commission on Education agrees that it is not enough. In its final report, the commission said:

"as a nation we need to spend more on education and training...It is our conviction that in the long term the improvements in education and training that will result from this increase in expenditure will lead to improvements in the economy and benefits to society with consequent improvements in Government finances."

Liberal Democrats share that view, and the vision of providing an excellent education service for all.

7.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its far sighted education reforms which are driving up standards and giving more responsibility to schools, more choice to parents and more opportunities to our young people; believes that the Government's commitment to a high quality education service is further demonstrated by the record sums it is spending; notes that the superficial policies advanced by the Liberal Democratic Party bear remarkable similarity to the policies advanced by Her Majesty's Opposition; further notes that those policies appear to revolve around reversing all the measures taken by Her Majesty's Government to raise standards and increase choice; notes the admission by the Liberal Democratic Party that it is a party committed to raising taxes, yet condemns its inability to demonstrate any clear linkage between a demand for more income tax and a well developed and defined set of educational policies on which additional tax revenues are to be spent; and believes that the Liberal Democrats' commitment to education would be better shown by ceasing its practice of campaigning in an underhand fashion against ballots of parents for grant maintained status, which this House utterly deplores.'.

This has been one of those tantalising debates where the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) started with a bit of a flourish—or at least the best flourish that he could manage in the circumstances—and then disappointed the House as he went on because none of the substance that we had eagerly anticipated came into being. The whole structure and edifice is built around the slogan on which the hon. Gentleman's party campaigned in the last election—"A penny on income tax". Incidentally, they lost votes in that election.

One penny on income tax would yield some £1.6 billion. That sounds like a lot of money if one says it quickly or slowly. However, the interesting thing is that that tantalising increase in education expenditure should be set against the fact that in the past few years—to take as an example the period 1991-92 to 1993-94—education spending in England has risen as a matter of fact and history from £24 billion a year to nearly £30 billion a year. In other words, the Government have already presided over an increase of some £6 billion, dwarfing the sort of increase that Liberal Democrats have promised.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): My hon. Friend mentioned the idea of the Liberal Democrats putting one penny on income tax to finance their education expenditure. Does he have any idea how many pennies the Liberal Democrats would have to put on income tax to finance all the other schemes with which they tempted the electorate?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend tempts me, but I suspect that if I go down that road I will get into some trouble in terms of the subject of the debate. However, it is a fair point which we should all bear in mind when we discuss what the promise may well produce.

Let us examine the context again, because we are up against a background of historical increases in education expenditure of some 18 per cent. in real terms over the period of this Government. Those increases go right across the spectrum to cover school expenditure, higher education expenditure and capital expenditure. All have had real increases. I say that in all humility and against the background that it has not yet been proven that there is any necessary causal connection between an increased level of education expenditure and an increased quality of output. Quality of output is related not to expenditure but to something quite different.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): How do the Government justify spending £750,000 on refurbishing a four-year-old building for the Funding Agency for Schools? That works out at just under £6,000 for each of the 130 people who will work in the building, compared with only £47 in capital expenditure for each child in North Yorkshire schools. Is not it more important to get rid of outside toilets and temporary classrooms? Does not education take place in schools, not in office blocks? Will the Minister do something to stop the profligate waste of £750,000 on a new office block?

Mr. Forth: The maintenance of schools is entirely a matter for local education authorities which have responsibility for them. If the hon. Gentleman's education authority is letting its children down, that is very sad, but it is not a matter directly for me. If the hon. Gentleman is criticising the Secretary of State for providing decent working conditions for public employees, I expect that the unions, to which I have no doubt the hon. Gentleman is slavishly adherent, will have a word or two to say about that.

Mr. Bayley *rose—*

Mr. Forth: I will not give way again. The hon. Gentleman asked me a question, and I have given him an answer. I am proud that we are providing decent working conditions for public employees, and I hope that we always do that. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. No seated interventions, please.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Member for Bath did not at any point let us in on the secret of how the £1.6 billion was to be spent. The truth is that if one looks at some of the subject headings on which he touched, but did not elaborate, one will find the reason why he did not go into more detail.

For example, the hon. Gentleman referred to pre-five nursery education. I shall return to that in more detail in a moment, but I shall mention it briefly. Providing nursery education in the full sense of the term for the pre-fives would cost about £1 billion a year.

The replacement of student loans by grants—a subject which the hon. Gentleman did not mention, but I should be surprised if it were far from his mind—and the return to a full-scale, non-means tested grant regime would cost £1 billion a year for the number of students which I am proud are now in higher and further education. The hon. Gentleman mentioned capital and building programmes, and skipped across figures which are not unadjacent to £2 billion in total. I think he mentioned £400 million for one sector alone.

The hon. Gentleman also skipped lightly across the matter of books and equipment, which was mentioned but not in detail, and increased support for special educational needs. I know that it is a long time since the Liberals have been in government, and I know that the value of money has changed since then, but stretching £1.6 billion to cover even a fraction of the headings upon which the hon. Gentleman touched but did not detail is typically and liberally irresponsible.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Minister mentioned that it has been long time since the Liberals were in power. Is not it a long time since 1973 when the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, made an unambiguous statement about nursery education and said that it would come along? Is not Britain, 20 years later, almost at the bottom of the league in European terms? Does not the Minister think that that is an example of the Government's hypocrisy and humbug? Should not they do something to assist nursery provision, and to live with the comments that Baroness Thatcher made when she was Minister of Education in 1973?

Mr. Forth: I have always tried to live by everything that Baroness Thatcher ever said. It has been one of my lifelong aspirations, and it is one which I still strive to achieve.

The hon. Gentleman has led me to the subject of pre-five provision, and it may become one of the great shibboleths of our age if we are not careful. Opposition Members attribute all possibilities and all solutions to the provision of nursery education for those aged three and four years old. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs Taylor) will no doubt do it shortly, and I make that prediction with utter confidence.

The reality is that the value of that provision in education terms has yet to be demonstrated. It has yet to be shown that providing nursery education for three and four-year-olds will advantage those pupils throughout their school careers. I will go further, and say that some of the local education authorities that have a long-established nursery education provision in the present system come out consistently with the worst key stage 1 results, and the worst GCSE results.

The repeated assertions that there is a direct causal connection between the universal provision of nursery education by the taxpayer and an improved educational outcome throughout the mandatory school years has yet to be demonstrated. There may be other advantages, but that is not necessarily one.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Has the Minister costed the Prime Minister's recent proposal for universal nursery education?

Mr. Forth: The Prime Minister made no such proposals. *[Interruption.]* I have discussed the matter with the Prime Minister, and I will share that conversation with the hon. Gentleman if he will let me. The Prime Minister made clear that he believes that a properly structured pre-five provision is something to which we should be moving when it is justified and when resources allow.

My right hon. Friend has made that perfectly clear and asked the Secretary of State to institute a proper inquiry into the matter. That is now being undertaken, and the results will be available to the Prime Minister in due course.

There are many other issues that that investigation will want to cover. Those issues have not been answered, although the hon. Lady may well do so in a moment. I will look forward to it if she does. Will the pre-five provision for nursery education be mandatory or optional? Would it be all day or part of the day? Would all the teachers who were involved be graduates? What would be the capital and building implications of the provisions? What about the transport provisions? Have those matters been taken into account?

I can tell the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) that we are talking about a figure not unadjacent to £1 billion a year if all those matters are taken into account and the fullest possible provision is made.

Of course, the matter should be considered, and it may well have been, but the hon. Member for Bath did not let us into the secret. The matters must be looked at, as do all others, as matters of priority. If one had £1 billion to spend, which aspect of education would one spend it on? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me.

Mr. Don Foster: I am grateful for what the Minister said. There is a clear willingness now from the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister to undertake that necessary detailed costing. That gives some encouragement for the future.

The figures to which the Minister refers are similar to those we have suggested. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind that savings would be made in the 40,000 jobs created by the introduction of nursery education for all. Would not that reduce the cost somewhat?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman must take careful account of the relationship that exists between his regime and the successful and flourishing pre-school playgroup movement. That movement does excellent work for the pre-fives and may well be jeopardised by the regime that I suspect the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

The hon. Gentleman made great play during his speech of a concept which he called the break-up of the 1944 partnership. That sounded pretty good and statesmanlike. I suspect however, that he really meant that he regretted the passing of the LEA monopoly grip on education provision, and that he rather regretted the passing of the drab uniformity of comprehensive education provision. I suspect also that he somehow resented the fact that our education system is being increasingly opened up in terms of choice and diversity, as outlined in my right hon. Friend's excellent White Paper two years ago.

The Liberal Democrats may have lost touch with their philosophy and their original intellectual justification and beliefs, because Liberals no longer welcome freedom of choice and diversity in education. They want to hark back to a lack of choice in terms of local education authority

[Mr. Forth]

monopolies and comprehensive education. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman hinted at this, but he again did not spell it out.

The hon. Gentleman also harked back to the rather incestuous inspection regime that we used to have, under which local education authorities inspected themselves. He went further, and seemed to imply that the excellent new independent Ofsted inspection regime was not to his liking. None of these subjects was detailed in any way, and they were all left hovering in the background. We did have enough of a flavour from what the hon. Gentleman said to realise that he is not in favour of them.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister talks about inspectors inspecting themselves. Does he accept that, in the preparation of the five to 14 curriculum in Scotland, a large part was devised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, which goes into schools to inspect the curriculum which it set for itself. How are the inspectors to come to an objective assessment of whether any shortcomings are due to the failure of teaching or to the failure of their proposals?

Mr. Forth: It is not for me to explore the mysteries of the Scottish education system, which is the prerogative of my colleagues in the Scottish Office. I am sure that they will have taken due note of the point made by the hon. Gentleman, and they may well want to get in touch with him. I do not want to stray from my modest responsibilities.

Mr. Wallace: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are regularly told by Conservative Members that this is a United Kingdom Parliament, and this is a United Kingdom debate. Is not it common courtesy that a Scottish Office Minister be here to deal with any Scottish matters which might arise?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are here to answer the terms of the debate which the hon. Member for Bath raised. As far as I can recall, he did not mention a word about Scotland, and I was listening rather carefully. It is a well-known tradition here that Ministers do not even attempt to answer on behalf of their colleagues in other Departments. I have told the hon. Gentleman that his words will have been noted by my colleague in the Scottish Office. I am sure that my colleague will do him the courtesy of reading what he has said, and may well answer him.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Could I bring my hon. Friend back to the debate, which is on investment in education? Is he aware that Essex county local education authority, now run by a Liberal-Labour coalition, refuses to spend even to the Government's standing spending assessment set for education? It is putting money collected this year from council tax payers in my constituency into reserves, instead of spending it and investing it in education for our children. What does my hon. Friend think about that? Is not it raw hypocrisy from the Liberal party?

Mr. Forth: That excellent example draws to the attention of the House that Opposition Members will find it increasingly difficult, if they even want to attempt to do so, to defend the actions of local education authorities that their friends control. There is an increasingly wide gulf between the promises made in the pre-election frenzy of little more than a year ago and the reality that we are seeing on the ground in local education authorities. That applies equally to authorities that are controlled by the Liberal party or some unholy coalition of Opposition parties. Opposition Members will have to face the increasing embarrassment, if they dare, of attempting to defend what their authorities said.

I shall bring my remarks to a conclusion fairly quickly because I know that others want to speak in this regrettably short debate. A few words were said by the hon. Member for Bath about grant-maintained schools. As usual, Opposition Members do not know whether to be dismissive or fearful of grant-maintained schools. They have never been able to make up their minds whether the growing grant-maintained school sector is something to be ignored because it is irrelevant or an enormous threat which will subvert the whole education system.

We now have a healthy, successful, confident and growing grant-maintained sector powered by parental ballots which, even now, are holding up in terms of voting. Some 70 or 80 per cent. of parents vote yes when the ballot takes place, with excellent turnouts. More than half a million pupils are now educated in grant-maintained schools. More than half a million parents have voted yes in ballots.

If Opposition Members want to threaten the grant-maintained sector, that is a matter for their judgment. Conservative Members are increasingly proud of what grant-maintained schools are achieving in providing real choice for parents about the future of a school and in admissions of their children. We are also proud of the quality of provision that grant-maintained schools have demonstrated that they are capable of making. They have broken out of the drab uniformity to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Bayley: The Minister justified earlier in his speech the spending of £0.75 million on the office headquarters of the Funding Agency for Schools because there should be good conditions for employees to work in. Does he believe that there should be equally good conditions for children in both grant-maintained and local authority schools?

Mr. Forth: Yes, of course I do. That is why we make such large capital provision each year and expect local education authorities to play their full part in setting their priorities so that they are able to make proper provision for school buildings. Many local education authorities have demonstrated over the years that they are capable within the budgets that they are given and raise locally of making such provision in both capital and revenue terms.

The interesting thing is that there is no relationship between the amount of money spent per pupil and the educational outcomes in one education authority compared with another. Opposition Members' obsession with the idea that if we simply throw enough money at education all will be well is entirely divorced from the truth. Quality will come from a combination of the national curriculum, objective testing of schools—the hon. Member for Bath hinted that he did not approve of it, but did not elaborate —Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, which we have set up and which has our full and unequivocal support, and the element of competition and choice in education of which the Opposition seem to disapprove so much.

It is a combination of such factors, properly supported by finance, as I outlined at the beginning of my brief remarks, with the full support of the Department for Education and the Government, which will continue to deliver improving and increasing quality in schools. It is not some return to previous regimes. It is not some dropping of all the policies that we have put in place, as the hon. Member for Bath constantly hinted. I suspect that we shall hear some more of that from Opposition Members as the evening proceeds.

I utterly reject all the terms of the motion before the House tonight. I hope that in my few remarks I have persuaded hon. Members to reject the motion when we come to vote on it later.

8.14 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I am pleased that we are having this debate, however brief it may be. For the benefit of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), I am happy to declare my interest first as a parent—that is the overriding interest that I should declare—and secondly an interest that I share with the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) as an adviser to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

It is interesting that both the spokesman for the Liberal Democrats and the Minister spent some time discussing nursery education. The Opposition take it as a mark of success that we have placed nursery education so high up the agenda that the other parties just cannot ignore that vital issue. The Minister is not quite sure which argument to rehearse. He is not sure whether to tell us that nursery education has no educational merit or that the Government will provide it when resources allow. Obviously, his discussions with the Prime Minister have not been completed. I am not sure who will win at the end of the day.

The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) made many remarks that I welcomed. Indeed, at times I felt that he had been reading the Labour party's green paper on education, with his emphasis on partnership and accountability. I hope that we shall have many other occasions to discuss our proposals.

This evening, I want to take on board some of the important issues that arise from the motion and from the Government's amendment. One of the main problems that we face in education today—apart from the Secretary of State, who I am sorry is not on the Front Bench this evening——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): He is playing truant.

Mrs. Taylor: He is truanting again.

One of the main problems is the priorities that the Government have set. Government decisions on education seem to have three main themes. The first is that resources are allocated on the basis of Conservative political correctness, not educational need. Time and again, Ministers do not show their interest in the quality of education received by every child in the country. Their obsession with political funding of education is dangerous in a democracy. The second characteristic of recent years is that Government policy is incredibly wasteful in a variety of ways. If Ministers were subject to the same rules as local councillors, they would all be surcharged every year. The third theme that runs through Department for Education policy-making is strange for a party which so often claims to want to get government off our backs. That is the vast increase in centralisation and bureaucracy under the Government.

I shall substantiate those allegations in some detail. I deal first with the Conservative version of political correctness which extends not only to those appointed to quangos, although we have seen that time and again, but, even more worryingly, to the day-to-day funding of every school in Britain.

Ordinary schools which educate the vast majority of our children are being discriminated against because they do not fit the Government's political mould. We should spend a little time this evening considering exactly what are the Government's priorities in education spending.

When the city technology colleges were introduced, we were told two things: first, that private sponsors were keen, eager and waiting to pick up the bill; and, secondly, that the CTCs would be centres of excellence and lights for others to follow. The reality has been so dismal that the Government have abolished and abandoned the policy.

The latest Ofsted report for 1992-93 on standards and quality in education gives Ofsted's view on the success of CTCs. It states:

> "No CTC has yet established itself as a beacon of excellence".

But millions of pounds have been poured into the CTCs. They have received £30 million of sponsorship money. The cost to the taxpayer has been £120 million, for just 15,150 pupils—an average cost per pupil of £7,997. Everyone in the House this evening should consider what that money could have been spent on in hard-pressed schools in our constituencies. It could have been used for science laboratories, language facilities, technology blocks or even nursery education. The cost of CTCs in revenue terms has also been great. The average cost has been £4,000 per pupil per year. The average cost per pupil per year in a local education authority school is £2,200. Those are the figures, despite all the assurances given at the time by the then Secretary of State.

That project has been scrapped and there are to be no more CTCs. But the taxpayer has had to pay for the Government's folly. Children in other schools are the losers because of the Government's insistence that political correctness and their dogma should come first.

Mr. Jamieson: Perhaps one reason why the Government scrapped the CTC policy was that the first one at Kingshurst was given a damning report by Her Majesty's inspectorate. Ironically, the most damning comments related to technology.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right—it is worrying that progress has not been made. One would expect the Government to learn from that, but what do they do? They abandon the CTC policy and devise the technology college initiative. They change direction to cover up the fact that their previous initiative has failed.

We were promised in the press release issued yesterday that there would be substantial sponsorship from business. That makes me wonder whether there will be another massive bill for the taxpayer. I do not understand why the Government cannot appreciate what the Confederation of British Industry said:

> "We want all schools to be strong in technology."

[Mrs. Taylor]

The CBI does not believe that funding compulsory education should be a business responsibility.

Ministers are breaking faith with all those other schools in the country that need extra resources for technology —the majority of schools—but are not prepared to walk into the Government's trap of grant-maintained status because they value their independence too much. That is a clear example of the way in which Government funding goes according to their version of political correctness.

Mr. Boswell: Before the hon. Lady leaves the subject, will she comment on the Labour party's proposals to involve private sector money in the public sector? Whatever the views of the CBI on the matter, how does she feel that such private money should be involved? Does she believe that it would be appropriate in the case of the schools sector?

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister, who has some responsibility for higher education, will know that there is a great deal of private money in that sector, which is where I should like to see an expansion of private involvement.

The Government showed their priorities by introducing the assisted places scheme, the cost of which has escalated every year.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): The hon. Lady referred to further education. May I remind her that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), in an interview on the "Today" programme, specifically mentioned schools in that context. Does the hon. Lady endorse the views of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mrs. Taylor: Yes, of course we are considering all ways of obtaining more private money, but not methods that allow the private sector to control what happens inside schools—that is the opposite of what the Government are trying to do. If we can find ways of raising money in the private sector to use on crumbling schools and the backlog of repairs that we are bound to inherit from the Government—through bonds raised at local level or something of that sort—it will be appropriate to consider them. But we do not want control to be imposed on schools in the way that the Government are trying to impose it.

I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) should want to divert attention away from the assisted places scheme and its cost to the taxpayer. I am sure that I have heard him and other Conservative Members talk about the importance of the taxpayer receiving value for money. In 1992-93, the assisted places scheme cost the taxpayer £92·8 million—£3,405 a pupil. That compares with the average figure of £2,200 in other schools—half as much again as the amount received by the typical pupil. Last year, Ministers overspent on their assisted places budget by nearly 20 per cent. I wonder which local education authority is able to overspend its budget on schools by 20 per cent.

We have seen the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools stand in for the Secretary of State on many occasions. He has frequently told us that he is keen to tackle the problem of surplus places. He estimates that there are 1·5 million surplus places, but he is willing to use taxpayers' money to pay for 28,000 places in the private sector. Where is the logic in that and where is the value for money for the taxpayer? That is the price that we as taxpayers are paying for Tory political correctness.

The bribes are running out for grant-maintained schools, but why has the grant-maintained capital budget been ring fenced in the past if not as a reward for political correctness? Why was cash protection rigged—as the Public Accounts Committee has shown—if not for political reasons? I am glad that the bribes are running out. I am glad that all schools, including grant-maintained schools, are realising the consequences of opting in to centralised control under the Secretary of State.

Mr. Don Foster: The hon. Lady says that the bribes are running out and I hope that she is right. But I have a letter from the chairman of governors of Prospect school which is currently contemplating opting out. The letter states that if the school becomes grant maintained,

"central Government will initially add to this investment £300,000".

That is rather a large bribe.

Mrs. Taylor: The example that the hon. Gentleman has just given is similar to the case of St. Thomas high school in Exeter, which voted last week. In that case, such promises were made and, I think, parliamentary questions were asked to find out whether a guarantee had been extracted. The parents had a choice and used it. They smelt a rat and overwhelmingly rejected grant-maintained status. They had no doubt heard of many of the problems facing grant-maintained schools. Those problems included the fact that, last June, 88 per cent. of grant-maintained schools had not received their budget for the current financial year. They also included the fact that many capital bids have been turned down. I read with great interest the Adjournment debate on 18 February this year when the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) talked about the refusal of capital to a grant-maintained school in his constituency. he said:

"It is with some sadness that I bring to the Minister's attention the fact that the capital grant application that the school was invited to submit for the 1994-95 financial year has been turned down."—[*Official Report*, 18 February; Vol. 237, c. 1233.]

He went on to point out—this may be interesting to the hon. Member for Bath, in view of this question earlier—that he had had assurances from Sir Robert Belchin that that school was high on his agenda for capital in the following year.

Mr. Forth: Is the hon. Lady complaining that too much capital is available to the grant-maintained sector, or that not enough is available? She seems to be trying to say both.

Mrs. Taylor: What I am trying to tell the Minister is that we will have more Adjournment debates of that kind from conservative Members as grant-maintained schools realise that the bribes are not materialising and as more and more of them run into difficulties.

Mr. McFall: My hon. Friend could learn from the experience in Scotland, where Paisley grammar school, in the constituency of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for education in Scotland, was supposedly opting out. The proponents of the opt-out brought up a head teacher from a grant-maintained school in England to make the point that, although the English school had a comparable school population with that of Paisley grammar school, Paisley had 13 more teachers than the English grant-maintained. The Scottish parents, despite the seeming bribes of the Scottish Office, knew that their future lay with a good local education authority. Is not that a lesson for them?

Mrs. Taylor: It is a very important lesson that we should all learn, but we should also bear in mind what happened in the other ballot in Scotland.

Mr. Forth: Scotland gets a lot of money.

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister is saying from a sedentary position that Scotland gets so much money, but there was one grant-maintained ballot in Scotland that went in his favour and the school decided to opt out, in order to avoid closure. What happened? In contrast to what has happened time and again with English Ministers, the Scottish Conservative Minister turned the school down because, he said, it was only seeking to opt out to avoid closure. So there are quite a few differences between what happens north of the border and what happens south of it.

Ms. Estelle Morris: Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps we can understand the Minister's confusion about what he is doing wrong—whether he is spending too much or too little money—because he is guilty on both counts? He is spending too much on capital to bribe schools in the initial years of opt-out and now he is spending too little on capital because he is part of a Government who are not prepared to see an overall increase in the amount of money going to education.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. Many schools have realised the consequences of going into the grant-maintained net. It is also a problem that has been highlighted by what is happening in some schools at the moment, given the squeeze on cash protection which will be more severe after April.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): The title of the debate is "Investing in Education". The Liberals are quite clear that they would spend a good deal more on education at a cost to the taxpayer. What would Labour do?

Mrs. Taylor: We would not be wasting the money that, as I have outlined, is being wasted at present.

Let me give the House another example of the difficulties that the Government are causing for grant-maintained schools. Some grant-maintained schools are having to sack teachers and others are facing redundancy. I will watch with interest the outcome of an industrial tribunal which will take place in Carlisle later this week, following the sacking of 10 teachers by Kirkby Kendal grant-maintained school late last year. Some of the teachers are taking the school to an industrial tribunal for unfair dismissal. Perhaps that is a clear example that not everything in the grant-maintained sector is rosy.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Kirkby Kendal was not among the schools mentioned in the Government's recent advertisements on grant-maintained status. They spent £200,000 trying to persuade other schools to go down that path. I wish that the Minister would tell us whether Hatchford primary school in Solihull, one of the schools featured in the advertisements, gave its consent to being featured in that way before it had heard from the Government that it would not receive one penny of its capital bid for the next year and whether it knew that it would be losing cash protection.

Most schools have understood that there is a great danger in opting into central control and being at the mercy of Ministers. That, no doubt, is why the number of ballots for grant-maintained status has declined significantly, contrary to what the Minister said at Question Time today, and why the percentage of no votes has increased significantly to 38 per cent.

Mr. Boswell: Does the hon. Lady agree that the yes vote in January was 89 per cent?

Mrs. Taylor: The figures that I have are for the whole of the last term and a half, which is a very good time to look at. I do not have the January figures with me, but there were probably about six ballots in January. In the autumn and spring terms of 1992-93—if the Minister really wants the figures—there were 259 ballots. In the comparable period this year, there were just 53 ballots. The number of yes votes in 1992-93 in that period was 199. In 1993-94, the number of yes votes had declined from 199 to 33. The percentage of no votes in 1992-93 was 23 per cent., whereas in 1993-94 the figure was 38 per cent. If, therefore, we are looking at trends in grant-maintained ballots, the number of ballots is going down and the proportion of no votes is increasing.

The Government's three flagship policies—CTCs, assisted places and grant-maintained status—are all proving extremely costly to the taxpayer. We see that across the board. The hallmarks of the Government are waste, inefficiency and bureaucracy. The costs of centralisation and of running the Department, as well as staffing costs, have gone up. We have had the ridiculous expense of running Sanctuary buildings. The Department for Education told the Select Committee that the increased costs were due primarily to the Government's school reforms. Considering that we are back to the drawing board with the national curriculum, after spending £500 million, and that the Government have overburdened teachers with more administration and more bureaucracy than ever before, that is a very sad picture after so many years of Conservative Administration.

Before I sit down, I should like to mention something that my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) touched on. I have not much time, because others want to speak, but I just mention it as an example of the stupidity of the Government and of what happens time and again when Ministers refuse to listen. When the Education Act 1988 was going through, Labour called for a joint body on curriculum and assessment. The Government refused. The National Curriculum Council was established in York, the School Examinations and Assessment Council was established in London, and the two went their separate ways.

In introducing the Education Act 1933, the Government accepted that we were right all along and have merged the two bodies into SCAA. The cost of the merger is £4 million, but it leaves the Government with an empty building in York. They have therefore created a new quango—the Funding Agency for Schools—and sent it to York. That is an incredible example of what the Government think it is right for a quango to do and have.

Taxpayer's money is involved in all that. When the National Curriculum Council was established in York it had a budget for fittings and fixtures of £560,000. It actually spent £2·3 million. But when it moved out so that the new quango could come in, there was a refurbishment budget of £763,000—more than three quarters of a million

[Mrs. Taylor]

pounds to refurbish a building that is less than four years old. That shows Government priorities and waste on a massive scale.

Ridiculously, the National Curriculum Council had to have a special carpet with the letters "NCC" interwoven throughout. Less than four years later, it must be thrown away and a new carpet must be laid for the Funding Agency for Schools.

Mr. Don Foster: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: No, I have nearly finished my speech.

All that adds insult to injury for schools, which face a massive backlog of repairs and a massive shortage of resources. It is an insult to the pupils who are trying to learn in leaking classrooms and crumbling schools and to the teachers who are trying to teach without enough books to go round the class. The Government have shown by their actions that they are not interested in the education of every child. Just before Christmas, the Prime Minister said that 15 per cent. of children in this country got an education equal to anywhere in the world, but that, unfortunately, the rest did not. That is a damning indictment of 15 years of Conservative Government.

8.42 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): In opening the debate, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) was quick to flag up the additional 1p in the pound to which the Liberal Democrats committed themselves before the last election, and to outline what that would provide in educational improvements. We are familiar with such traditional ruses from the Liberal Democrats. They blithely go around the country telling people on doorsteps that putting just a penny, which sounds fairly innocuous, on income tax will provide any education item chosen from a menu according to the person interviewed. That has a certain appeal, but it is totally dishonest.

According to the Liberal Democrats' own document, "Excellence for All", 1p in the pound on income tax would provide £1·75 billion extra over five years for the repair of school buildings and for nursery education. Tonight, the hon. Member for Bath agreed with my hon. Friend the Minister that that is likely to cost nearly £1 billion, although it is costed in his party's document at £525 million. He said that the shortfall would be covered by a saving on jobs created. That spurious argument does not stand up to close investigation.

The document also says that the penny would pay for the fact that no class would contain more than 30 pupils. That is set against rising school rolls in primary education, contrary to the trend in recent years. It would also pay for a significant increase in funding for local management of schools, which would mean more money for the budget of any school represented by the person to whom the Liberal Democrats were talking on the doorstep.

Mr. Streeter: Is not my hon. Friend being a little harsh on the Liberal Democrats? After all, would they not save money by dramatically cutting the defence budget, thus throwing many of her constituents and mine on to the unemployed list?

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend makes a good point. But the Liberal Democrats do not intend to use savings made through defence expenditure cuts on education. They say categorically that 1p on income tax will pay for all that. Perhaps they should get back to basic sums.

The 1p is also supposed to pay for

> "reimbursing governors for earnings lost in the course of their duties";

to increase funding for in-service training for teachers; and to

> "establish an adult education and training unit with its own budget in the Department for Education."

As if that were not enough, that penny is stretched to the smallest decimal point in further education, where the Liberal Democrats would abandon the student loans system. The document says that all students would be eligible for a "fixed grant" to cover "specific additional costs" incurred as a result of their studies. A means-tested benefit would also be given to students, based not on their parents' income but on their own. The cost of that would be enormous.

All those measures already exceed £2 billion expenditure. Are those further education pledges to be funded also by 1p on the social security budget? They take us into the realms of a lot of money.

Mr. Heald: Has my hon. Friend also considered the cost that would be involved in reorganising every educational institution in the country? Those would include education departments where once there were local education authorities, a student council organisation in every school, a single Ministry reorganised for education and training, a new pay review body, a new national qualifications council and a new general training council. What would all that cost?

Mrs. Browning: It would cost considerably more money—certainly well in excess of 1p on income tax.

Mr. Boswell: My hon. Friend may not be entirely fair to the proposers of the motion. Has she noticed that the original pledge of 1p on income tax has been transformed in the motion to a reference to

> "increase investment in education by at least the equivalent of one penny of income tax"?

In proposing all those measures, might they not put much more on income tax than they have yet admitted?

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The wording,

> "at least the equivalent of one penny"

means that, on the doorstep, Liberal Democrats can pick any one of the items mentioned by hon. Members tonight and say, "If this is what you want, we'll deliver it and it will cost you only 1p on income tax". It is nothing but a device for the doorstep and has nothing to do with increasing standards in education. It is a dishonest proposal.

Ms Estelle Morris: The hon. Lady is right to say that what the Liberal Democrats promise on the doorstep is not what they deliver when they are in control in local authorities. But will she accept responsibility for what Conservative local authorities do? Will she explain why Devon county council, when it was Tory controlled before last April, managed to put only 11 per cent. of its children through nursery education comparied with Labour-controlled Newham, which managed to put 64 per cent. through nursery education?

Mrs. Browning: I have great pleasure in providing that explanation. When the Conservatives were in control of

Devon county council before the county council elections, it cut its cloth accordingly. Labour and Liberal Democrat local education authorities throughout the country choose their priorities. If they choose to prioritise nursery education, it is inevitably at the loss of other areas of education that are just as, if not more, important.

The motion talks of "growing chaos and division" in education. We have certainly had growing chaos and division in education in the county of Devon since the county council control went to the Liberal Democrats, particularly surrounding those schools seeking grant-maintained status.

Before Liberal Democrat control, I was asked on several occasions by schools that were considering grant-maintained status whether I would speak in support of it. I told them categorically that if they wanted specific information I would do all that I could to assist them, but I did not feel that it was a matter for politicians and refused on each occasion. In recent weeks, however, the way in which the Liberal Democrat council and the LEA in Devon have behaved has been quite disgraceful.

Earlier today during Education Question Time my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) drew attention to the way in which the grant-maintained status ballots for St. Thomas high school in Exeter were conducted, and reference has been made to those ballots tonight. I informed my hon. Friend that I would be mentioning the subject because at the same time as St. Thomas was balloting, so was Ottery St. Mary primary school in my constituency. I have referred to my hon. Friend the official complaint by the governing body about how the LEA conducted the negotiations and the public meetings with parents.

The figures for insurance costs that were given to parents were not quoted on the basis of a primary school in Devon. The LEA quoted insurance costs for a secondary school in the midlands, thus worrying parents about the additional costs if the school became grant maintained. In addition, a member of the governing body who did not support grant-maintained status was able to conduct detailed negotiations with the LEA about the financial running of the school. That information was given to the newspaper so that the chairman and governing body had to read the details concerning their school in the public press. In other words they—the official body—had been sidelined so that the LEA could continue to conduct the way in which information was given to parents—through the newspapers instead of through the governing body.

Mr. Don Foster: I shall attempt to be brief. The hon. Lady raises many interesting points. First, I am not sure whether she was congratulating the Liberal Democrats on keeping their promises about grant-maintained schools. In view of what she has said, does she believe that it would be wrong for Members of Parliament to write to parents involved in grant-maintained school ballots? Does she believe that insurance for grant-maintained schools is easy to come by, or would she confirm my understanding that many are having considerable difficulties in getting insurance?

Mrs. Browning: Whether hon. Members wish to be involved is a matter for them, as is whether they wish to put a party political slant on the subject or choose to do as I did and seek specific pieces of information. I have had no difficulty in obtaining insurance quotations, so I see no reason why a governing body should not obtain them.

Mr. Jamieson: Surely the hon. Lady must be aware that the only information put out by Devon county council was approved both by Local Schools Information and by the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust.

Mrs. Browning: The hon. Gentleman is speaking about a matter in my constituency and I resent the fact that he has not done his homework. If he has an interest in what went on at the Ottery St. Mary primary school in my constituency, I hope that he will do his homework and find out the information.

The LEA responded to one governor and not the governing body. The chairman and the rest of the governing body read that information in the press. When they tried to correspond with the LEA and negotiate directly with them, they were denied that opportunity. That is an improper way for any LEA to communicate with a governing body.

If the hon. Gentleman has such an interest in my constituency, perhaps he will write to me privately and explain just what he knows about the way in which the discussions and ballot took place. It is no coincendence that there is a great deal of overlap of interest. When the local newspaper, the *Exeter Express and Echo*, printed a photograph of one of the meetings at St. Thomas high school, the audience included people from the Ottery St. Mary primary school which, to my certain knowledge, had absolutely no interest in St. Thomas high school.

Under the Liberal Democrats in Devon, the LEA will disclose information to anybody and leave the governing body last, until they have to ask for the information. We also seem to be in the area of flying pickets who go from meeting to meeting, regardless of whether they have an interest in the particular school. That is not how the grant-maintained status option should be considered. It should be considered rationally and impartially—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There is now so much noise that I can scarcely hear the hon. Lady. Will hon. Members keep rather quieter?

Mrs. Browning: Such discussions, particularly with parents, should be considered impartially and with full information on both sides. There are obviously two sides to the argument; none the less, the democratic process set up by the Government has been subjugated by the Liberal Democrat council in Devon and the National Union of Teachers and others who have a vested interest in making sure that it does not happen and who are making sure that parents are not given access to full and impartial information.

I close with a quotation from Devon county council's chief education officer, following the St. Thomas high school vote. He said:

> "The vote is particularly significant as it keeps the authority well below the 10 per cent. threshold for secondary school pupils attending opted out schools. Beyond that level, Devon has to share responsibility for planning the provision of secondary schools with the Funding Agency for Schools . . . A yes vote would have taken the percentage of secondary pupils in Devon to 9·95 per cent."

It is not in the interests of fairness and impartiality or a matter for the judgment of parents and governors; it is a matter of sustaining an LEA department that is at the fore

[Mrs. Browning]

of the activities perpetrated by the Liberal Democrats in Devon—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman put that away. I do not want to see rude pictures across the Chamber.

8.56 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Tempting though it is to comment on some of the points raised earlier, in fairness to hon. Members and the requests from the Chair for short speeches, I intend to concentrate solely on one issue. As a Member representing inner London, I raise an issue that is causing enormous concern to schools throughout London—the future of section 11 funding.

In London at the present time, some 650 teaching posts are funded under section 11. In my constituency, 48 full-time teaching posts are funded under section 11, and 21 schools benefit from it. The grant paid to the London borough of Wandsworth—I am a Member for that borough—is well over £1 million a year. Those figures result from a series of questions that I have asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department over the past two weeks in the House.

Under section 11 funding, the present percentage—75 per cent.—will, in April, be reduced to 57 per cent. It is already clear what the effects of that cut will be, not only in my constituency but in many boroughs throughout inner and outer London. As a result of that reduction, London will lose some £16 million. It will affect many schools in boroughs such as Brent, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hackney, Ealing and Islington. No hon. Member, on either side of the Chamber, who represents a constituency in those boroughs can be unaware of the effects that it will have on schools in their constituencies unless there is a drastic reappraisal of the cuts.

Mr. Heald: Is it official Labour party policy to reinstate any cuts that are made in section 11 funding, as we have not heard about that from the hon. Member's hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Cox: I would expect that every Labour authority will do all that it can to reimpose section 11 funding. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman goes through the Lobbies as Lobby fodder on the many occasions on which we see cuts being made in local authority funding, in whatever sector that funding may be spent. In the light of the hon. Gentleman's question, he may be interested to know that the borough of Wandsworth, which makes great play of having the lowest council tax in the country, has clearly said that it will only keep section 11 funding until the summer, and will give no guarantees that, for the rest of the year, or future years, it will pick up any of that funding. This issue goes to the heart of the argument that I am seeking to present, not only for my constituency but for constituencies that are represented by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I confirm that when the Government announced the cuts in section 11 funding, although it is a Home Office matter, my hon. Friends the shadow Secretary of State for Education and the shadow Home Secretary, jointly made it clear that it would have a serious adverse impact on the education of children who benefited from the funding and for whom English was not their first language. We would restore those cuts.

Mr. Cox: In the schools in my constituency, I have found that section 11 funding benefits the whole school, not just part of it. If no teachers in the school are employed under section 11 funding, because schools often manage their own budgets they do not have the resources to pick up the staffing levels that section 11 funding allows them to have, the whole school will suffer. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) may be interested to know that the funding next year will be reduced still further to 50 per cent. At the moment, it is 75 per cent.

In the past three weeks, I have visited five schools throughout my constituency, not just in certain areas. Not one head teacher or member of staff, when we have talked about this issue, has said to me that they are in a position to pick up the funding out of their existing budgets to make up for the loss of money that they will soon experience. That is what is so crucial to us in London, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said, the whole role of the school will start to suffer. No school in inner London—or, I suspect, anywhere in the country—can say, "We are lucky. We have surplus teachers. If we lose a teacher because of funding withdrawals, we have the additional staff to make up the loss." From the visits that I have made in my constituency and the detailed discussions that I have had with head teachers and staff, I can say that not one of them said that they could pick up that funding and therefore keep staff now employed under section 11. What they do say is that they are enormously fearful about the effect on their schools. The cuts will not only affect teachers' morale, although that is crucial; they will affect parents' trust in schools and the standards in schools.

As we all know, whatever the difficulties—and there are some difficult schools in London, as there may be in many other parts of the country—it is to teachers' credit that they do everything possible to raise standards, and often succeed. I am convinced, however, that that can be done only when staffing levels are adequate: without adequate staffing levels, classes become larger and problems arise. Those of us who visit schools, and talk to heads and other teachers, know that when enough staff are available they can move the youngsters with problems, and continue to pursue the standards that schools are working to achieve.

This is a crucial issue, for London and for Members of Parliament. I know that it is primarily a Home Office issue, but I beg the Minister to consult his Home Office colleagues and try to readjust the cuts that are threatened for April. Otherwise, we shall undoubtedly experience enormous problems as a result of the breakdown of morale and loss of hope—and, above all, the loss of the expectations felt by many youngsters, and especially by their parents.

The Minister may say that this is indeed a Home Office matter, but the issues are intimately linked. As I have said, the funding for schools is due to fall from 75 to 50 per cent. next year; councils will be stretched to the limit. It will be a disaster for London schools in areas such as mine, whose authorities refuse to compensate for the loss of funds.

I do not believe much of what we hear from Ministers; I take far more notice of what I am told by heads and other teachers. But if the Minister who opened the debate really believes what he said about the progress that had been made, he really should consider section 11 funding. If the cuts proceed, how will progress be made? Sadly, we shall see the reverse of progress—loss of morale and hope, and a loss to the communities in which the schools exist. Surely, no hon. Member on either side of the House can condone such behaviour.

9.7 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Let me declare an interest immediately: like the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I am a consultant with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

I hope that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) will forgive me if I do not follow his lead on section 11 funding. I was interested by what the hon. Member for Dewsbury said—or, rather, what she did not say; I thought it significant that, in a speech lasting some 28 minutes, she did not set out the Labour party's programme. She seemed more than content to attack grant-maintained schools—yet, if they are failing, why should she spend so much time attacking them? As Shakespeare said, methinks the lady doth protest too much.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: I will in a moment. Let me get into my speech first.

The motion strikes me as somewhat contrived. Of course education requires investment: that is why the Government spend more per child, in real terms, than was spent in 1979. We spend more on pre-school education, we spend more on children in school and we spend more on our young people in advanced education.

We have invested in the nation's teachers with pay increases that better reflect the importance of the work that they do. I have argued in the House over a long period that the overwhelming majority of the nation's teachers are dedicated to their profession and to the children in their charge. It is, therefore, right that they now receive a salary which is more commensurate with their responsibilities and duties.

In education, as in life, however, money is not everything. Ideas and policies are even more important. There is little doubt that new ideas and policies have come from the Conservative party and from the Government.

Mr. Win Griffiths: On the subject of new policies and what the hon. Member was saying earlier about my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), may I point out that my hon. Friend was attacking not grant-maintained schools, but the policies of the Government that created such a cockeyed and wasteful system?

Mr. Pawsey: I found that to be genuinely an extraordinary intervention. As the hon. Gentleman is not now attacking grant-maintained schools, and if the Labour party is not now attacking grant-maintained schools, let me hear him say, in simple words of one syllable, that under any regime of which he is a member, grant-maintained schools will remain. Of course they will not. Of course his hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury and other Opposition Members continue their spiteful action against the grant-maintained schools, a matter to which I will refer later.

I say that the new ideas and policies come from the Government and from the Conservative party. We have sought genuinely to improve the quality and standard of state education by introducing the national curriculum and testing, grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and national targets for education and training, and by substantially increasing the number of students in advanced education. In 1979, only one in eight of the target group was in advanced education. Today, the figure is one in three—an unprecedented increase.

That increase emphasises two things—first, that the nation's schools are producing substantial numbers of young people well able to take advantage of advanced education and, secondly, that resources have been increased in the universities, enabling them to take more students.

I will now turn to the subject of local education authorities. We have endeavoured to reduce the monopoly; indeed, the LEA monopoly has been increasingly challenged by the emergence of grant-maintained schools. Grant-maintained schools build on the success of local management of schools—yet another of the Government's initiatives. LMS ensures that more funding—or, as the motion puts it, more investment—reaches the individual school and reaches down to the individual classroom, to the individual pupil. That must be to the benefit of the nation's children.

I understand why local education authorities dislike grant-maintained schools. They are, after all, a challenge not only to the established bureaucracy and empire of the LEA but to the policies and the ethos of the LEA. In spite of the opposition, however, 814 grant-maintained schools have so far emerged, with another 67 in the immediate pipeline, which makes a total of 881. In addition, a further 118 have voted yes.

Grant-maintained status introduces diversity into the nation's education system. Where there was one single basic school, the neighbourhood comprehensives, there is now real choice for children and for parents, and that choice will grow because of GMS and because the Government are allowing those schools to change their character.

Parents like choice, a point emphasised by the fact that, as my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools pointed out, more than half a million pupils are now being taught in grant-maintained schools —schools which have cut the apron strings that once secured them to the local education authority.

Yet another initiative introduced by the present Government was the introduction of the Office for Standards in Education, which ensures that every school will be inspected at least once every four years—a substantial improvement on what went before. I recall that when the measure was introduced, it was thought that it would be the end of inspection as we knew it. The reverse is true. Ofsted is a success story. It is accepted and working well and its inspectors go into the nation's schools and make a positive contribution to improving the quality and standard of state education.

The initiatives that I have so far described are only some of the ideas that the Government and the Conservative party have introduced, but it is instructive to compare our policies with those of the Opposition. Inasmuch as the Labour party has a policy, it is simple and single: one policy, one choice, one school. In Labour's view, bureaucracy is best and the man in shire hall has all the answers.

[Mr. Pawsey]

Opposition Members oppose tests, league tables and anything that smacks of independence. Opposition Members have become not so much the party of Opposition, more the party of obstruction; or, perhaps more accurately, the party of abolition. Opposition Members would abolish grammar schools, grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges. The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) is applauding and I have a longer catalogue to give him, so he will be able also to applaud the abolition of the assisted places scheme and, according to the hon. Member for Dewsbury, independent schools.

Opposition Members march under a slogan of "Back to the 1960s", and they want to return to the trendy fashions that did so much to destroy British education. Theirs remains a true policy of envy—a policy displayed and re-emphasised last week by the hon. Member for Dewsbury. In an interview given in the magazine of the Independent Schools Information Service, she reaffirmed her party's opposition to independent schools and her desire to abolish the assisted places scheme, which provides places to about 30,000 children from low-income families.

I noted, almost with incredulity, the intention of the hon. Member for Dewsbury to reopen the issue of charitable status for independent schools, thereby reversing the policy of her predecessor, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I wonder what the Leader of the Opposition, in his quest for respectability, makes of the albatross that she has hung around his neck and that of the Labour party?

I shall turn to the policy of the mover of the motion —the Liberal Democrat party, or whatever it is called this week. I do not accuse the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) of being two-faced, for if he had two faces he would not be wearing the one that he is wearing today. I accuse him, however, of facing two ways. After all, on testing the Liberal Democrats said:

"very little information of use to parents has ever been produced."

They went on to say that they would have a system of tests based entirely on continuous assessment.

The hon. Member for Bath appears to disagree with his party—he shows the independence of mind for which he is rightly becoming famous. In a report in *The Times* he states:

"the issue is not about the fundamental principle of testing and assessment".

It is, however, true that, from time to time and when it suits his party, it attacks the

"fundamental principle of setting each child the same objective test at a given time."

Naturally, the Liberal Democrats would abolish most formal examinations, including the GCSE, the national vocational qualification and A-levels. They would be replaced by qualifications modelled on—this will amuse the House—the piano exams principle. That is the best that they can come up with.

The debate has provided Conservative Members with an opportunity—albeit very brief—to highlight some of the Government's initiatives and expose the paucity of thought among the Opposition parties. We now require a period in which schools can digest the reforms that have been introduced. I have no doubt that the past six years will be seen as a time of great change and challenge and that from that challenge will emerge an education system well suited to the needs of the next century.

9.20 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): It is always a pleasure to follow a peroration from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) whose speech was, as always, lively although it owed more to rhetoric than to fact—it improves every time I hear it. I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and I shall make my contribution brief as I know that other hon. Members wish to participate.

There are many stresses on schools today, mainly due to the myriad innovations of the past few years, such as LMS —the local management of schools—a concept that I broadly welcome. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth mentioned it but I must point out that it was pioneered by Labour authorities and copied—sensibly—by the Government. The national curriculum and the constant chopping and changing have also placed stresses on our schools. There have been many U-turns and only last week the common funding formula was announced.

Last week the Select Committee on Education took evidence. The Government spokesman on education in another place said that one essential fact about the common funding formula was that it had to be transparent and easily understandable. The Committee heard from the head teacher of a grant-maintained school who was asked whether he understood how the figure for his school's budget was arrived at. It was most revealing that he replied:

"I have to confess that I do not understand how the figure was arrived at".

I liked his next comment which was:

"I also understand why I do not understand."

Clearly, more chaos and confusion will enter the education system if we have a common funding formula that head teachers, directors of education and treasurers do not understand. The real test will come tomorrow when a Minister from the Department for Education comes before the Committee and we find out whether he understands the common funding formula.

We have heard tonight that many schools have been disrupted by the ballots for grant-maintained status. The Education Act 1993 guarantees that every year governors have to consider the disruption of their school because they have to vote on whether to have a ballot. It is simply a one-way track to Government control—schools have to keep on balloting until they have made the "right" decision.

Reference has been made to a ballot that took place at St. Thomas' high school last week, the result of which was announced on Thursday. It is yet another example of disruption. The school is an excellent comprehensive school with 1,200 pupils. It has a good reputation and high standards but found itself holding a ballot on grant-maintained status.

What happened in the balloting process? The head teacher held only one meeting, at which he did not allow any contrary view to be expressed. The only way in which the contrary view could be expressed to the head teacher and the governors who wanted to opt out was for a group of parents to hire a hall some distance from the school and to advertise a meeting. The 650 parents who turned up, with an independent person chairing the meeting, heard both sides of the argument clearly put forward.

What the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) said tonight was totally wrong. I repeat to her that the information put out by the local education authority in Devon was similar to that put out when it was under Conservative control. That information was approved both by Local Schools Information and the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust. What went wrong with the ballots at St. Thomas' high school and at Ottery St. Mary was that the parents did not make what Conservative Members thought was the right choice.

Mrs. Browning: It is amazing, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport—a seat more than 60 miles from Ottery St. Mary—has such detailed knowledge that he professes to know far more than the local Member of Parliament does about how the matter was conducted with the governing body, which has been in correspondence and communication with me on the subject for the past three weeks. If the hon. Gentleman knew so much about those events I wonder why he did not raise with me the fact that he intended to trespass on my constituency over a matter affecting Ottery St. Mary.

Mr. Jamieson: If an hon. Member raises a matter in debate in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, surely it is in order for another Member to speak about the substance of what has been said. The hon. Member for Tiverton is attacking me for coming to the Chamber well informed. I shall always accept such an attack from her, or from any other Conservative Member. I shall come to the Chamber well informed. The hon. Lady does not like what she is hearing, and most of all she does not like what the parents in her area—perhaps voters or former voters of hers—said in the ballot, not what the parents said at St. Thomas' high school.

So espoused are Conservative Members to parental choice that when the ballot goes against them they come to the Chamber whingeing and complaining about information not being presented clearly and fairly. I should have thought that the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam)—he might have attended the debate tonight, such was his concern about the outcome of the ballot—would say that what is needed in those schools now is a period in which the wounds caused by the ballot can heal, and the school and the teachers can get on with the job of educating children rather than having to go through politically motivated ballots.

There has been some talk about capital expenditure on schools tonight. At one time, that was used as a part bribe to grant-maintained schools, to entice schools to opt out. I am sure that the hon. Member for Tiverton will have done her homework, and like me will have noted that six grant-maintained schools in Devon put in a bid for a total of £2·85 million for capital works in 1994-95. Although those are the so-called flagships of Tory policy, what were those schools actually offered? I hope that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) is listening, too, because he has a particular interest in one of the schools. Of the £2·85 million that the grant-maintained schools in Devon bid for, the Government, with all their generosity to grant-maintained schools, offered them a mere £23,000. They must now be reflecting on whether they would have been better off staying with the local education authority, because then they would probably have received substantially more.

Mr. Streeter: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jamieson: I shall certainly give way if the hon. Gentleman will explain why the grant-maintained school in Plymouth did not get its £750,000 bid. In that case I shall be pleased to hear from him.

Mr. Streeter: The hon. Gentleman is extremely hostile to grant-maintained schools, but why does he not join me in congratulating the headmaster and staff of an excellent grant-maintained school in his own constituency—St. Boniface college, which this year achieved far better exam results than the comprehensive school just along the road, of which he used to be deputy headmaster?

Mr. Jamieson: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is an absolutely absurd idea. He may answer the question why he does not send his own children to the school in his constituency. Since the school in Plymouth went comprehensive and we got rid of part of the system of secondary moderns and some of the selection, we have seen standards improve more and more in the city. If the hon. Gentleman had done his homework, he would also know that.

One other matter that I shall raise concerns the fact that many of the children in my constituency are children of service families. Since the parents are serving abroad, sometimes in war zones, their children attend private schools through the boarding schools allowance scheme. Those schools are mainly private schools and an answer given by the Minister shows that, in total, £120 million per year is spent on that scheme. I am not opposed to the scheme, but to what degree is that huge investment of public money checked? So few of those schools receive an inspection, which was talked of by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey)—the four-yearly Ofsted inspection. Inspections are not made of those private schools, yet they receive large sums of public money. I have examples of some of the few schools which have been inspected by Her Majesty's inspectorate and Ofsted. Those schools receive respectively a quarter, one half and two thirds of their money from the taxpayer, but they have the most damning HMI reports.

I have written to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, who has replied. I asked him if those reports had been made known to all the parents and children in the school. He said that the school is supplied with copies of the published report and that

"it can distribute as it sees fit".

If there is a good report, it is sent to all the parents, but if, like those schools, it is a bad report, it is not. The Minister's letter continued:

> "The onus is on the school to distribute the report to interested parties or to advise them where reports can be obtained."

Needless to say, in the case of those schools, the reports never found their way into the hands of the parents. I look forward to hearing answers to some of the points that I have raised. In particular, I should like to hear what the Minister intends to do to ensure that children of service men and women get a decent education in those private schools which at present are not inspected by Ofsted.

9.32 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I confess that I went too far earlier when I protested about the total absence of Scottish Ministers on the Government Front Bench. It is fair to say that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) had indicated that he would not be able to attend the debate because of the Standing Committee. It is also fair to say that at least one member of the Scottish Office, the Secretary of State, is not so committed. In the United Kingdom Parliament, dealing with the subject of education which affects people north and south of the border, while the Labour party Scottish spokesman has been present for a good part of the debate, there has not been a single Scottish Conservative Member present. That reflects the attitude of the Conservative party to an important matter such as education north of the border.

Mr. Burns: What about the Scottish Nationalists?

Mr. Wallace: I am not here to defend the Scottish Nationalists.

Mr. Boswell: Would the hon. Gentleman like to remind the House how many members of the Liberal Democrat party were present during the extremely important debate before Christmas on the national education and training targets?

Mr. Wallace: It was a far larger percentage than that of Scottish Conservative Members present during tonight's debate, since anything is greater than zero.

To add to the injury that I felt when the Minister said that he could not reply to my intervention, I was asked by the Scottish Office to indicate some of the matters that would be raised. Perhaps I had overestimated the Minister's speed learning on issues as complex as those relating to Scotland, notwithstanding his background.

It is a pity that there are no Scottish Office Ministers here because there are one or two kind things that we would have said—for example, about the early introduction of the five to 14-year-olds curriculum in Scotland. It is fair to say that the curriculum has been introduced in Scotland with greater public and professional acceptance and willingness to make it work than has been the case south of the border. However, aspects of the national curriculum have been changed even before some parts of it have been implemented.

In testing, we have seen the Government's willingness to back down to a considerable extent under joint pressure from teachers and parents. Now, instead of imposing an ideological position, local authority staff are agreeing that teachers will be free to determine whether it is appropriate to test and, if so, when. The fact that there have been relatively few tests has not brought the huge outcry from parents that Tory Members lead us to expect. In Scotland, we have not the product of this Government but an inheritance of a much broader-based approach to secondary education and the examinations at the end of it.

It is understood that perhaps tomorrow we will get the Government's response to Professor Howie's report. While there is general consensus that Professor Howie has identified a weakness in a system which has served Scotland well for many years, I hope that the Government will not go down the road of having a two-tier system of examinations at the end of secondary education.

I was not allowed to intervene in what is substantially a debate dominated by English Members. The debate has had its moments. We enjoyed the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) describing the advertisement displayed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) as "rude". In case there is any doubt in the minds of those who read the record later, I hasten to add that the advertisement on the advantages of grant-maintained schools that the hon. Lady described as "rude" was placed in the *Radio Times* by the Department for Education.

Mrs. Browning: As hon. Members will observe, I have now put on my glasses. I tend not to wear them in the Chamber—that way, Opposition Members remain a blur to me. When the picture was suddenly flashed at me across the Chamber, without my glasses on it looked like a rather rude picture and I did not want to have anything to do with it.

Mr. Wallace: Hon. Members on this side of the House would perhaps think it was rude in other respects, but I do not think that anyone could say that it offended public decency.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: No. The hon. Member for Tiverton made two criticisms: first, having campaigned in the county council elections in opposition to grant-maintained schools, the Liberal Democrats maintained their election promise when they swept aside the Tories in Devon; and, secondly, she seemed to have an aversion to open government and to be frightened that too much information was getting into the public domain. Undoubtedly, the fact that there was that amount of information led to the voters and parents taking the decision which they did in the ballots that have been referred to.

Much of this debate has rightly concentrated on the need for investment in education and the question of resources. When one looks at the developments in places such as south-east Asia and the changes that will come from eastern Europe, it is clear that we must invest in our young people if we are to be able to compete economically in an ever more competitive global market.

Dr. Spink: The hon. Gentleman will be happy to congratulate the Government on their investment in education since 1979. They increased by 50 per cent. in real terms the total amount that is spent on education, by 19 per cent. the amount that they spend per pupil on capital, by 47 per cent. the amount that they spend per pupil in education and by 31 per cent. the amount that they spend on books and equipment in education.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman could not have teed up my next point better if he had tried. My hon. Friend the Member for Bath referred to the brief from the Library for the debate on the Budget resolutions and the economic situation on 6 December. He pointed out that if one takes account of the appropriate education price deflators and the changes in pupil numbers, the increases in resources is not about 40 per cent., but just 2 per cent. That reveals a fall in real terms in spending on secondary education, and spending on further education has fallen by 22 per cent.

The report by the National Commission on Education shows that spending on books per pupil has fallen by 17 per cent. and expenditure per pupil was no higher in volume terms in 1990-91 than it was in 1980-81. At 1991-92 prices, capital expenditure in schools in Scotland when the Government came to power was £149 million. In 1991-92, it was £72·5 million, having fallen in one year to as low as £63 million.

Many of the figures are far from accurate. There has been a fall in investment in education if one takes into account all the relevant factors. It is not just a question of money and resources. The motion makes it clear that there must also be investment in goodwill and people, and an investment in the partnership described in the motion between all the main players.

Mr. Pickles: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: No, I will not give way. I have been generous in giving way, and I am speaking against the clock.

The Government have been weak. There has been a negative investment in terms of goodwill at all stages, and the alienation of many of those employed in the education service has led to a staggering loss of morale. Looking north of the border, we can see the reasons behind the campaigns that the teaching unions have been mounting about the greater work loads, or overloads, which have been placed on them.

We need only to look at an assortment of the 24 Government initiatives since the 1987 election. There has been a new initiative every three and a half months. Most of those are not trifling, and some are welcome. They include school boards; the five to 14 programme; performance indicators; devolved school management; modern language teaching in primary schools; formal development planning; action against bullying; national teating; computers in the classroom; case conference machinery; regulations recording truancy; staff development and appraisal; enhanced school inspection; self-governing schools legislation—one could go on.

Those are important developments, but, taken as a whole, they give a strong impression that the Government have substituted vision and strategy for a policy of change for change's sake. The policy lacks coherence. On the one hand, there is the promotion of decentralisation, and on the other the imposition of central control.

The Association of Head Teachers of Scotland prepared a report which was sent to the Under-Secretary at the Scottish Office last year. The report said:

> "If there is any underlying consistency to this catalogue of reforms, it certainly escapes casual scrutiny. People know it is not possible to travel in different directions at the same time. The problem is overcome . . . by the use of phrases familiar to headteachers, for example:—'Emphasis on . . . should not be to the exclusion of . . . without losing sight of the need of' and the like. What this kind of language amounts to is a belief that by uttering a few well-chosen words, the laws which usually govern human affairs will somehow be suspended."

There are two unifying factors. Most, if not all, are time-consuming and require extensive work over and above the basic function of the teacher—teaching children and young people in a classroom.

When the AHTS named the report to which I referred, it was no coincidence that it called it "Children Incidentally". The report said:

> "The title chosen . . . reflects our view of the way in which the immediate needs of children are being pushed to the periphery as all attention is concentrated on change as a process, and, seemingly, an end in itself."

There is stress and low morale, and that affects teachers and inevitably has an effect on the children they teach. It cannot be conducive to creating a proper educational environment in which the highest standards are achieved.

The staff of Inchmore primary school wrote to the *Scottish Educational Journal*—the journal of the Educational Institute of Scotland. They said:

> "In the primary sector we, as individual teachers, have to address all curricular areas not just one subject. If the Government want quality then they must pay for it by ensuring that our children, in Scotland, are being taught by teachers who are not suffering from the stress of implementation."

When well-documented cases are presented to the Scottish Office, it appears that only lip-service is paid to the problem. The remedies that are put forward make no impact on the work load of the teacher in the classroom, and they fuel further the suspicion that officialdom at the highest level has no real concept of what it takes to teach children in the classroom of the 1990s.

We should not lose sight of the people who matter. They are the children in the classroom and the young people in our colleges and universities. At nursery, primary and secondary level and in further and higher education there have been tremendous pressures.

In Scotland, the proportion of three and four-year-olds who attend nursery education is lower than even the United Kingdom average, which does not always bear worthy comparison with other countries. I have mentioned some of the problems in primary schools with the introduction of curriculum change. In further education, the important link between local communities and further education colleges has been broken as the Government pursue centralising tendencies.

While the Government boast about the increase in student numbers in our universities—a worthy achievement—they say little about the strain that additional numbers place on lecture theatres, laboratory equipment and tutorial sizes. Little is heard about the significant drop-out rate among students and the financial hardship that many of them face.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools asked what evidence there was that increased resources led to better standards in education. I know that it is not a very good authority, but perhaps I could quote from the Government's amendment to our motion. It suggests that the House

> "believes that the Government's commitment to a high quality education service is further demonstrated by the record sums it is spending".

We have challenged whether those sums are as great in real terms as the Government claim.

Mr. McFall: The hon. Gentleman mentions the sums that have been spent, but he knows as well as I do that in Scotland we are going through local government reorganisation—not reform—which the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities have estimated will cost £720 million. Given that the reorganisation is being put in place against a backdrop of reducing public expenditure, does the hon. Gentleman feel that the schoolchildren of Scotland in the future will be less well off than they have been up to now?

Mr. Wallace: The current generation will be very much affected by those changes, on top of all the other matters to which I have referred.

[Mr. Wallace]

It is clear from the agonised protests of the hon. Member for Tiverton that the policy commitment made by the Liberal Democrats——

Mr. Pickles: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: I have only one minute left. The policy commitment of increased resources amounting to 1p on income tax is a popular policy. It gives substance to what we have argued. It is more convincing than the promise by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). She said that Labour's commitments would be met by tackling waste and not having so many carpets in the office of the National Curriculum Council. That lacked a certain degree of credibility.

We have costed our programme. It was put to accountants before the last election. We argue that our sums add up a lot better than those of the Conservative party, given the public sector borrowing requirement that it has created compared with the false prospectus that it put to the electorate at the general election.

Education is an investment that we cannot afford not to make. By souring the relationships that are vital for creating a partnership to deliver a high-quality education service, and failing to invest the necessary resources, the Government are in danger of failing a generation. Glossy pamphlets and league tables will never be a substitute for the dedication and professionalism of the teaching profession. Our young people deserve far better than they have received after 15 years of Tory rule. Our motion makes it clear that we are the party which has the commitment.

9.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) at least paid my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State the compliment of picking up on the most interesting remark of the evening, which my hon. Friend made at the beginning of the debate. He properly made the point that there was no direct correlation between the total expenditure and the success of a particular school system. The Government's amendment makes it clear that we have a commitment which is evidenced by the high and rising level of provision of finances for education.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred inaccurately to the drop-out rate. He spoke as though it had increased. The Liberal motion also says that the drop-out rate has increased. He referred to spending on further education and deplored the breaking of the link with local education authorities. I thought that exactly that decentralising of power and empowerment of the local community was a Liberal priority. The hon. Gentleman also warned us, in a number of windy phrases, that we should not lose sight of children in the classroom—I agree. He said that we should make a heavy investment in education, which we have also done.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The annunciator is referring to the Minister as Mr. Baldry—it has just been corrected.

Mr. Boswell: What a splendid waste of time.

Let us now consider the facts. When I consider the debate I am reminded of the famous old remark about the Opposition Benches reflecting a row of extinct volcanoes. It is clear that the explosive force of the Labour party's spending pledges has been effectively, if temporarily, plugged by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who is sitting on the core. Nevertheless, in those places that I believe are known in the trade as round the back and out of sight, at the sides of the volcano of explosive spending, are pyroclastic flows. They appear at local gatherings such as teachers' conferences, where idle spending pledges are made. I anticipate that the plug will be removed from the central core and we shall see a return of the characteristic Labour habit of showering pledges all over the place in an uncontrolled manner.

To pursue the analogy, the Liberal Democrats, who tabled the motion, have seemed much more like the tail end of volcanic activity. They are gently rounded, non-threatening and entirely non-intrusive grassy mounds, but if one moves close to them one can observe the outcrops of volcanic pumice. If one moves closer still one finds that the stuff is abrasive, but essentially lightweight. That has been well evinced in the debate.

The substantial part of the contribution of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) has already been dealt with and I shall respond to the issues raised by the Liberal Democrats later.

I shall deal first with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). She offered her familiar litany of grouses, although she set them out more elegantly than she sometimes does. She referred in an almost thoughtful way to political correctness. If she wants to look for examples of political correctness in action she should look at local education authorities.

The hon. Lady referred to the alleged wastefulness of Government policies. It was conceded that there were well over 1 million empty places in schools. Those places have not been under the direct control of the Government—it is important to deal with that issue at a local level.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Will the Minister give a guarantee that no school will be allowed to opt out to avoid closure as part of a plan to reorganise and to get rid of surplus places, as has happened?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Lady has made such assertions, but my brief experience and the experience of my colleagues has shown that we always turn our attention to potential problems such as that. We have not allowed it to occur.

The hon. Lady also spoke of centralisation. The number of school governors with a proper job to do in the local management of schools and grant-maintained schools is about 250,000. That is a huge increase in the number of people with a practical job to do on behalf of their schools and it is very much to be welcomed.

The hon. Lady was on familiar territory when she spoke about grant-maintained schools. She neglected to say that the great majority of parents, pupils and staff of grant-maintained schools are delighted at the provisions that have been obtained and the improvements in standards.

Mr. Pickles: My hon. Friend has mentioned grant-maintained schools and the effect of local education authorities. Does he deprecate the fact that Bedfordshire county council has withdrawn library services from grant-maintained schools? Does he also deprecate the fact that Kent and Essex have withdrawn repairs and maintenance from school budgets? Does he particularly deprecate the fact that, in Cornwall, potential school governors apparently have to take an oath of allegiance against grant-maintained schools? Does he agree that we do not want placemen as school governors, but people who want to contribute to the school?

Mr. Boswell: Time is short—the answers are yes, yes and yes.

The hon. Lady referred to the assisted places scheme without referring to its policy. I noticed, as did my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, that in her speech there was no reference at all to policies for education and no reference to a concern for the quality of education, except obliquely. Those are the reasons why we need to innovate and to make changes in educational policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) spoke with great passion. She analysed and destroyed the Liberal Democrat case for the one extra penny, but I will return to that myself because I will enjoy doing it as well. My hon. Friend then referred to a particular school and a complaint about a ballot which I think she has referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I remind the House that the Government believe in democracy and in the right of parents to choose the best future for their schools. If, where cases are brought to my right hon. Friend's attention, he judges that an LEA or anyone else has engaged in activities which have prejudiced the outcome of the ballot, he has the power to void the ballot, and he would use that power if it were justified. I think that I should not comment beyond that.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke with some force about his concerns over section 11 funding. He rightly anticipated that this is primarily a matter for the Home Office and we can draw his remarks to the Home Office's attention, but I should remind him for the record —it is an important point —that the needs of children in that category are not catered for solely by section 11 but are also reflected in the standard spending assessment formula.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) spoke with this characteristic force about what was going on and he pointed to the weaknesses of Labour policy. He referred, for example—as a higher education Minister, I should do so, too—to the remarkable achievement that we have produced in empowering young people and in expanding student numbers so that we now have more than 1 million students in this country. He also referred to the importance of challenging the settled monopoly of local education authorities and of increasing choice and he is entirely right about that, too.

The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) wound up the Back-Bench contribution with his characteristic whingeing about this and that, his dislike of certain grant-maintained schools, and his concern about the common funding formula, on which we have consulted fully and which is no more complicated than LMS standards of devolution. I had thought that the hon. Gentleman was a mathematician, but I could be wrong about that. He exemplifies one of the essential problems about the attitude of the Labour party, which is that nothing must ever be changed, and every innovation that we make is automatically rubbished because they have nothing to offer instead of it.

If I may return to the motion itself, I remind the hon. Member for Bath—I hope that I have not besmirched him, but I have it on the record—that he once said that his party would be very keen to see the benefits of grant-maintained status being passed to all schools. It is a sort of vicarious GM, no doubt including the LEA in the case of the Liberal Democrats.

I must return to the central point of the debate, which is the one penny. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton destroyed the case for one penny because she made the point that it had been amply recycled into a range of provision from nursery books to student loans. We have been told that it is "at least" one penny, but the Liberal Democrats have spent their penny in such a way that it is even more recycled than Thames water is.

I notice also that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), in the kind of debate that is never noticed because it happens on a Friday, referred to a visit to Hong Kong, where the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland may also have gone. He reported to the House on 14 January:

> "There is no doubt that it is easier to do business where tax has a ceiling rate of 15 per cent.—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 443.]

One or two extra on top of what we have, and what is the price of that?

In the middle of all these false trails, false complaints and false nostrums, the Government are getting on with the job of improving the nations's education. We should record that on the schools side alone, through the revenue support grant provided by the Department of the Environment, we are spending £17·1 billion directly into local education authorities. At the same time, we are asserting choice and diversity. We are driving forward, through performance indicators, higher standards. That is not divisive, but is what parents want. We shall continue to do that and to raise educational standards.

For that reason, I invite the House to reject the motion and to support my right hon. Friend's amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 30, Noes 282.

Division No. 150] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Harvey, Nick
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Lewis, Terry
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood,

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*

Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher

Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryll s, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*

Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*

Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 276, Noes 121.

Division No. 151] [10.13 pm

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony

Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles

Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy

Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewas[illegible])*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard

Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David

Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric

Jamieson, David
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wilson, Brian
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its far sighted education reforms which are driving up standards and giving more responsibility to schools, more choice to parents and more opportunities to our young people; believes that the Government's commitment to a high quality education service is further demonstrated by the record sums it is spending; notes that the superficial policies advanced by the Liberal Democratic Party bear remarkable similarity to the policies advanced by Her Majesty's Opposition; further notes that those policies appear to revolve around reversing all the measures taken by Her Majesty's Government to raise standards and increase choice; notes the admission by the Liberal Democratic Party that it is a party committed to raising taxes, yet condemns its inability to demonstrate any clear linkage between a demand for more income tax and a well developed and defined set of educational policies on which additional tax revenues are to be spent; and believes that the Liberal Democrats' commitment to education would be better shown by ceasing its practice of campaigning in an underhand fashion against ballots of parents for grant maintained status, which the House utterly deplores.

Community Care

10.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I beg to move,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 10) (House of Commons Paper No. 218), which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

This report sets out the proposed allocation of the special transitional grant to local authorities in England for the next financial year for expenditure on community care services. It also describes the main features of the grant and the conditions that the Government intend to attach to its use.

I am always happy to discuss the success of community care policy. At this time last year, we were knee-deep in predictions of doom and disaster, and I am pleased—but far from surprised—that we can now look back on a very sound and promising beginning.

No one was more keen to forecast doom and gloom than the Labour party. The Opposition are like Christopher Robin on an off day—kneeling at the foot of their beds praying that something will go wrong. How cross they were when it did not. They said that community care would be underfunded by about £1 billion. Then they dropped their bid to £70 million—I suppose that that was a mere blip in Labour economics.

Social services departments had the nerve to say that they thought that the funding was fair and were savaged by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), to the extent that he provoked a response in *Community Care* magazine from the director of social services in the London borough of Croydon, who said:

> "Having failed to alter the national political map for the past 13 years, Blunkett, like so many other disgruntled and frustrated politicians, goes home and kicks the cat; In this case local councillors and directors of social services."

They kicked in vain, however.

The report represents the Government's tangible commitment to the continued success of the new arrangements. It transfers about £736 million to local authorities. Taken together with the funding rolled forward from the current year, that means that, next year, authorities will have more than £1·2 billion available to meet their new community care responsibilities.

Most authorities now realise that, used sensibly, that is sufficient for the job. That sum is, of course, in addition to the personal social services standard spending assessment resources, a substantial part of which has always been used for domiciliary and day services and public sector residential care.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I have just come to the House from a meeting about the Government's proposed plans to run down Guy's hospital. Do the figures—in Southwark's case a little more than £6 million—allow for the additional burden on the community care budget of the plans for reducing services in some parts of the capital's health service?

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman referred to the increase that Southwark council is to receive this year. He got the figure wrong, but he got right the fact that it is an increase—from about £56 million to about £66 million, which is an increase of 16·4 per cent. If Southwark council is well managed and can use its resources efficiently—he will have to tell me whether it is, and whether it is capable of doing that—it will certainly be able to cater for the community care needs of people in the borough during the coming year.

I was saying that I was especially glad that this year we have been able to include a further £20 million in next year's grant over and above the total that had previously been announced. I hope that that will please the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. The aim is to encourage the further development of respite and home care services.

Indeed, the level of diversification, enabling people to have a real choice between staying in their own home—where possible—and moving to residential care is one of the success stories of the past 11 months. In many parts of the country, diversion to domiciliary care is proceeding faster than anyone had expected, and we are getting reports of rates of 10 per cent. or more. That is one of the factors that have allowed us to speed up some of the transitional aspects of the grant.

In particular, we have been able to phase out the use of historical data about income support claims from residents of care homes and nursing homes as a basis for distributing the grant between authorities. Instead, we can now use the personal social services standard spending assessments exclusively, the same basis as for virtually all other social services funding. The effects of the move will benefit more than two thirds of authorities.

Another of this year's successes has been our commitment to real choice for users of community care services, whether residential or domiciliary. Continued success depends on a continuing diversity of service providers, especially in the independent sector. I have, however, been disturbed by the number of complaints that I have received from proprietors and managers of private and voluntary care homes who allege that some local authorities are willing to waste money by ignoring the independent sector and placing people in much more expensive council-owned establishments.

The importance of the independent sector to community care reforms can hardly be overstated, and the Government will continue to support its role.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): As the Minister said, choice is an important issue. Will he acknowledge that the requirement in the current and the next financial year to spend 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant in the independent sector restricts choice? In many instances, it means forcing people into expensive institutional care because of the lack of domiciliary care and support at a local level.

Mr. Bowis: Of course it does not. Before community care, 100 per cent. of the moneys that came from social security went to the independent sector. We are talking now about the 85 per cent. of the transfer element that we are asking—indeed, requiring—local authorities to spend in the independent sector. It is a modest demand and has nothing to do with the disbursement of the moneys that were previously spent on domiciliary and day care and which came from the broad social service budgets.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage his colleagues in local government to play their part in ensuring that the independent sectors—private and voluntary—can diversify and help to provide a wider choice for people, whether for residential or domiciliary care.

Local authorities should use their purchasing power to develop and stimulate new independent sector services, especially in the day and domiciliary spheres. I expect authorities to consider all potential providers and to strive for quality and value for money at all times. The independent sector has been a major player in community care services for many years, and its expertise must be harnessed to the challenges of the new policy. I want private and voluntary providers to be fully involved in the planning and provision of the range of services needed.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Will the Minister acknowledge that changing from a formula based partly on income support payments and partly on SSAs to a formula based wholly on SSAs seriously disadvantages some authorities? In a letter to me three weeks ago, he said that such a distribution mechanism

> "involves both winners and losers".

He went on:

> "I recognise that there are some authorities, like North Yorkshire, whose special transitional grant will be lower next year than they had been anticipating."

In fact, it will be more than £3 million lower, even after assurances that the change would be phased in over a number of years. How does the Minister expect an authority such as North Yorkshire, which has a traditionally low spend—in my view, too low a spend—on social services for the elderly to deal suddenly with a £3 million cut in its budget without severely disadvantaging the elderly people who rely on its services?

Mr. Bowis: I know that the hon. Gentleman will be in close touch with the North Yorkshire social services department, and I ask him to go back and discuss with it the precise figure that we are offering this year. He will find that, instead of a cut, there is an increase of about £10 million—or 15·2 per cent.—for social services as a whole. Will he then ask why, if the social services department in his county is so concerned about its ability to look after local people in need, the authority has underspent by about £5 million on its social services budget in the current year? There was £55 million in its standard spending assessment for this year, but only £50 million in its budget.

We shall again require all authorities to use most of their grant on services provided by the independent sector. Moreover, that condition is cumulative, so that next year authorities' independent sector expenditure must increase significantly over that for this year. I shall also give some thought to our definition of the word "independent". *[Laughter.]*

The hon. Member for Brightside laughs, and I am not surprised. Many people have laughed at some of the devices employed. I have serious doubts about some homes that in theory have been transferred from councils to charitable trusts and so on, but which do not seem to be truly free from local authority interference and influence. If I think it necessary, I shall amend the definition in the condition accordingly.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Will the Minister comment on our experience in Nottinghamshire, where, when the county council was forced to contemplate the closure of homes, several housing associations and not-for-profit associations in the voluntary sector went through the books with the council to find out whether they could run the schemes?

[Mr. Alan Simpson]

What am I to say to the housing associations whose representatives have written to me explaining their reason for pulling out of such a transfer was that, on the basis of the existing formula, they would not be able to run the homes without reducing staffing standards to dangerously low levels that would threaten the standard of care for the residents?

Mr. Bowis: For a start, the hon. Gentleman would do well to examine the current record of Nottinghamshire social services department, which is indeed giving us great cause for concern. I have had to invite the director and chairman to come to my office to discuss the situation, and to see how they can put Nottinghamshire social services back on a proper, fair and just footing.

I also suggest that the hon. Gentleman considers the figures and, realising that this year Nottinghamshire's resources will increase from £108 million to £122 million, sees whether he can persuade the county to provide a decent service in the best interests of the people of Nottinghamshire.

We provide more than financial support. We have put in place a careful programme of monitoring and evaluation, and every authority has been visited at least twice to discuss progress, and to offer advice where appropriate. The outcome of the monitoring has been encouraging, and I have already referred to some of it. Not only are the basic structures all in place, but it is clear that people are already being offered more appropriate support.

Generally, people who would previously have looked to the social security system for support can now get a timely assessment of their needs. There do not seem to be widespread backlogs. However, a number of authorities report that their procedures have turned out to be over-complex. They are reviewing them, and I hope that that will lead to simpler and more comprehensive procedures. I am also conscious of the message that I have received from my own national users and carers group that the information and communications for users and potential users leaves room for considerable improvement.

Fortunately, a great deal of enthusiasm and energy seem to be going into improving consultation with and involvement of both users and carers. There are welcome signs of users and carers becoming much more involved in the assessment procedures, although there is still a long way to go.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Is my hon. Friend aware that many independent care home proprietors are worried because local authorities are unfairly preferring local authority homes when making referrals, and also unfairly applying much higher inspection standards to private care homes than they apply to their own premises?

Mr. Bowis: I am aware that that is alleged, and also that, if it were happening, it would be wrong, because public sector homes are required to be inspected and assessed according to the same standards as are set for voluntary and private sector homes.

I am equally aware, as my hon. Friend says, that, in some parts of the country, perhaps in parts of his own area, there are examples of people being persuaded to go into residential care homes in the public sector which are more expensive than appropriate and suitable accommodations available in the independent sectors.

Mr. Hinchliffe *rose*——

Mr. Bowis: I am responding to an intervention from my hon. Friend.

The Audit Commission is one of the monitoring organisations which consider the cost and value for money of community care, and I expect it to draw it to the attention of local authority social services departments should it find that that is the case. Of course, that will become apparent as the year progresses.

Mr. Hinchliffe: On the issue of the choice of people and the question of the use of local authority accommodation, is it not a simple fact that vast numbers of older people prefer to go into local authority accommodation because that accommodation is of a good standard, and especially because it is often located in areas where those people have lived all their lives? The Government are destroying that choice, because they are deliberately attempting to close down local authority accommodation. Where does the choice of local authority homes lie in the Government's policy?

Mr. Bowis: It is for local people, local authorities and local social services to decide the sort of provision they may or may not wish to provide in their own sector. It is also up to them to purchase, on behalf of people whose needs they have assessed, suitable accommodation in residential care where that is the preference—as opposed to domiciliary care—of the individual who has been assessed. That individual should then have a choice under our statutory direction of choice on the home to which he or she is directed. That choice can be there in the public sector as in the independent sectors.

What I am saying, what my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) is saying and what far too many care home managers and owners are saying, is that, all too often, that choice is not real in Labour authorities, which seek to promote their own homes at the expense of choice for the individuals who wish to choose homes in the independent sectors. I hope that the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) will begin to support us on that line, instead of showing his innate hostility to the private sector.

On bed blocking, the dire predictions of some people have also happily proved unfounded. Some parts of the country are reporting lower levels than before April. There have been some small isolated problems, for which local managers have been prepared and which they have been able to deal with, as we expected.

Joint working between local authorities and the national health service is also generally good. The agreements we required them to make on discharge arrangements and placements in nursing homes have had a positive effect, and there are welcome signs of commitment to joint development. That condition is one that I am repeating this year.

That is the big picture, but I have also been impressed by earlier reports of what it has been possible to achieve for individual users of services. For example, the lady with a husband suffering from dementia who wanted him to be cared for at home has been able to receive 28 hours of home help each week, district nursing, and two weeks' respite care in every six.

Another lady with significant health problems, who would previously have had to enter a residential care home, has been able to stay in her own home, thanks to a comprehensive package of care—meals on wheels, home help seven days a week, respite care to ease her isolation, district nursing, various aids and adaptations and a laundry service. All the ladies so worried about coping alone——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Where?

Mr. Bowis: Of course, the Opposition do not want to hear these things, because they are examples of the success of the policy. As I began by saying, they are only happy when they think that the policy is not working. If they will listen, I am giving examples of people who are benefiting from the policy, such as the lady who was so worried about coping alone that she was thinking of moving into residential care, but was reassured when her local authority arranged for someone to visit each night before she went to bed to ensure that the gas was turned off and the house was locked up.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bowis: In a minute.

Equally, I have seen good examples of the provision of residential care, such as the lady who woke up one night to find a burglar in her room and decided that she needed to move to a home for reassurance and company, and who was able to choose a home where friends of her Church of denomination were living.

Ms Jowell: I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House celebrate examples where community care is working well. Can the Minister tell the House which authorities these examples have been taken from?

Mr. Bowis: I wish that the hon. Lady would replace some Labour Front-Bench Members, because this is the first time that I have heard from Labour Members a recognition that the reforms are going well? When we produce examples selected——

Mr. Morgan: Where?

Mr. Bowis: —from around the country as a result of the monitoring process, the hon. Lady will celebrate those successes, even if Labour Front-Bench Members will not.

It has been said that the implementation of the community care reforms marked the beginning of a decade of change, rather than an overnight revolution. That is perfectly true. It is now clear that the early days of the reforms represent a satisfactory foundation for that decade —a view shared by many other observers, including the Audit Commission and the Association of Directors of Social Services. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition spokesman on health is in the wrong debate. This is about local authorities in England. If he listens, perhaps he will learn some lessons for Wales as well.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Given the Minister's flattery of my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), perhaps he will now answer her question and tell us which English authorities he drew his examples from.

Mr. Bowis: I have already told the hon. Gentleman that the examples come from a variety of areas of the country, and we could give him many more if he so wishes.

The point is that the policy's success is a tribute to the considerable efforts made up and down the country by local authorities, health authorities and users and carers. We need to be vigilant to ensure that that progress continues. I look forward to the next year of community care with some confidence, and I commend the report to the House.

10.46 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The Opposition welcome this opportunity to have an albeit brief debate on Special Grant Report (No. 10). I think that people would be alarmed if they knew how rarely we get the opportunity in the House to discuss such an important subject as community care. As the Minister said, the report contains the amount of grant to be made available to individual local authorities during the second year of operation of the changed community care arrangements.

In view of the Minister's comments, it is worth reminding the House that Labour supported the broad thrust of the community care provisions in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 as a means of unravelling the mess created by the Government's ill-thought-out, publicly funded expansion of private institutional care.

In many respects, the arrangements set out in the report are still constrained by the same Government preoccupation with the market that we heard throughout the Minister's speech. That preoccupation led to the need for the 1990 changes in the first place. Labour believe that as long as Government policy remains more concerned about the interests of private providers of care than about service users and their carers, genuine community care reform will remain a long way away.

As the Minister is well aware, the central motivation for the changes introduced last April was Exchequer anxiety over the soaring cost of DSS expenditure on income support claims made by residents of care and nursing homes. Following a change of policy in 1981, those rose from £11 million per annum to £2·5 billion per annum in the past financial year, and constituted a £10 billion investment in the resurrection of institutional care as the central plank of the Government's community care policy. A vast number of people entered private residential care and nursing homes without any formal assessment whatever, and many could and would have been able to remain in their own homes if some of those resources had been invested in genuine community care.

Last April's changes aimed to address what has been now recognised as the gross misuse of public funding. The Opposition fully supported the introduction of care planning at local authority level and, in particular, the arrangements for assessing care needs. Our worry, however, is that in the funding arrangements for both the first and the second year of care, the changes are placing deliberate barriers in the way of the achievement of progress in community care provision.

When the House debated the current year's funding arrangements on 11 February and 3 March 1993, as set out in the special grant reports 6 and 7, I made clear the Opposition's concern over the adequacy of grant mechanisms used for its distribution, and the requirement on local authorities to spend 85 per cent. of that in what the Government call the independent sector. I wish to reiterate some of these concerns tonight, but, before I do, perhaps I can issue one word of welcome to the Minister. He should make the best of it, as it might be the only one he gets.

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

The Minister is aware that the Opposition felt that the formula used to distribute the current year's special transitional grant was profoundly unfair, and that it verged on the bizarre. The grant was based 50 per cent. on the individual local authority's standard spending assessment and 50 per cent. on the previous income support claims by people in private care and nursing homes in the area. The nonsense of that formula was that it was weighted heavily in favour of councils with the most private care and nursing homes, despite the fact that many of the residents concerned originated from other local authority areas and had preserved their entitlement to continuing income support payments being unaffected by the changes.

I know that the Minister was concerned about the unfairness of the formula. He intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) during the debate on 3 March, and said:

> "the allocation is perhaps weighted towards rural areas—as opposed to the inner cities"—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 401.]

The Minister shares my concern about that point.

The unfairness of the formula to which I have referred was brought home to me most strongly when I went to an establishment in the constituency of my hon. Freind the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). Nightingale House, which may be known to the Minister, is a Jewish home which is jointly registered as a care and nursing home, and offers nearly 400 places. Many of the residents receive income support and their claims counted in the grant calculation for the local authority in which the home is situated, even though most of the claimants originated from other local authority areas.

It is clearly coincidental that the local authority gaining grant in this way is Wandsworth, because, in certain other respects, that authority, like nearly all London boroughs and many metropolitan authorities, lost out badly under the formula used during the current year. If the funding had been distributed on the basis of SSA—as it will be in 1994-95—Wandsworth would have nearly £900,000 more in its existing budget.

The fact that London boroughs alone lost nearly £25 million as a result of the first year of community care changes puts the Secretary of State's announcement last Thursday of an extra £10 million for London's mental health provision into some perspective.

Regardless of arguments about the overall care funding, the majority of local authorities—68 out of 108—lost substantially on the grant that they received during the first year. Sheffield lost over £2 million, Southwark lost £1·7 million, and Leeds lost £1·3 million. Smaller authorities such as Wakefield—my own local authority—lost nearly £1 million. Those are huge chunks of resources which should have been made available on the basis of the Government's calculation of population needs.

Many councils have struggled desperately to make decent care available against a background of the totally inadequate special transitional grant and, according to the Association of Directors of Social Services, alongside spending freezes and cuts in the base budgets of social services departments in the current year. The association obviously welcomes the fact that the Government have abandoned their previously discredited distribution formula and, in this report, are moving to SSA as a basis for the formula.

While the Opposition applaud the Government's long-overdue conversion to common sense, we would strongly press the Minister to address the problems that have arisen during this first year because the formula was completely wrong.

First, the Minister should address the serious difficulties facing those authorities that have lost out on millions of pounds in the current year. Secondly—this point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley); my hon. Friend has left the Chamber, but he made an important point—the Minister should recognise that authorities that gained in the first year will, in many instances, come down to earth with a severe bump as a result of the contents of the report. The Government have bungled the funding arrangements badly and made the proper planning of community care year on year a total impossibility.

The original funding formula was badly skewed because the Government acceded to pressure from the private care home industry, which feared the impact of the care changes. The difficulties facing so many local authorities stem from the fact that the Government take more notice of the business interests of private providers than the needs of users and carers. They relate to a manifestly inappropriate market ideology at Government level, which is holding back in so many ways properly planned and thought-out responses to the needs of users and carers. The Minister's speech was full of phrases such as "use of the independent sector". The Government's policy is not to provide what people positively choose or need. It is use of the independent sector, right or wrong. That is not good enough.

The Government have conceded that their previous distribution formula was wrong. But in this report, they continue to shackle the development of genuine community care, again by insisting that 85 per cent. of the special transitional grant should be spent in the so-called independent sector. That requirement stems purely and simply from an ideological desire by the Government to protect the interests of private care providers and extend their involvement into domiciliary care.

The Government are again putting their obsession with market forces before the real interests of those who receive services. That obsession is clearly preventing the provision of a range of services geared to offering alternatives to institutional care.

I am sure that the Minister will be aware that social services directors and local authority associations have urged the Government to review their 85 per cent. requirement because it obstructs proper community care provision. I have no doubt that the Department of Health's intelligence networks have advised the Minister that in the past few weeks the Labour party has undertaken a survey of directors of social services on the impact of the 85 per cent. requirement. We shall publish the detailed results within the next few weeks and, as usual, I shall sent the Minister a copy.

The initial findings of the survey are worrying. It is clear from the range of responses received that the 85 per cent. requirement means for many people unnecessary admissions to residential care because in various parts of the country private or voluntary sector domiciliary care remains either non-existent or minimal. It says a great deal about the Government's priorities on community care that they are prepared to see unnecessary and expensive institutional care used inappropriately because of a dogmatic refusal to allow special transitional grants to be used to extend and improve local authority care home provision.

The Minister will recall that, shortly before Christmas, the chief social services inspector and the chief executive of the national health service management executive wrote local authorities a letter saying that their decisions on community care expenditure should be based on value-for-money grounds. But we have been told by local authorities in the survey that we have undertaken in the past couple of weeks that the requirement to spend 85 per cent. in the independent sector is bringing them into direct conflict with that directive. It is causing them to misuse and waste their scarce resources in unnecessary admissions to institutional care. Will the Minister state which directive has precedence—the 85 per cent. requirement or the Laming-Langlands letter? I shall give way if the Minister wishes to respond to this point because I could do with a drink of water.

Mr. Bowis: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said in response to his intervention in my speech, he would recall that I reminded him that, in the past, what is represented by the 85 per cent. for the independent sector was 100 per cent. for the independent sector. We are talking about the money that previously went direct to the independent sector to look after the residents in those homes. Substantial resources are available from the social services general budget which traditionally have been used to support people in part III homes and in domiciliary and day care.

I should like to know what the hon. Gentleman is doing to ensure that authorities controlled by his party look to use that money sensibly, wisely and in the best interests of individuals. It is in their interests that the widest possible choice is made available. That includes, of course, the services provided by the independent sectors, private and voluntary.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The House will have noticed that the Minister failed to answer the question that I put to him. I repeat that question. Does the 85 per cent. requirement take precedence over the Laming-Langlands letter? It is as simple as that. The House requires an answer—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister has now received a message from his officials, I shall willingly give way to him again.

We have clear evidence that the 85 per cent. requirement is forcing people into unnecessary and expensive institutional care that they do not need. Local authority directors are telling us that, and they must be telling the Department of Health. What will the Minister do to unravel that mess? Does he wish to intervene?

Mr. Bowis *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hinchliffe: He does not wish to do so—the House will draw its own conclusions from that.

I want to make it clear that the Opposition's argument is not simply that there has been an underinvestment in community care. The Government, through their obsession with private provision—which the Minister mentioned throughout his speech—have grossly misused the resources provided.

What could have been achieved if much of the £10 billion investment, through supplementary benefit and income support payments in private residential and nursing homes, had been used instead to develop real community care where people need it? People need home care, day care, day and night sitting services, meals provision, communication technology, aids and adaptation, respite provision and the range of mental welfare services that can provide safe and caring alternatives to psychiatric hospitals. What could have been achieved if the Government had not abandoned community care to the market?

The Government are now trapped. Private home owners are screaming at them because referrals for permanent care are falling—we have heard their views represented tonight by Conservative Back Benchers. How sad it is that the Government seem to see their task as ensuring a continued and wholly inappropriate use of outdated institutional provision simply because it is in the private sector. The Opposition recognise that the non-statutory sector has a role to play in care provision, but that role has to advance the development of community care, not hold it back.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): If the hon. Gentleman means what he says, why does he not encourage social service departments to promote the development of the private sector in domiciliary and home help services rather than obstruct their development?

Mr. Hinchliffe: Unlike, I suspect, the hon. Gentleman, I worked for many years in a social services department. When dealing with someone in need, one does not bother about which sector provides the services, but merely tries to provide for that person's needs. The hon. Gentleman suggests that social services departments, with all their massive daily pressures, should have to spend time on trying to find entrepreneurs, who simply do not exist in many areas.

The second issue that the hon. Gentleman should consider is that such providers are not regulated or inspected. They are not registered, and could come straight out of prison or from the courts, with all sorts of convictions. They could enter people's homes and offer domiciliary and physical care. They could be dealing with an old person's finances—the Labour party do not believe that such people should offer community care.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman paints a picture of a divided Britain that I find distressing. In my local district, the purchasing authority has made it perfectly clear that it will not buy services from people who do not meet the standards that it has laid down. It has had no difficulties, and I do not understand why other local authorities cannot make the same decisions.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes an interest in social services, for which I commend him. But he has missed a fundamental aspect of the checks and guidelines on domiciliary care, as has the Minister. We are assuming—as the Minister does constantly—that all domiciliary care is provided through the contracting process. Vast numbers of elderly and disabled people purchase domiciliary care directly, without the involvement of the local authority. They have no safeguards. The fact that the Government are not acting on that is disgraceful, and the Minister knows it.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. Greatly increased resources are available to social services departments. He said that he used to work in a social services department; I bet that he never had a year such as Wakefield did this year, with resources increasing from

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£29 million to £40 million. More money is available, and if we are asking for a proportion of that to be spent in the independent sector, that means more money for domiciliary care in the independent sector, over which there is control through the contractor. We are able to ensure that standards are required of the voluntary or private sector placing tenders for domiciliary services.

The problem is that too many authorities run by the hon. Member's party refuse to put out a specification so that the independent sector can tender at all.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am happy to debate until the cows come home the position of Wakefield social services and its financial situation. Nobody was more surprised than the acting director of social services in Wakefield when the Minister quoted those figures last Tuesday. I have a letter here which, if the Minister cares to read it, I will pass over to him and which shows that the way in which the Minister has come to calculate the questions is beyond everybody in Wakefield.

If the transitional grant is put to one side, there is to be a real reduction in the revenue budget for 1994-95 of £400,000, in order that the council can avoid being capped. When the Minister talks about SSA, special transitional grant and all the other things that he mentions, he seems to forget that, although we are being given all these generous resources, local authorities, including a responsible local authority such as Wakefield, are also being capped. I am proud of my local authority and I will debate with the Minister, if he wishes, the issues of deep concern to me in my own locality.

I was saying that the Opposition genuinely recognise that the non-statutory sector has a role to play when it is developing community care, innovating, offering new services; but the sad fact is that in so many respects the private sector, in particular, is hanging on to outdated models of institutional provision that are totally inappropriate to this day and age.

I have certainly seen in the private sector excellent examples that can offer something of genuine relevance to people's comunity care needs. I have looked in some detail, as I think the Minister is aware, at communication technology, where what is on offer from the private sector enhances real choices and opportunities for those in need of care and does not hold back the development of community care, as is unfortunately happening in some respects at present.

I urge the Minister seriously to consider the problem being caused by the 85 per cent. requirement. I am not suggesting that he drop the specific quota in its entirety, as I understand the need to safeguard the voluntary sector, in particular, for example, in those areas concerning drug and alcohol provision where the voluntary sector has a specific role to play—a role of which the Minister is well aware and which, like me, he values very much. But the 50:50 split suggested by the local authority associations would, I am sure, enable a radical improvement in care provision and overcome many of the problems that I have mentioned.

The Minister has again implied that the Government have been somehow generous in their special transitional grant provision. It is important to make it clear that the STG is money for new local authority responsibilities which would have been spent anyway by the Department of Social Security. May I press him again on the point that he did not answer in last week's health Question Time and which he has not referred to tonight? If the funding is, as he suggests, so generous, why are the Government urging local authorities to introduce charges for basic care services that have been freely provided in many areas from the time that they were first introduced? He must be aware that that is a matter of huge concern in various parts of the country, especially, for example, to the parents of young people with learning disabilities who find themselves being charged quite high prices for the attendance of their sons and daughters at day care establishments. Many people feel that to be totally inappropriate and highly insensitive. I should welcome the Minister's comments on that point.

Our debate takes place against the background of growing public concern about the Government's community care policy. As the Minister knows, my party has consistently supported the development of community care, but we recognise that the Government's commitment to market forces in health and care obstructs and undermines strategic planning at national and local level and the achievement of a seamless service.

It is an unfortunate coincidence that tonight's debate takes place only a few days after the publication of two separate reports concerning the care of the mentally ill, both of which expose the fundamental contradictions of Government policy. The first, with which the Minister will be familiar, was commissioned by the North West Thames health authority and found that managers of a proposed health trust were so obsessed with achieving trust status that they neglected disturbing shortcomings in care that may have contributed to the deaths of some 14 patients.

The second report concerns the case of Mr. Christopher Clunis. I am surprised that the Minister did not refer to that important and tragic case. Mr. Clunis, who suffered from schizophrenia, caused the death of Mr. Jonathan Zito in December 1992. The report clearly demonstrates that the Government have yet to start proper co-ordination and collaboration of care provision at a local level. It exposes how the lack of resources contributed to that appalling tragedy and shows how limited the alternatives to hospital care still are.

I am genuinely sorry that the Secretary of State, who is not present in the Chamber tonight, chose to try to make political capital out of this issue at the weekend, singling out a Labour council for specific mention, when page 105 of the report clearly states:

> "We do not single out just one person, service or agency for particular blame".

I pay sincere tribute to Jonathan Zito's widow, Jayne, who, since her husband's death, has campaigned ceaselessly and courageously for proper care and help to be given to the likes of Christopher Clunis. I urge the Minister to listen to her message—a message not of vengeance and malice but of genuine concern for the likes of her husband's killer who, as she says, have been condemned to a life of degradation and poverty. On Thursday, she said:

> "It is not enough to make a market out of mental health. These people need care and supervision. You cannot compete when you are dealing with people's lives".

For those very reasons and the other concerns that I have expressed, I urge all hon. Members who share our anxieties about community care to join us in the No Lobby at the end of the debate.

11.11 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): May I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the 20th anniversary yesterday of your arrival in this House? My hon. Friends and I hope that it will be many years before you require community care.

I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) because he attended the conference on the Isle of Wight when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the ring fencing of funds for community care. I know from recent conversations with the hon. Gentleman how seriously he takes community care. He observed me in the Members' car park with my car engine running and was so concerned about my welfare that he returned three hours later to make sure that I was all right.

On the Isle of Wight, 26·4 per cent. of the population are of pensionable age. That is the 17th highest percentage in England and Wales, where the national average is 18·7 per cent. Moreover, 18·8 per cent. of households consist of one pensioner living alone, which is 3·7 per cent. above the national average of 15·1 per cent. Care in the community is, therefore, of considerable importance to the island.

I wish to raise two points. The first concerns Haylands farm at Ryde, which was formed under the auspices of Mencap in 1977 and provides sheltered work for mentally handicapped students. It has a number of sheep and goats, sells 300 eggs locally, and rears pigs that are sold as meat. The farm extends to more than 16 acres, most of which are owned by the Isle of Wight county council, which charges a fair and unsubsidised rent. One acre is owned by Mencap.

The farm is entirely supported by donations of money and its own manpower and materials. It is now recognised as a day centre unit by the Isle of Wight county council and receives very limited funding. The local authority should purchase the services and facilities offered by the farm under the care in the community legislation. The farm meets all the requirements of a provider of services but does not get much of the cash. For the past three years, the county council has promised to put the farm on a permanent financial basis but, unfortunately, it still staggers from month to month. A number of us on the island are concerned that that excellent facility continues to have that problem.

My second point is about the concerns of members of the Isle of Wight Registered Care Homes Association. We seem to have made a little progress on funding. When the funding was first announced, we were told that it would run out in July. We are now told that it might stretch until September. Clearly, things have moved on a little.

I should like to explore the possibility of using any notified underspending by councils against their 1993-94 special transitional grant allocation. First, let me make it quite clear that the Isle of Wight county council has not suffered a cut in community care funding in 1993-94. The council received £2·354 million in special transitional grant funding. The figure for 1994-95 is £3·376 million, an increase of just under £1 million on the pervious year. I should like my hon. Friend to tell me in due course whether he has yet reached a decision on the possibility of the unused STG money being reallocated to the Isle of Wight and I hope to hear from him shortly as to whether that is possible.

There is and always has been considerable mistrust on the island between the councillors and the private sector. To try to reduce that, I asked the private sector to set up its own association, which it did, and by and large that has done a great deal to break down the barriers of suspicion and mistrust so often voiced by Liberal councillors about the private sector when I was a county councillor. The private sector still has misgivings about the county councillors' operation of Islecare and the way it was financed, the subsidies that the county council day care facilities receive and the almost total lack of opportunity for the private sector to participate in the provision of those care facilities. Having said that, while I would like to see the councillors take a step back from the management of the companies providing these facilities, as well as the residential homes in competition with the private sector, the district auditor might yet feel compelled to insist that the whole arrangement must become more transparent and arm's length—at least, I hope so.

Despite that caveat, community care is working well on the island, and to some extent I suspect that part of the difficulty is the fact that so many elderly people are now being maintained in their own homes—the very intention of community care. However, I believe—and the Minister's letter shows—that the formula has worked against the interests of the Isle of Wight this year and that there is a problem.

I consider it my job to separate the hype and attention-seeking tendencies of the leader of the council whose ability to deploy extravagant language has created more tension in the Isle of Wight than Lindy St. Clair's stays and whose contribution to a reasoned debate is about as welcome as woodworm in a rowing boat, but I would be remiss not to bring the concerns of Haylands farm and the Isle of Wight Registered Care Homes Association to the attention of my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

As so often happens in the House, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. I therefore leave the last word to Mike Leyshon, the editor of the association's newsletter entitled, "Homing In". On page 17 he writes:

> "What are we really faced with here? A few less social service funded placements each. A faster rate of contraction of our market than originally predicted. A dozen or so businesses pushed over the edge on which they may have been teetering for some time. It may be most care homes will survive this year's struggle, some may even prosper".

11.18 pm

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): The report that we are discussing tonight gives us a rare chance to debate community care, an issue of great importance to many constituents of many right hon. and hon. Members.

Unfortunately, we are limited tonight to debating the money that the Government consider sufficient to fund community care and how they have decided that that money should be allocated.

On the first point, it is quite clear to me that the resources that the Government have allocated to fund care in the community are totally inadequate. One need not take my word for it; one has just to read the report of the inquiry into the Christopher Clunis case. In what has been universally acclaimed an excellent report—including by Jonathan Zito's widow, Jayne—the inquiry team declared that the care and treatment of Christopher Clunis was a "catalogue of failure and missed opportunity in which lack of resources played a part."

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) raised the Clunis case. It is a

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tragic case. We take it seriously, as indeed we would any other instance of a breakdown in the care of people with mental health problems. But the hon. Lady should recall and remind the House that the Clunis-Zito case pre-dates community care. We are talking about a case in 1992, as the hon. Gentleman acknowledged. We are now talking about resources for community care that started on 1 April 1993. The hon. Lady should recall that the background to that case and the report, as the hon. Gentleman said, mentioned a number of areas in terms of discharge, information, communication and so on. Reference was made to the resources for medium-secure units, particularly in London, but that does not relate to the report, important as it is.

Ms Lynne: I am grateful to the Minister. He must realise, however, that the report stated that lack of resources played a part. We must address that in this debate on resources for community care. I do not think that we can ignore it. I know that other parts of the report stress that lack of monitoring was a problem. I sincerely wish that when the Government brought in care in the community —I am grateful that they did—they had set up the proper monitoring. If they had, we might not be in the state that we are now in. Resources played a part and there is no way that the Government can get away from that fact.

Mr. Bowis: That was before community care.

Ms Lynne: It might have been before community care, but that does not make it—*[Interruption.]* The lack of resources is still there—*[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to continue with my speech? In response to that, the Secretary of State announced a further £10 million—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be most grateful if the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) would either listen to the hon. Lady, who is making an important speech, or retire—*[Interruption.]* Order. I do not know who the hon. Gentleman is pointing to, but I am not interested. He should either stay quiet and listen to the hon. Lady or go out of the Chamber.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. The point that she is making is important. In response to her comments on the Clunis case, the Minister seems to imply that community care suddenly began on 1 April last year. Community care has existed for generations, before most if not all those in the Chamber tonight were born. She is right to say that of course community care existed when the Clunis tragedy happened. The Minister must address that fact.

Ms Lynne: I agree with the hon. Gentleman about that.

Mr. Bowis: The point is that this tragic case pre-dates community care as funded under the report this year, and the report of last year.

Mr. Morgan: That is not what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Bowis: It is exactly what I said.

Mr. Morgan: No, it is not.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Order.

Mr. Bowis: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Lady should address her remarks to the resources for community care that she would like to see, bearing in mind that over the four years we are raising them to £2·2 billion.

Ms Lynne: I am grateful to the Minister. I will reach that point in my speech, but we must take into account the Christopher Clunis report, because it was extremely damning of the Government. It is essential to remember that.

What was the response by the Secretary of State for Health? She announced a further £10 million for mental health care in the capital. That is a nice round figure, and appears to be generous, but do we have any idea whether that is enough? I do not think that we do, because there is no monitoring system. Will that money be new, or will it be diverted from another cash-starved programme? I would like the Minister to answer that when he replies.

Another illuminating comment arising from the Clunis inquiry was in section 52.0.1 of the report, which says:

"it has been noticeable how little routine attention appears to have been paid by anybody to the quality or outcome measurement of the community management of mentally ill people."

The report added, in section 52.0.2:

"purchasers do not know what they are buying nor do providers know what they are selling. No one has a means of telling whether the community service provided is an effective or an efficient use of resources."

Essentially, no one knows what they are doing, how much it costs or whether they are meeting the needs of the people whom they are meant to serve.

How, then, did the Government reach the conclusion that £10 million was enough? How, for that matter, did they reach the conclusion that the money that we are debating tonight was adequate for the various needs that must be met by social services departments across the country? The Government need to set standards for community care, and then openly determine the resources that are needed to meet those standards. If that is more than they can currently afford to pay, let them at least have the decency to be honest with the electorate and say so. Perhaps they could also consider giving the electorate the freedom to decide whether they want more resources to be spent on community care.

If we cannot be convinced that the Government have provided enough resources for community care nationally, can we be convinced that the available resources have been distributed fairly? Again, I am not convinced. Last year, the DSS transfer was distributed in a way that took into account the historic income support expenditure. As I am sure hon. Members know, that was done to take account of the past costs to the DSS of supporting people in residential and nursing homes.

It had been suggested that the use of past income support data would continue for the next few years, although it would be tapered off. Instead, the Government have decided to rely entirely on the standard spending assessment as the means of calculating the amount required by each local authority. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) pointed out in a debate on this issue last year, it has been admitted by many—including the Government, or so it seemed at the time—that the SSA system was not right.

At that time, there was a commitment to review the system. Has that review taken place, and did it take community care responsibilities into account? Did the

Minister or his Department consult local councils? I am sure that such consultation must have taken place, but I should be delighted to hear that from the Minister. Did he and his Department ask local authority representative bodies for their views on the decision?

It is possible that the decision to rely wholly on the SSA will not affect all regions, although a social services director in my region said that it was too early to say. There is particular concern, however, in areas with especially high numbers of older people. Many retired people have moved to one of our pleasant coastal towns, and social services departments in such areas fear that the SSA does not take into account the effect of that movement. In the south-west, for example, more that £35 million has been taken away; not surprisingly, that is regarded as a devasting blow to the region.

Although any money for community care is welcome, it still concerns me that there is not enough, and that the Government are not open in how they determine what is needed and where it is needed. I also hope that the Minister will look again at the requirement to spend 85 per cent. in the independent sector; I am sure that many social services directors have asked him to do so. I hope that some of my concerns can be remedied.

11.28 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I shall be brief, but I think it important to contribute my view that community care is working a great deal better than the picture painted by Opposition Members suggests. Recently I met representatives of two of my local health trusts, along with the social services departments and local general practitioners. Morale was extraordinarily high; tribute was paid to the work done by care managers and the way in which they work together to ensure that patients' transition from hospital into the community is as smooth as possible. That is very encouraging.

Sod's law dictates that, as I speak, something is going badly wrong somewhere in a case in Kent. There are millions of relationships every day between social service staff, the private or public sector and individual clients and inevitably things will go wrong. One of the things that has been remarkable about the development of community care in Kent is the willingness of local staff of social services departments, the health department, the general practices, the caring organisations and the voluntary organisations to work together to achieve as good an outcome as possible for their clients.

Speaking as a Member of Parliament, I point out that we have had a dramatic decrease in the number of letters complaining about the way in which people are cared for and I believe that that reflects great credit on the development of community care in Kent. Of course, there are shortcomings. There always will be. We have a rapidly escalating number of people aged over 65; we have a growing number of young people coming from broken homes. Everyone knows that. We could spend twice or three times as much and still be asking for more.

I have drawn the attention of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), to the fact that my local social services people are a little anxious about the cost of some of the equipment that is required to enable people to stay in their own homes. I have no doubt that in the years to come we shall have to consider carefully the sophistication and technological advances of equipment which makes it possible for people to stay in their own homes but which is very expensive.

I believe that we shall also need to make rapid progress towards giving the public the assurance that social workers are properly qualified. Everyone knows that some staff in social services departments have had an exhaustive training whereas others have not. The introduction of national vocational qualifications has made, or will make, a dramatic difference to the self-confidence and competence of many staff, especially residential care staff and domiciliary staff. I welcome it enormously. I hope, however, that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is taking seriously the many occasions on which I and others have urged him to make progress with the social work council, because I think that it is not fair to attack social workers for a lack of professional self-confidence and competence while denying them the right to register as fully qualified professionals or, at any rate, giving them a level of competence that the public can recognise. They may not be fully qualified, but if at least there were a council which said what their qualifications were, the expectations of them would become more realistic.

I strongly believe that community care has been a tremendous improvement on what went before. A vast amount remains to be done, but I have to pay tribute to the remarkable way in which all the people concerned, as far as I can see, in my county, where they have been pioneers in the development of social services, are working together, and to their very clear perception that they are only at the beginning of the type of fruitful relationship that will result in ever-increasing improvements in the care delivered to clients in the community.

11.33 pm

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): There is nothing that divides the House about the desirability of community care. It is beyond dispute that elderly or disabled people are best, and indeed prefer to be, cared for in their own homes for as long as possible. What Opposition Members find so frustrating is the extent to which ideology has replaced a practical debate about what will deliver that objective for elderly and disabled people throughout the country.

I pressed the Minister to give the names of the authorities and people for whom community care was working so well and I recognised them all because of my previous work with the Labour-controlled authorities in Birmingham and Islington and with my present council, in Southwark. They are good news and we should celebrate them. They should not be the subject of ideological point scoring.

Opposition Members are concerned to persuade the Government to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of the community care that people want and need being delivered to people in their own homes. What users of community care and their carers tell us time and again is pretty consistent. It is of little importance who provides what they get. In many cases, people do not even know who provides the care that they receive. A recent study shows that about 40 per cent. of people thought that social security was provided by the local authority.

Flexibility, reliability and affordability are what matters. Research evidence about what residents of homes for the elderly value shows that it has little to do with

[Ms Tessa Jowell]

whether the home is run by the local authority or by an independent provider. However, elderly people view the sudden and often unannounced changes of management that are a feature of the private sector as one of the most disruptive influences. Homes change owners about every three years—that is a good run—and every change is profoundly disrupting for the elderly residents.

The Minister talked about local authorities giving preference to putting people into their homes, when the Government have erected every obstacle to local authorities continuing to act as providers of residential care. The role of local authorities in the provision of that care for the elderly has never been more important. Elderly people are being admitted, on average, to residential care when they are 10 years older than they were 10 years ago —*[Laughter.]* Will hon. Members just listen to my point, because it is a serious matter?

Ten years ago people were admitted to residential care when they were in their early 70s, but the average age for admission now is the early 80s, when people are much more frail and dependent. Invariably, their care needs are beyond the resources of most independent, private care homes. It is relatively easy to find an independent care home for someone who is not dependent, incontinent or demented. It is much more difficult to find a place in the private sector for an elderly person who requires that level of care. The local authority, therefore, has to provide the essential backstop of reliable, available care. The Government have put every conceivable obstacle—financial and otherwise—in the way of local authorities trying to continue to offer that choice to the relatives of elderly people contemplating residential care.

My constituents have little access to nursing homes locally—I believe that there are about 12 nursing home beds in the whole of Southwark. If my constituents need to be admitted to a nursing home, they have to move many miles away to get the care that they need, which makes journeys difficult for families who wish to visit them. That leads me to another component of the complex web of factors which cannot be ignored in judging the success of community care.

One reason why the independent or private nursing home sector has grown at such a rate is that it is an aspect of care which was previously provided free of charge by the national health service and which is now almost entirely in the private sector. If one is looking for an element of care which was previously provided free by the health service and which has now been effectively privatised, one needs look no further than nursing home care for elderly people.

I refer now to some of the comments made in the wake of the thorough inquiry into the murder of Jonathan Zito by Christopher Clunis. I think that all hon. Members will accept that the Christopher Clunis case sets back the cause of community care by 20 years. One tragedy obscures the hundreds of thousands of success stories that have been part of community care for people with mental illness for the best part of 30 years.

It is important not to forget what a long haul mental illness is for many people who may suffer from it for most of their life. I was reminded of that recently when I opened the Ivydale centre in my constituency. It provides excellent community mental health support for people living in south Southwark. I met again three or four regular users of the centre whom I knew from working as a psychiatric social worker at the Maudsley day hospital in the early 1970s. For them, mental illness and the certainty of a recurrence is a way of life.

I remember very well a man whom I will call Terry. He is in touch with people who use the Ivydale centre. When I worked at the Maudsley day hospital, he was being admitted for the 17th time. The consultant psychiatrist reminded everyone that it was a cause for celebration that he had stayed out for three weeks longer than ever before. It is no good regarding care for people who suffer from mental illness as a series of one-off, acute episodes. It is important to consider the type of care that will support people who become chronically ill for the rest of their life.

The conclusions of the Christopher Clunis inquiry make it important that the debate is conducted on the basis of fact, not muddied by some of the myths that are creeping in as a substitute for fact. How many Christopher Clunises are there likely to be? About 1 per cent. of the population suffers from schizophrenia and, of that 1 per cent., a further 1 per cent. is likely to become seriously mentally ill as Christopher Clunis became seriously mentally ill—a top estimate of no more than 4,000 at any one time.

We also need to remember that all those people who have committed serious offences while disturbed were known to their local services, all were young, and none had ever been long-stay patients in hospitals. So their circumstances had nothing to do with the closure of long-stay mental hospitals. However, what the Christopher Clunis inquiry has raised so sharply is need, and the desperate need in south-east London, for guaranteed funding for the number of medium secure places needed for people who suffer from serious mental illness so that the rest of the mental health services can function properly. I hope that the Minister will give a guarantee that such places will be provided.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will my hon. Friend highlight one more important aspect of the Clunis case —the fact that the introduction of the market system has made self-referral almost impossible in inner London and other inner city areas for people suffering from an acute illness? The introduction of the contract system has eradicated self-referral within the system, which in turn makes it almost impossible for the individual concerned to seek emergency services.

Ms Jowell: I shall bring my remarks quickly to a close, but I must reiterate my concern that medium secure places in south-east London should receive the planned funding that is needed, and that the Government's current proposal to require 75 per cent. of funding for people who are mentally abnormal offenders to be met from capitation funding should be dropped.

11.47 pm

Mr. Hinchliffe: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make one or two concluding comments. I am pleased to follow the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), who speaks with such great knowledge and experience of the issues before us. I repeat what she said—that we want community care to be a success. Although there are significant differences between us, which have been aired tonight, there is a consensus in the House that we all wish to aim in that direction.

I shall reinforce some points that have been made by other hon. Members and make one or two points that have not yet been made. The position of carers is one of the issues that we have not touched on specifically, and there should have been more comment on it in the context of the report. Carers do not now have any statutory right to demand a service or even an assessment. Moreover, in the present arrangements for community care there is no provision for grievance procedures after assessment, for appeals on assessment or for reassessment or review, which would often be helpful.

The other question that worries many people in social services is the confusion that has arisen concerning the measurement of unmet need. Local authorities appear to have been discouraged from making a note of unmet need —yet surely the Minister must accept that measurement of a national care deficit would help any Government to address the problems that we face in developing a proper community care policy.

It would have been helpful if there had been some discussion on the problems arising from the rundown of the Independent Living Fund, which to my knowledge is having an impact on community care in many cases. The limit of £500 is pushing people into institutional care when that could have been avoided. According to parliamentary answers that I have received, that is happening in various parts of the country. Housing provision, too, should have been touched upon, because in anybody's book housing is one of the most fundamental elements of community care.

There have also been some important contributions on wider issues connected with social work. I commend the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for his reference to a general social services council. He made a point that Ministers should take up. It is no good people, especially Conservative Members, bashing social workers about lack of professionalism when social workers themselves are saying that they want a professional body that will regulate and ensure good standards. The Government cannot sit back and ignore the demands of the profession for such an important body.

The significant and profound difference in ideology between speeches by Opposition Members and most of those by Conservative Members has come across clearly. The differences really do come down to what my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich called ideology. The Minister was obsessed with the need to use the independent and private sector, and his speech was riddled with comments on that theme.

The speech of the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) consisted of his desire to see beds filled in private homes. Conservative Members see care as a business. That is the fundamental difference between the Government and the Opposition. Community care is not a business. Community care is about addressing the real needs of vast numbers of people which will not be met by simply leaving the provision to the market.

11.50 pm

Mr. Bowis: May I reply to some of the points which were raised? The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) raised a number of items which he said were not addressed. Let us concentrate on those that were. He referred to the question of charging, which is, of course, one way in which to bring a contribution from users into the provision of social services. It is discretionary. It is always supposed to be according to ability to pay and not to exceed that and it is perfectly reasonable.

My hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) raised an important point about the Mencap home. I hope that the Isle of Wight social services will listen to the points that he made and we shall certainly consider that further with him. He also referred to matters affecting the island's budget. He will know, as I know, that the island's budget for social services as a whole will rise by 12·4 per cent. in the current year. He will know as I know that the authorities there have had problems in the past because of their especial cost of fire prevention provision, being an island. He will also know, because we have discussed it before, that in social services we cannot take on board the other aspects of local government funding. The island's council has to use its resources efficiently and sensibly. I must say to him that his director of social services was the only one in the whole country who had not understood that the money from the first year's transitional grant was going to the standard spending assessment in the second year. We shall consider the points that my hon. Friend raised on the question of the underspent reallocation.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) referred to the allocation for her borough. That represents an increase in the current year of 12·7 per cent. for Rochdale. She also referred to the south-west and, in the case of Devon, there has been a 13·5 per cent. increase in total resources in the current year and an increase of 17·7 per cent. for Cornwall. I hope that she will tell her political friends in that part of the world that that settlement is generous. It requires in return the efficient use of resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) was correct in his assessment of what has been achieved. He talked of good progress and that is the message which has come from all the monitoring that we have conducted in the first 11 months of community care. The right assessment is that good progress has been made and that there is more progress to be made. It is a programme for a decade, not for one year, and we shall build on that. My hon. Friend referred to the general social services council. I have discussed that with him before and I know how closely he is associated with the arguments on that issue. It is certainly an issue which we are considering and we shall have to see the sort of social work level of qualification which one may consider in such a council. Other hon. Members referred to a council which would cover everybody working in social work. There are different arguments, but we welcome the debate.

The hon. Members for Rochdale, for Wakefield, for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) and others referred to the tragic Clunis case. It is not directly relevant to the debate because it pre-dates the way in which we fund community care and goes beyond it. Nevertheless, I accept the points that have been raised about the need to take on board the lessons of that and other comparable cases if we are to reassure the public, people who have mental health problems, their families and the professionals as a whole. Let nobody suggest that we are not doing just that. It is not only a question of £10 million in response to that inquiry. That was an important £10 million towards resources in London, but it is by no means the whole answer. The whole answer begins with the £2 billion that we are putting into mental health provision in the current year and it continues

[Mr. Bowis]

through the code of practice, which I am sure that the hon. Member for Dulwich recalls was laid before Parliament in the past year and is now revised and in current usage. The whole answer also refers to the £45 million programme for the medium secure unit building programme. It refers to the key workers training, which is so important and on which I shall be addressing a conference later in the week. It refers to the supervision register which we are requiring should be in the programme by 1 April for contracts from from that time.

It applies to the discharge guidelines on which we are consulting at present. It applies to the supervised discharge and extended leave proposals for which we are awaiting legislation. It applies to the £20 million homeless mentally ill initiative, which supports 2,000 people in the community. It applies to the £35 million supporting £50 million of specific grant—800 schemes supporting 64,000 people.

We are talking about the cost of community care doubling from £565 million to £1·2 billion this year. We are talking about £6·4 billion for social services, which is an increase of 48 per cent. in real terms since 1990-91. I have no hesitation in asking the House to support the generous settlement for this year which is provided in the report for the benefit of people in community care.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 185, Noes 52.

Division No. 152] **[11.54 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Irvine Patnick, and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Barnes, Harry
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Caborn, Richard
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Primarolo, Dawn

Simpson, Alan	
Skinner, Dennis	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*	**Mr. Hugh Bayley and**
Wray, Jimmy	**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm.**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 10) (House of Commons Paper No. 218), which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

12.6 am

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I understand that the purpose of Adjournment debates is to develop a personal and intimate relationship and dialogue with the Minister involved, so I hope that you will understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why my starting point this evening is to say something about my family. I have three children. I suspect that, like me, most Members would happily say that they would give their life for their children. It would be a different matter if I were asked whether I could give my life "to" them? And what would I do if that, in itself, were not enough? I take that as my starting point because one of my constituents, a man named Peter Jones, has had to confront precisely those questions in dealing with the issues facing the life of his son Ross.

The national press picked up the case of Ross Jones a few weeks ago. He is likely to be the last child to receive an award from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board before the Government's new rules come into force. I should like to say a bit about Ross. At the age of three, Ross was criminally battered. He barely lived. The fact that he has survived is a great tribute to the medical skills of those who dealt with him and to the love, affection and commitment of his father, grandmother and brothers.

Ross is now 14 years old. Only a matter of months separate him from the youngest of my children. I am somewhat humbled by the knowledge that, throughout the years that I have played football with my youngest son, Peter Jones has changed nappies for his son, Ross. Throughout the years that I have taken my children out careering around the countryside, Peter Jones has carried his son Ross everywhere they have gone. As I stand and look with a sense of excitement and optimism at the ability of my children to grow into independent adults, Peter Jones knows that his son will never experience that growth into independence. Ross will for ever be a child's mind trapped in an adult's body that does not really work.

The reward that Ross is likely to receive through the CICB will be about £1·3 million. The award will be based on an assessment of the actual damages that he has suffered and the "actual" costs of care entailed in supporting Ross and ensuring that his family are able to live with him in a caring and loving environment. He began to be carried around when he was three years old and his grandmother was in her 60s; he is now 14 years old and his grandmother is in her 70s and riven by arthritis, so the position has changed greatly. The family's greatest fear has been that they would not have the physical ability or financial resources to continue to provide the supportive and loving environment with which they have been able to surround him in the 11 years since he was criminally injured.

Despite everything, Ross is lucky. He comes from a remarkable family who have been able to give him a degree of care and love that is a tribute to the best parts of society. He is lucky in that he will have received the award before the changes in the rules. If Ross Jones's claim had been entered after this April, the maximum amount that he would have been able to receive would have been £250,000. His family would have been left in the dreadful position of having to decide what would be best for him. Would it be better for Ross to live a long life, drag them

[Mr. Alan Simpson]

into penury and be left, should he outlive them, in penury, isolation and loneliness himself? Or should they hope that he dies before the money runs out? That is an appalling choice to confront the victims of the most serious multiple criminal injuries. Yet it is precisely the choice with which such families will be confronted under the new scheme.

The danger is that Ross will be the last in a line of victims to be compensated for the actual injuries received, based on the actual costs of care that they will face for the rest of their lives. Instead, there will be a system of arbitrary tariffs. I do not think that the public outside the House can begin to understand or sympathise with the idea of a victim of child abuse receiving a maximum award of £1,000—the same amount as that awarded for a chipped tooth. I do not think that they will understand that rape victims should be entitled to a maximum of £7,500, the same as if they had suffered a fractured hip or a broken knee. They will not understand how victims of multiple rape should be entitled to a maximum award of £10,000. They will not understand how, for those who lose an eye, the award of £20,000 will apply whether the victim lost his or her eyesight at the age of eight or 80. In a world peopled by humans, the implications are far more complex.

The public will not understand the Government logic that proposes developing a new scheme around a framework that ignores the idea of separate calculations for loss of earnings, medical expenses or the consequences of medical multiple injuries.

Instead of a human-focused system of compensation and awards, we are moving towards a system of arbitrary ceilings. Not content with rate capping, it seems that the Government are now intent on death capping and disability capping. The police officer who, under the current system, having been attacked and having to retire permanently disabled, received an award of £121,167 would be cash-limited to £7,500 under the new scheme. The mother of two children—whose husband was stabbed to death and died on their doorstep—who received an award of £137,236 would be limited to £17,500.

There have been problems under the existing scheme, but the nature of those problems was clear: they were mainly to do with medical delays, with the absence of legal aid and with the lack of a statutory framework of criminal compensation on the same basis as the compensation available under civil law. What the Government propose is to move us from injustice to rough justice. It is, in fact, a movement towards no justice at all. The proposals seem to be about the abandoning or devaluing of the victim rather than putting the victim first. They are about having a crazy system which is tariff-centred and not people-centred. Fundamentally, they are about the saving of money.

On 31 March 1993, the then Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), wrote a letter to the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in which he said:

> "The real costs of the Scheme lie in the size of the compensation bill . . .[A] major element in the compensation bill is the size of the award . . .Once the basis on which payments are made is changed, with the tariff scheme, the linkage to common law damages and to their rate of increase will be broken."

The current Minister made it even clearer in his answer in *Hansard* on 3 February this year, when he pointed out the actual savings involved. There would be savings over a three-year period, with a 25 per cent. reduction, from £204 million to £153 million, in the amount expected to be paid out in criminal compensation. It would be an enormous figure for those actually making the claims, but we ought to put it in context. What are large amounts of money for victims of criminal attacks are small beer for the Government.

The figure needs to be seen against a different set of measures. It amounts to one third of 1 per cent. of the £13·8 billion of public debt that the Government wrote off in the privatisation of public industries. It is less than the £57·6 million "bung" that the Government tried to give to British Aerospace when they sought to palm off Rover on it, and which has now had to be repaid by British Aerospace.

It is against those sorts of figures that the scheme must really be judged. It is a shabby way to treat victims of serious crime. It is an insult to innocence. It is an affront to those who might have sustained their injuries by trying to prevent a crime rather than perpetrate one.

Outside the House, the Government need to understand that they barely have a supporter in the land. They have no backers among the public, who see this as a measure of the Government's contempt for them. The Victim Support campaign now has 37 organisations, including the Police Federation, the Prison Officers' Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Trades Union Congress and the General Council of the Bar, all of whom are flatly opposed to the tariff scheme that the Government seek to introduce. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, in its statement, told the Minister:

> "The intention throughout the history of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme has been that an individual victim of a crime of violence should be compensated in exactly the same way as he would have been had he sued his assailant in the Civil Court."

I presume that that would apply equally had the "he" been a "she". It then said:

> "the Board have repeatedly made clear to Ministers their considered view that, whilst sharing the aims of Ministers to provide as efficient and quick a service as possible, these proposals are fundamentally wrong."

Tomorrow, in another place, the Government will hear noble Lords of all parties roundly denounce the basis of the Government's proposals. If that is not enough, the Government should understand that their proposals would clearly breach the European convention on compensating victims of violent crime, article 4 of which makes it clear that

> "compensation shall cover at least loss of earnings, and in the case of dependants, loss of maintenance".

Last March, the Home Office Minister told the CICB that the reformed scheme would no longer offer compensation, but only

> "a tangible recognition of society's sympathy and concern for the victim".

Victims of crime do not want "tea and sympathy" from the Government. They want decency, equality before the law, justice and sufficiency. That is not much to ask in a society that claims to be civilised.

How do we begin to enshrine those principles in a framework of criminal injuries compensation? I suggest that we adopt a different notion of "back to basics", which involves setting out clear and simple principles. First, the victim of criminal injury should be treated no less favourably than someone similarly injured who obtains compensation through the civil court—a system based on common law damages. Second, compensation must incorporate at least four elements: the cost of future care; loss of earnings; medical costs; and a dependant's entitlements. Third, victims must have access to legal aid. Fourth, a victim's relatives must have entitlements to cover their own financial loss resulting from the victim's injury or death. Finally, those suffering long-term serious injury should have access to "structured settlements", adapting to the actual costs of care, not the arbitrary indifference of a tariff system.

The good news is that the framework for such a scheme already exists in the form of the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. The whole framework now operates within Northern Ireland, so the Government need not acquire the skill of joined-up thinking; they must simply learn to listen and understand. The failure to do so will leave society open to serious and damaging consequences, especially for those in Northern Ireland. Only a fool would presume that, if the rest of the United Kingdom changes to an arbitrary system of tariffs, the existing provisions in Northern Ireland could be guaranteed to survive tomorrow.

The second consequence is that the families of the most seriously injured victims would be haunted by the fear of penury if the victims lived too long, torn apart by feuds over how to divide the windfall spoils in the event of a victim's early death, or feel a sense of foreboding about what would be left of the victim's life if he or she happened to outlive the carers within the family. And the victims themselves will be embittered by the arbitrariness of this tin-pot tariff system.

I urge the Minister to recognise only two things: that the current proposals are a framework for fools and horses, but that it is not too late to turn around.

12.23 am

The Minister or State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): We are in the business not of giving victims tea and sympathy but of providing the most generous compensation scheme for victims in the world. When the tariff scheme is introduced, it will remain the most generous compensation scheme in the world.

Let me make it clear that the Government are committed to ensuring that the needs of victims are properly recognised, and that they are treated with consideration and respect. That is why we have increased the grant to Victim Support by more than 50 per cent. in the past three years and why we are increasing it by a further 20 per cent. next year to more than £10 million. Very few organisations today have benefited from such a massive increase in expenditure.

We have accepted all the recommendations to help victims in the royal commission's report, and even now we are taking further measures to improve the position of victims in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Support for victims can be provided in many forms. It can be practical, emotional and financial. I want to concentrate on the last aspect tonight.

Our criminal injuries compensation scheme has been in operation since 1964. As far as we are aware, it is the second oldest such scheme in the world and the most generous anywhere.

Listening to the hon. Gentleman tonight, one would get the impression that we were paying out just a few million pounds, and that other countries were much more generous, so it is worth putting on record the fact that we pay out far more compensation than all the other countries in the European Union put together. Only the United States of America pays out more in total than we do, and considering that there are considerably more victims of crime in the United States, our awards are 3·5 times more generous than the average United States award.

We shall continue making generous awards to victims —that will not change—but a scheme whose essential features were designed 30 years ago, when reported crime was much lower and the number of applications far fewer, is no longer the right way to achieve that aim.

We now need a simpler, more straightforward and transparent scheme that gets awards to victims reasonably quickly and with as little fuss and inconvenience as possible. Applicants should start with a good idea of how their claim will be considered, and how much money they are likely to get. They should not need to seek specialised expensive legal advice to make an application. That can be very expensive, and can slow things down.

We do not believe that those basic requirements can be met by a complex quasi-legal scheme based on common law damages and individual assessments. We believe, however, that they will be met by our new tariff scheme.

Under the scheme, compensation will be paid more quickly and simply from a scale of awards for injuries of comparable severity. All eligible applicants with similar injuries will be treated in the same way, and will receive the same lump sum payments. Despite suggestions to the contrary, those payments will continue to be generous. As our White Paper made clear, the tariff has been based on awards made recently by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, reflated to bring them up to current-day values.

There is nothing arbitrary about the scale of the tariffs. If the hon. Gentleman considers that the award for rape victims is insulting, he should complain to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, because we took the board's average award to rape victims and increased it. We have not picked the figures out of thin air; we have put all the compensation awards the board has made into the computer and added them up, and we came up with the median award.

The net result is that at least 54 per cent. of claimants can expect to get as much as or more than they could have expected under the present arrangements. The figure will be still higher, because the level of inflation we assumed when setting the tariff is starting to look extremely generous. Moreover, under the tariff scheme, it will no longer be necessary to deduct from the award any benefits that claimants may have received from the Department of Social Security. That too will benefit many claimants, and will have the added advantage of speeding up payments.

There will be a new, fully independent appeals system for those dissatisfied with their award. Unlike the present arrangements, in which the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board effectively acts as both judge and jury, there will be complete separation of the initial decision taking and the appeals process. That too will benefit victims.

We have been asked why we did not bring into force the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which, for most practical purposes, would have made the present scheme statutory. The simple answer is that the board asked us not to, because it would have seriously disrupted its work in dealing with the ever growing backlog of cases. The Home Affairs Committee in 1990 accepted the force of that argument.

[Mr. David Maclean]

In the meantime, the picture has been changing dramatically, even since the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. The volume of cases received has gone up 50 per cent. and, regrettably, is still rising, while the amount paid out in compensation has increased threefold. The old scheme is simply not geared to cope with such levels of business. That is why we need the radically different approach that is provided by our tariff scheme.

Some cynics say that the real purpose of the change is merely to save money. That is not the case. The main objective is to provide a better service to victims. The key feature of the tariff scheme is that awards are based on those given under the old system. Most victims will receive as much as, or more than, they would have done under that system. The tariff scheme will still remain one of the most generous in the world.

Once the changeover to the new system is complete, the expenditure on compensation will continue to rise. Any hon. Member who suggests that the global amount that we will be paying out will be cut, or will be less than we are currently paying, is talking nonsense; it is not true.

The overall expenditure on the tariff scheme will continue to rise, but it will rise less quickly than it would have done had we kept the present compensation scheme. I make no apologies for that. Securing best value for money is something to which we must have regard. We cannot simply allow a major area of expenditure to continue its rapid upward spiral unchecked.

Concern was expressed that the tariff scheme will not take individual circumstances into account and, more particularly, that it will no longer pay loss of earnings. It has even been said that this contravenes the European convention on the compensation of victims of violent crime, which the United Kingdom has ratified. I do not agree, but I can tell the House that we are sending full details of the tariff scheme to the Council of Europe, as the convention requires, and will take careful note of any response made.

I am tempted to say that, if any hon. Member is suggesting that Britain should put its scheme on the same basis as Europe, my hon. Friends in the Treasury would agree, and would say, "Could we please not pay out £150 million this year, but merely the £6 million or whatever that Germany paid out?"

I believe that the tariff scheme includes an element for loss of wages and the other heads of damage currently payable, although those heads are no longer assessed separately. The tariff levels were set by reference to awards made by the board, and those awards included loss of earnings and so on. So the tariff awards similarly include an element for loss of earnings inside each award and include other heads of damage, albeit unquantified and not assessed separately.

I accept that some people will get less than they might have expected under the present scheme—that is an inevitable consequence of such a major change—but it must be remembered that most claims are comparatively small. In 1992-93, 86 per cent. of all awards were under £5,000, and only 5 per cent. exceeded £10,000. That means that most of those who will get less will not get much less.

That is a rather different picture from the one that has been painted, which may have left some hon. Members with the impression that most people will be losers under the new scheme, and that they will all lose badly. The awards will be paid more quickly and with much less fuss. It is important that victims who want to put the incident behind them as quickly as possible and get on with their lives should get their compensation as quickly as possible.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the criminal injuries compensation scheme is not the only source of state aid that victims of crime can look to. With respect, that is the mistake that the hon. Gentleman made: assuming that the only help that would be available to victims had to come from the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Victims can rightly, and do, receive generous and long-term help from the national health service and from the Department of Social Security, as indeed can any other person in this country who sustains a non-criminal injury or is unfortunate enough to suffer some accident or comparable misfortune, with no one else to sue for it, or if it is not a criminal injury and they cannot get financial help.

Many thousands of people suffer the horrendous injuries referred to by the hon. Gentleman. There is no one to sue and no compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, but the full resources of the national health service and the Department of Social Security—all the caring help and the various allowances—are payable to them. They will be payable to victims of crime as well, and rightly so.

Our tariff scheme will not differentiate between different classes, or between different occupational groups; everyone experiencing similar injuries will receive the same award. We consider that arrangement more generally understandable, and no less fair, than the current system.

I know that some will dispute that, arguing that the tariff scheme cannot cope with certain types of injury, such as shock, child abuse or sexual offences; the hon. Gentleman, for instance, suggested that the tariff levels for particular injuries were wrong. He argued that certain types of injury were more serious than others attracting the same award. I do not accept that argument.

Mr. Simpson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. If he is calling me a liar, we must address the point. Our tariff scheme is based on some 20,000 awards made by the board: that is the truth. It reflects the true levels. We have not picked out half a dozen figures, and produced a scheme out of our heads; we put 20,000 awards through the analysis before basing the tariffs on them, and increasing the tariffs.

The scheme therefore reflects the level of awards actually made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, and maintains the relativities established.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-four minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 2 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Belize

1. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his opposite numbers in the European Union concerning relations with Belize.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): We keep other member states informed of developments affecting Belize. The European Community welcomed Guatemalan recognition of Belize in 1991 and its reaffirmation by the new Guatemalan Government in 1993. The European Community also urged Belize and Guatemala to continue to work for a full settlement of their territorial dispute.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree, however, that there is a serious potential threat to Europe from the creation of a vacuum in Belize when the British garrison is withdrawn in October? These days, that vacuum is likely to be filled not so much by Guatemala as by the Colombian cocaine and crack cartels. That has happened already, since the pretty disastrous Drug Enforcement Agency spraying campaigns aimed at locally grown marijuana in the mid-1980s. The vacuum has already been partly filled by Colombia. Will the Minister therefore give some thought to how we can ensure that when the border ceases to be patrolled by a British garrison, there is no threat to Europe—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has obviously not heeded at all the statement that I made to the House on Thursday. I am sure that I have the support of the House in asking that hon. Members ask brisk questions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are not withdrawing entirely from Belize. There will continue to be a British training presence and an aid programme there. We have also made it clear that we stand ready to be consulted in the event of a real threat to Belize materialising, contrary to our present assessment.

Mr. Wilkinson: Notwithstanding the good relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala and between Guatemala and Belize that happily exist at present, will my hon. Friend consider discussing not with the European Union but with the Government of Nepal the possibility of basing a Gurkha battalion in Belize? That would be beneficial to the Gurkhas, who have been drawn down from Hong Kong, and potentially to the defence of Belize as well.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our position has been made clear. The garrison is being withdrawn—indeed, progress in withdrawing it is already in hand—but a training presence will remain. If the Gurkha units mentioned by my hon. Friend require jungle training in central America, doubtless they will be considered for that role.

Kashmir

2. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Indian Government this year over the future of Kashmir.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): My right hon. Friend's most recent discussions with the Indian Government over the future of Kashmir took place during his visit to India in November.

Mr. Madden: When Prime Minister Rao visits Britain later this month, will the Government tell him that they believe that the people of Kashmir have a right to self-determination?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have no doubt that when the Prime Minister of India visits Britain, our Prime Minister will discuss with him a range of matters, including Kashmir. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we feel that four ingredients are essential: there should be a dialogue between India and Pakistan, respect for human rights, a political process in Kashmir and a cessation of external support for militants in that area.

Mr. Jessel: Does my hon. Friend accept that Britain's historically excellent relations with India will tend to be upheld by India's welcome decision in relation to Kashmir to set up a human rights commission?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, that decision is most welcome, and we expect the first report from the Indian human rights commission shortly. It will deal with a wide range of issues that have been drawn to its attention.

Bosnia

3. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on Bosnia.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Members of the Security Council consult continuously on that subject in capitals and in New York. The most recent formal meeting of the Security Council took place on 14 February.

Mrs. Mahon: Surely, if we are to have a lasting peace in Bosnia, agreements such as that declared today between the Croats and Muslims should occur after consultation with, and the agreement of, all five permanent members of the Security Council. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Serbian leaders are claiming that the United States is bypassing the United Nations? Does that not make affairs much more difficult in that area, especially for the Russians?

Mr. Hurd: As I told the House yesterday, we have welcomed the progress that the Americans have piloted between the Croats and the Muslims. We hope that that will form part of an eventual full settlement.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the progress that has been made between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Assembly, which have advanced the prospect of peace, continues to try to ensure that other areas that are surrounded can be relieved?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and I am sure that he is right.

Dr. John Cunningham: Since everything that has been done so far in Bosnia has been done with the authority of the resolutions of the Security Council, is it not important that, whatever objectives are sought with the best of intentions, they should be acceptable to the Security Council of the United Nations? Is it not apparently dangerous to see the developing spheres of influence dominated, on one hand, by the United States of America and, on the other hand, by Russia? If part of Bosnia is to ally itself with Croatia, is not the danger that the concomitant will be that the other part of Bosnia will want to be merged into a greater Serbia—something which the whole conflict has been an attempt to prevent? In those circumstances, what position will the European Union adopt?

Mr. Hurd: What we need and have been working for is a negotiated settlement. It cannot be imposed. It has to be negotiated. The content of that settlement is secondary; it has to be agreed. If the agreement announced yesterday between the Croats and the Muslims matures, if it takes full shape, the question will be how the Serbian part of Bosnia fits into that. That will be the next stage of the negotiation. Of course, all that has to be done under the basic authority of the UN.

Exports

4. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is given to British industry and commerce by British embassies and high commissions to promote British goods and services in the export market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Our posts concentrate hard on promoting British exports. We now have 201 commercial sections overseas and 20 new posts have been opened or reopened since 1990. Those posts provide a wide variety of help to British companies. They seek out export opportunities, advise companies on the business to be won in their markets, lobby on their behalf for major contracts and against discrimination and organise visits by trade missions and Ministers to win business. Research shows that 70 per cent. of our customers are satisfied with our service and 90 per cent. said that they would use those services again. The value of British exports world wide rose by £3.3 billion in the past year compared with 1992.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the role played by the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry in securing export orders and jobs for the country is disgracefully undermined by the naive, sanctimonious and dishonest campaign waged by certain newspapers and Opposition parties with regard to Malaysia? Does he accept that it will mean the loss of British exports and British jobs and that the only outcome will be that we will become the laughing stock of our major competitors, which will step in and pick up the jobs that British workers should be doing?

Mr. Hurd: I spent two and a half happy hours on that subject this morning. What emerged is that, since June 1988, we have followed two policies of facilitating and building up defence sales to Malaysia and getting our share of civil contracts with the help of aid and trade provision under the rules. Those have been separately and successfully followed. The grave accusation that my hon. Friend and I are under is that we have done too much to help British business and protect British jobs.

Mr. Enright: Notwithstanding that reply, will the Foreign Secretary give an absolute guarantee that not only will he not encourage the sale of land mines but he will forbid their export to anywhere else in the world?

Mr. Hurd: I should like to write to the hon. Gentleman on that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes, because there are various types of land mine and, as the hon. Gentleman certainly knows, an intricate international discussion is going on at the moment about how that area of arms sales can be limited and reduced. So, rather than chance my arm, I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alexander: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Department of Trade and Industry is seconding 100 business men with export expertise to that Department? Will he arrange for some of those people to be used in the high commissions and embassies abroad so that we can beef up our export strategies there?

Mr. Hurd: We are doing that and I am in close touch with my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. I should like to draw the attention of the House to a letter in *The Independent* today from Sir Derek Hornby, chairman of the British Overseas Trade Board, and others bearing out what my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) said, and what my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) implies, about the substantial improvement in recent years in how the Foreign Office helps British exports.

Mr. Rogers: Regardless of the synthetic bluster of the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), does the Foreign Secretary agree that, whatever embassies and officials do, their work is undermined when a Government are prepared to abuse and distort trade negotiations and overseas aid provisions? In the case of Malaysia, are not the Government putting jobs in this country at risk by their shady, behind-the-door deals?

Mr. Hurd: There has been a great deal of bluster on that subject and we can now see the harm that Opposition spokesmen and others have done to British interests. I am glad that the Select Committee concentrated on the core of the matter and went into it steadily. It was not beguiled into believing the nonsense spoken by the spokesman for the Liberals and the spokesman for the Labour party. They tried to bring completely unrelated and extraneous matters into the argument—the bluster, to use the hon. Gentleman's word, which has done so much harm to British interests in the past few weeks.

Israel

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations between Britain and Israel.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Our bilateral relations are excellent.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend express the sympathy of the whole House with the victims of the Hebron massacre? Will he also congratulate the Government of Israel on their speedy reaction to that massacre and express the hope that the act of one man will not derail the peace process in the middle east because, were it to do so, that would be victory for extremism?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right in every particular. It is vital that the peace process be kept alive. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a message to Chairman Arafat expressing our great distress at the crime that had been committed.

Mr. Galloway: Was not one of the swift reactions of the Israeli Government that their armed forces began to shoot down worshippers rushing from the mosque and, in the days that have elapsed since, including today in Hebron, have shot dead many people? Does not Israel bear complete responsibility under the Geneva convention for the safety and well-being of the people under its occupation? Did not Dr. Goldstein do and the rabbi who buried him say what many thousands of settlers in the occupied territories would like to have done and said?

Mr. Hogg: In view of the hon. Gentleman's odious support for Saddam Hussein, I should have thought that he would think it wise to abstain from participating in questions on the middle east.

Sir David Madel: Before any negotiations begin between Israel and Syria on the possible withdrawal of Israel from the Golan Heights, is it the Government's view that, first, full diplomatic relations should be established between Israel and Syria, with all that that entails?

Mr. Hogg: I do not think that that is a condition precedent, but it is important that there should be early movement by both sides. The Government of Syria need to make it plain that what is on offer is a full friendly relationship with Israel, and Israel needs to make it plain that she will withdraw from the Golan Heights.

Sir David Steel: Is the Minister aware that since the terrible tragedy in the mosque at Hebron, almost the same number of people have been killed or wounded in the disturbances that followed? Will he, therefore, support the initiative of the stationing of a UN observer corps on the west bank and assure the Israeli Government that that has proved very successful in diminishing communal violence in South Africa?

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the number of people who have been killed since the shooting in the mosque. There are attractions in stationing an observer force. Discussions are going on in New York on the terms and siting of such an observer presence.

Mr. Dykes: Does not the magnificent work for peace of Moshe Raviv, the Israeli ambassador in London, the fact that the Government resisted the foolish attempts to close a Palestine Liberation Organisation office many years ago and the fact that they are working together show that the majority of moderates both in Israel and among millions of Palestinians are yearning to reach a peace settlement? Therefore, the British Government must persuade the Israeli authorities to proceed to the disarming of extremist settlers.

Mr. Hogg: It is extraordinarily important that the Government of Israel move towards disarming extremist settlers and act to prevent extremist settlers from coming into contact with Palestinians. I agree with my hon. Friend.

Dr. John Cunningham: I join the Minister in denouncing this heinous crime—the wanton slaughter of innocent people at prayer in the mosque at Hebron. All friends of Israel will share the views of the Israeli Prime Minister that that action was a shame on Zionism and an embarrassment to Judaism. Is not the most important thing for Her Majesty's Government to do now to encourage the resumption of the peace process? In that connection, we should remind the Government of Israel of its duties under the Geneva convention to protect all citizens, especially the Palestinians in the west bank and Gaza. Should not other provisions of the agreement—the release of prisoners, the symbols of statehood, an international presence in the occupied territories and the establishment of a PLO civilian police force—be quickly accelerated?

Mr. Hogg: It is extremely important that all parties to the peace process negotiations resume them as speedily as possible. I welcome a number of steps that have been taken by Prime Minister Rabin to disarm the extremist settlers and, indeed, to announce the release of a number of those held in detention.

Bosnia

6. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made to bring about peace in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The continuing ceasefire in Sarajevo and the recent ceasefire agreement between the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croat forces are welcome steps towards an end to the fighting. We also welcome the agreement between the Bosnian and Croat Governments initialled in Washington today.

Ms Hoey: Does the Minister recognise that millions of people in this country do not understand why the concerted action that has been taken in the past couple of weeks could not have been taken with Britain taking the lead over the past two years? Nevertheless, if General Sir Michael Rose comes back and tells the British Government that more British troops are needed to make the peace progress continue, will the Minister give an assurance that he will bring that request to the House?

Mr. Hogg: I do not imagine that the electorate in this country will understand the hon. Lady's criticism. The

British Government have committed 2,400 troops to Bosnia. With the exception of the French, that is the largest contribution.

Mr. John Townend: What is the total cost to the taxpayer of the British operation, and what proportion is refunded by the United Nations?

Mr. Hogg: The overall figure that I have in the back of my mind is £170 million. However, because I might be misleading my hon. Friend, I should prefer to write to him with the details.

Turkey

7. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Turkey to discuss the position of minorities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited Turkey on 19 and 20 January. He has no plans at present for a further visit.

Mr. Rooker: Was it spelt out in clear terms to the Turkish Government that while they maintain discrimination against minorities, particularly the Kurdish minority, by banning the use of the language, not allowing the teaching of the language and banning its use in public speeches, any application that they make to join the European Union is totally and utterly out of the question?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When Turkey originally applied to join the European Community, the application was turned down and it was pointed out that its human rights record did not come up to the required European standards. I believe that that is the case even today. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised those matters with Mrs. Ciller, the Prime Minister. We believe that Kurdish aspirations must be pursued constitutionally. That is a message for the PKK—the terrorist organisation—and for the Turkish Government.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a world of difference between meeting Kurdish aspirations and the problem that the Turkish Government have in dealing with one of the most vicious terrorist organisations in the world?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes. The PKK does not respect human rights, but the message delivered forcefully by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was that the Turkish Government must not respond in kind. They must deal with the terrorist threat within the rule of law and by respecting human rights.

Ms Quin: Did the Minister see the reports in the *Financial Times* of 20 and 21 January in which the United Kingdom and Germany were described as

> "Turkey's main friends and advocates within the EU"?

It was also reported that the Foreign Secretary was seeking to deepen ties between Turkey and the European Union. Will the Minister confirm that there will be no question of making further progress with Turkey's application to join the European Union and that it should be a long way back in the queue, certainly behind the former communist countries of eastern Europe which are now democratic and are seeking to join the European Union?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Union has important relations with Turkey and it was important that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary should develop them further. There is no question of reassessing the possibility of Turkish membership of the European Union at present.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I recognise that there have been atrocities on both sides, but has my hon. Friend seen the recent report by Amnesty International which outlined the appalling atrocities committed by Turkish security forces in the eastern part of Turkey? One incident involved the burning by the security forces of a 16-year-old shepherd boy from Kurdistan. Will my hon. Friend confirm that Turkey's application to join the European Union will have no chance of further progress if that country continues to have an appalling human rights record?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Any such behaviour by the Turkish security forces is wholly unacceptable and I can confirm that when Turkey's application to join the European Union is reassessed, its human rights record will play a part in that assessment.

Cyprus

8. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent round of talks on Cyprus.

Mr. Hurd: Negotiations resumed in Nicosia on 17 February. They are focusing on a package of confidence-building measures, which has been agreed in principle by both sides. It is important that the parties should take advantage of the present opportunity to make progress because it may not quickly recur.

Mr. O'Brien: Missing persons and the settlement of land and buildings are issues which involve human rights. I should imagine that they are part of the 14 confidence-building measures arising out of the talks. Will the Secretary of State assure me that the confidence-building measures will continue and that pressure from the special UN representative, Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government will be placed on Athens and Ankara to get the talks under way and settled? Can we be assured that business arising out of the talks will not be withered?

Mr. Hurd: In recent days, I have been in touch with Mr. Joe Clark, the Secretary-General's representative. I saw the Prime Minister of Greece about this matter the day before yesterday and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, I have talked to the Turks recently. There is an opportunity here, starting with the measures proposed, for the reopening of Varosha and of Nicosia airport.

We will do all that we can as a guarantor power to make sure that all the parties to the dispute seize the opportunity. As I have said, if the opportunity is lost it may not come again quickly.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is growing frustration in the south of the island at the length of time it has taken to get the confidence-building measures in place, particularly as, according to experts, it could take up to two years for the airport to be made usable again?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with that, and I share the frustration. We will urge those involved in the negotiations to press ahead as fast as they can.

Mr. John D. Taylor: In welcoming the decision of the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots to accept in principle the UN proposals which were supported by the Government, may I ask the Foreign Secretary to confirm that the Government also support the recommendations of the UN working party to implement those proposals? Do the Government support in particular the suggestion that in the interests of air safety there should be only one air control system for the new international airport at Nicosia and the existing international airport 10 miles away at Ercan?

Mr. Hurd: The proposal is that Nicosia airport should reopen under UN control. I am not familiar with what is proposed for air traffic control. I am sure that it is important, as the right hon. Gentleman says, and I will look into it further.

Middle East

9. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Israel and the middle east to discuss progress on the peace talks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend visited the region in January. He had useful discussions with the principal participants in the peace process. He has no plans at present for a further visit.

Mr. Streeter: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a terrible tragedy would become an international disaster if a peace process which could bring meaningful and lasting benefit to millions were to be scuppered by the appalling Hebron tragedy, which was the work of just a few? Will he arrange for himself and the Foreign Secretary to visit the region, where their formidable powers of diplomacy can be brought to bear particularly on the Palestinians and their supporters to get back to the negotiating table as soon as possible?

Mr. Hogg: Yesterday, I had a meeting with four middle eastern ambassadors and with representatives of the Arab League and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. I hope to have further meetings with representatives of the PLO this week and I will certainly stress to them—as has my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—the importance of resuming the peace process and talks as speedily as possible.

Mr. Faulds: Would it not help the peace process between the PLO and Israel if the Foreign Office were to urge that, in the interests of peace, the Israelis should deal extremely stringently with the settlers and withdraw both them and the settlements? Does the Minister agree that it is not generally realised that the reasonableness of the PLO has led to Israel having 75 per cent. of what was Palestine while the PLO has less than 25 per cent?

Mr. Hogg: I accept that the settlements are a major problem which stand in the way of a peace settlement. I strongly endorse the action taken by Prime Minister Rabin to disarm the extremist settlers, but there are grave difficulties in disarming all the settlers as many of them face substantive risks themselves.

India

10. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of current relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic of India; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Relations between Britain and India are excellent.

Mr. Spring: My hon. Friend will be aware of the great strides being made by the Indian Government in liberalising and privatising the country's economy. Will he assure the House that help will be given to British exporters to access that growing and important market and to capitalise on the truly excellent relationship between the British and Indian Governments?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have massive commercial interests in India, and Britain is the second-largest overseas investor in that country. Our investment is rising dramatically, and last year trade increased by more than 20 per cent.

Mr. Godsiff: Bearing in mind the excellent relations Britain has with India, will the Minister ask the Indian Government whether they have any objections to British Members of Parliament travelling to Indian-held Kashmir to see for themselves the situation there?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am always encouraging the Indian High Commissioner to persuade his Government to allow more visits by British parliamentarians. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) visited India in January this year, and went to Kashmir. Lord Weatherill has been to Kashmir recently. The International Commission of Jurists and several international lawyers, led by Sir Philip Goodhart from Britain, have been there. Many American and French senators have also travelled there. There is much independent observation of what is going on.

Mr. Lord: Will my hon. Friend accept from someone who had the good fortune to visit India with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in January this year that relations between our countries seem to be better than they have been for a long time? Is he aware of the enormous boost given to trade between our two countries by the Prime Minister's visit last year and the truly excellent work done by our high commissioner in India? Will he urge British business men to make best use of the opportunities now offered in India?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that the opportunities exist. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last year launched a great trade initiative. It culminated at the end of the year with the Indo-British week in November, to which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary went and at which 16 major deals worth £1.2 billion were signed.

Middle East

11. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has sent his condolences to chairman Arafat and, through him, to the families of the victims and the injured of the massacre in Hebron. I very much hope that that crime will not be allowed be stand in the way of the peace process.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that I have written to chairman Arafat, whom I was pleased to meet in London, and to my friend, Afif Sofieh, his representative in the United Kingdom, to express my personal grief and anguish at the awful killings in Hebron? I wish to make it plain that that is the sentiment of the entire Jewish community of this country. I know that the members of that community would, like me, want to associate themselves with the words of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who hoped that the assassin would not achieve his end—the end of the peace process.

Mr. Hogg: I know that what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said will be echoed and repeated by the entire Jewish community in this country.

Taiwan

12. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to improve diplomatic and commercial links between the United Kingdom and Taiwan.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): Although the United Kingdom has no diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we attach great importance to our commercial, cultural and other links. British exports rose in 1993 by 22 per cent. to £668 million. The United Kingdom has attracted over half of Taiwanese investment in Europe. The British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei, established in October 1993, is being reinforced with additional staff to develop those links further.

Mr. Lidington: While accepting that we do not recognise Taiwan diplomatically, may I ask my right hon. Friend to assure the House that the Government will ensure that we have enough people of sufficient calibre in Taiwan to help to guarantee that British companies, rather than French or Japanese ones, make money out of that important market?

Mr. Goodlad: Indeed, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. Starting with the establishment of the British trade and cultural office in Taipei, we are taking steps to achieve a commercial presence in Taiwan. We are increasing the number of United Kingdom-based staff from three to four and strengthening the number of locally engaged commercial staff. The year 1994 has started well: Davy International announced at the weekend a blast furnace contract worth $97 million, which will also provide work for about 250 subcontractors in this country and spare parts will be supplied for many years to come.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is it not about time that we recognised the Taiwanese Government and set up diplomatic relations with them, given the importance of that country to our economy? Will the Minister convey to the Taiwanese authorities the great concern of many of us at the stockpiling of rhino horn in that country—*[Interruption.]* Rhino are an endangered species—I wish that Conservative Members would recognise that. Will the Minister tell the Taiwanese authorities that if they would act against the dealers they could do something to preserve the endangered species of rhino in Africa?

Mr. Goodlad: On the subject of recognition, the British Government acknowledge the position of the Peoples Republic of China and that Taiwan is a province of China. We recognise the Government of the Peoples Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China. In our view the status of Taiwan is a matter for Peking and Taipei to resolve between themselves.

On the subject of rhino horn, on which I know that the hon. Gentleman is a considerable expert, trade is a matter for the European Community as a whole. We made it clear that there was significant concern in the United Kingdom about rhinos. Other member states agreed to maintain pressure on Taiwan and review the need for further action in the light of progress later this year.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that although normal diplomatic relations between this country and Taiwan do not exist, the Chinese on Taiwan nevertheless give our representatives in Taipei de facto though not de jure diplomatic recognition? In view of growing trade and improving relations between our two countries, and the fact that the Republic of China on Taiwan is now a fully fledged democracy, is it not about time that we gave the same democratic status to Taipei's representatives in Britain, and the niceties that go with that?

Mr. Goodlad: All Taiwan representative offices in the United Kingdom are private companies or institutions. Under British legislation, exemption from tax, import duties and so on is available only to diplomatic missions considered as such under the terms of the Vienna convention. We have no intention of using the legal situation to create difficulty for the Taiwanese offices here.

South Africa

13. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to monitor whether the election in South Africa in April is free and fair.

Mr. Hurd: Britain is contributing substantially to the observer operations of the United Nations, the European Union and the Commonwealth. The exact number of British observers in the election has yet to be finalised.

Mr. Bayley: Does the Foreign Secretary share my concern about the withdrawal of Inkatha from the elections because people living in Inkatha areas who vote will be deemed to be African National Congress supporters and their lives may be at risk? How many polling stations will there be in the elections and is it the intention of Britain as the former colonial power, together with other countries under United Nations and Commonwealth control, to ensure that there are enough observers to have at least one at every polling station? Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman recall that for the first multiracial election in Zimbabwe Britain sent a large number of police officers, and will he consider doing the same on this occasion?

Mr. Hurd: The United Nations plans to field 1,778 observers in the South African election, the European

Union 312 and the Commonwealth 60, so there will be enough observers. The hon. Gentleman will know that we are already giving help to the South African police.

Even more important is the hon. Gentleman's first point: I understand that there was a good meeting yesterday between Mr. Mandela and Chief Buthelezi, and I hope that out of that improved atmosphere may come progress towards a fuller joining of all concerned in the elections on April 27.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the United Nations estimate of some thousands of observers is a critical part of ensuring free and fair elections in South Africa? Does he agree that it would be a great tragedy if British parliamentarians alone were ruled out by the present situation in the House? Will he use his best offices and urge the Opposition to let us participate?

Mr. Hurd: I will certainly follow up that point.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Foreign Secretary agree, as I think he does, that the monitoring of the election in South Africa would be much easier if Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha were to take part? Does he therefore welcome, as I do, the tentative moves made yesterday in that direction? Will he use his best endeavours and take every opportunity to encourage Chief Buthelezi to join the elections in full participation?

Mr. Hurd: I have just said that I think that it is very important. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed what the President of the United States and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed yesterday—that our two countries would work hard to strengthen the tangible, practical steps we can take to promote the process of democratic reform in South Africa.

Sudan

14. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet the Foreign Minister of the Sudan Republic to discuss the conflict in southern Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the moment, we have no plans for such a meeting.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am disappointed that there are no such plans, bearing in mind that many people in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere are concerned about the conflict in southern Sudan, which has been going on for far too long. The fact that they happen to be black upon black does not relieve us of any responsibility.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. We share that concern and we endorse the peace initiative being promoted by the Kenyans, the Ugandans and others.

Mr. Cash: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that 40,000 Muslim fundamentalists have been airlifted from Khartoum to southern Sudan; that 200,000 people from southern Sudan have been driven into Uganda over the past few months; and that there is a prospect that that figure could rise to a million, which Uganda simply could not cope with? Will he ensure that every effort is made to ensure that the people moving into Uganda are given every support by the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development and by the American and British initiatives that are currently under way?

Mr. Hogg: What my hon. Friend says reinforces the importance of the present peace initiative. I echo what I have already said—that we think that the Government of Sudan should respond positively to that initiative.

Mr. Gunnell: What steps has the Minister taken through the United Nations to seek a solution to this problem? Will he ensure that the negotiations that are under way are discussed with the United Nations so that it, too, may play its maximum role in sorting out this mess?

Mr. Hogg: It is important not to undercut the present initiative. Therefore, for the moment I should prefer to see weight placed on the initiative to which I have referred —that promoted by the Kenyans, Ugandans and others. If it becomes plain that that will not succeed, one can consider other mechanisms.

EC (Political Union)

15. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his counterpart Ministers in the EC to discuss greater political union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no plans for a meeting of Community Foreign Ministers to discuss greater political union.

Mr. Cryer: When the Minister does meet the appropriate Ministers, will he make it clear that, despite the cosy consensus between the Front Benches, millions of people outside the House see no benefit from the Common Market, do not want greater political union and, given the chance, would get out? Those people recognise that that would immediately knock £24 a week off the average family food bill, reduce our payments by some £2,500 million a year and perhaps help to reverse the £10 billion deficit of payments that we have with the Common Market, which has been nothing but a millstone around our necks ever since we joined.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The vision of the European Union that the hon. Gentleman is scared of is written up in the socialist manifesto to which his party is fully committed, so I invite the hon. Gentleman not to vote Labour in the forthcoming European elections.

Mr. Oppenheim: Should we not do our best to ensure that any deepening of the European Community does not preclude its widening, too? Is my hon. Friend not just a little bit ashamed of the position in the European Community? Having preached the benefits of open markets to the countries of eastern Europe for so long, the European Community is now refusing open access to goods from those countries just when they most need our help—and all to appease a few inefficient, cosseted vested interests such as the European steel industry and European farmers. Will we in Europe not look back with shame in future years at this selfish short-sightedness?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We are in the forefront of those European Union members calling for openness of markets with the former communist states of central and eastern Europe to help stabilise them, but I can bring my hon. Friend some good news: I have just come back from an Accession Council meeting in Brussels, which lasted for five days. I am glad to say that we now have political agreement with three new member states—Finland, Sweden and Austria. When they join the Union, they will reinforce our model of a Community which is decentralised, free trading, diverse and open to the world.

Mr. Radice: With respect to the successful enlargement negotiations, will the Minister tell the House what in his view now constitutes a blocking minority?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A blocking minority is 23 votes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that it will never be the Government's policy to embrace federalism in whatever form in the European Union and that we believe firmly in nation states, with more of the power returning to the nation states and fewer directives coming out of Europe?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Yes, Conservative Members are against the establishment of a federal European state.

Mr. Dafis: As the Minister will know, the new Committee of the Regions established under the Maastricht treaty will meet for the first time next week. Does he agree that it will constitute a vital mechanism for the representation of the interests of the small nations and regions of Europe, which should really be the building blocks of a new federal Europe? Does he also agree that the Committee of the Regions could and should become the second chamber of the European Parliament?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am not sure about a second chamber of the European Parliament, but the creation of a Committee of the Regions is certainly in line with our view of the European Union—a body that is decentralised and makes decisions as near to the citizen as possible.

Middle East

16. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's support for the Washington accord on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Government are helping to fund 10 surgeons in Jerusalem and Hebron, together with the provision of specialist medical supplies and nursing to treat the victims of the massacre in Hebron. More generally, our aid to the occupied territories will amount to £20 million this financial year and £70 million over the financial years 1994-96.

Mr. Townsend: Is it not to be regretted that the Security Council was unable to condemn the horrendous massacre in the mosque immediately and without reservation? Can my right hon. and learned Friend explain that? Is he satisfied that the commission of inquiry will be able to tell us what actually happened at dawn prayers? Finally, should not the British Government offer to fly some of the many people who were seriously injured in the massacre to this country for hospital treatment?

Mr. Hogg: All members of the Security Council condemned the crime that occurred. We are now finding out whether a special Security Council resolution can be passed to assist a number of forward policies. For instance, we want to establish whether we can station observers in the area, along the lines suggested by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel).

Five members of the commission of inquiry have been appointed, under the presidency of the supreme court. I think that it will be fair and independent. As for the question of flying people to the United Kingdom, the consul general in Jerusalem has instructions to liaise with the Palestinians to find out whether there is any specialist treatment that they require and we can provide.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I am sure the Minister will agree that, while we welcome the concern and anger that have been expressed about last week's murders in Hebron—and the letter from the Prime Minister will be very welcome—what is required is an early resolution of the peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians. If those talks are to resume, a more positive move must be made by the Israeli Government, along the lines suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Does the Minister agree that it would not be unusual for us to have an international presence on the west bank? We have already had one in the form of European consuls general in Jerusalem. Surely we could use those immediately, as we did when our own consul general Ivan Callan went to Beit Sahour to investigate alleged incidents in that town. That would be a more positive move.

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree that it is very important for the peace talks to resume as speedily as possible. I think, however, that the hon. Gentleman would want to say of Prime Minister Rabin's response that many of the steps that he has taken were directed expressly to that end. Mr. Rabin is as deeply shocked as I believe the hon. Gentleman is, and has made it plain that that represents the attitude of all Israel. He has also indicated his willingness to release, I think, 1,000 detainees. He has set up a commission of inquiry which I believe to be fair and independent, and has announced a willingness to disarm extremist settlers. I hope that those steps will be seen as constructive.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is disgusting that a joint delegation of Members of Parliament will not be allowed to go to Israel next week because of Labour policy?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think that the failure to observe the usual courtesies between the two sides is actually preventing hon. Members on both sides from engaging in activities that are helpful to international relations and advance the work of the House here.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not sickening that there are extremist elements who have tried to make a hero of the mass murderer who carried out the recent terrible crime? Should it not be made clear to Israel—one recognises that there has been a substantial change since the last elections —that there can be no lasting peace until there is a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel? That is an absolute essential for justice for both Jews and Palestinians.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. It is appalling if anybody in the state of Israel seeks to endorse this murder. But it is also fair to say that those who do are in a tiny minority and that the people of Israel as a whole must be deeply distressed and shocked by what has happened.

EC (Intergovernmental Co-operation)

17. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he proposes to have discussions with his European Union partners concerning the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign policy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We regularly meet with other member states to discuss the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign policy.

Sir David Knox: Which particular areas have been identified in which the countries of the Community can work together during the next few months? Will my hon. Friend agree that this process has been greatly facilitated by the Maastricht treaty?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Maastricht treaty set up the intergovernmental pillar of the Union to allow us to carry forward these initiatives. My hon. Friend asks which areas. The middle east, the former Soviet Union, South Africa and the former Yugoslavia are four of them, and already we have a joint action to deliver humanitarian aid in Bosnia.

Mr. Worthington: Is not the Sudan a further area in which the European Union could work together and throw its full weight behind the report of the special rapporteur on human rights, Gaspar Biro, and insist that the Sudanese Government allow international aid agencies and international observers into all parts of the Sudan and, in particular, into the Nuba mountains where there is mass destruction and mass killing?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The fact that the European Union is concerned about the Sudan does not mean that the problems are any more intractable and difficult, but this is certainly an area which concerns the Foreign Ministers of the Union, and I will pass on the hon. Gentleman's particular concerns.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the major benefits of the recent decision regarding the accession of three new member states which he mentioned earlier is that, whether we are talking about the foreign policy pillar or any other pillar, we have seen a substantial shift from net recipients to net contributors and that this shift in the balance of decision-making in the Community must be very good news for this country?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Probably all, but certainly three, of the new member states who we hope will accede will be net contributors to the budget and this will make them as interested as we are in budgetary discipline.

Yugoslavia

19. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current developments in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier in reply to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey).

Lady Olga Maitland: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House when the joint British-American reconstruction programme in Sarajevo is due to begin? Does he agree that this came as a result of the very worthwhile talks between President Clinton and our own Prime Minister?

Mr. Hogg: The answer is soon and yes.

Mr. Austin-Walker: What action have the Government taken in respect of the aggressive and oppressive action by Serbia against the people of Kosovo? Will the Minister also comment on recent incursions across the Albanian border by Serbia-Montenegro?

Mr. Hogg: We deplore them. It is very difficult to see how Serbia will be readmitted fully to the community of nations unless and until civil and political rights in Kosovo are fully established.

Mr. Dickens: In respect of the former Yugoslavia, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Great Britain can stand tall? Were we not the first to send troops to that area? Were we not the the first to send medical supplies, food, airborne warning and communication system aircraft and ground monitoring equipment? As far as the world, NATO and the Security Council of the United Nations are concerned, Great Britain has really played its part 100 per cent.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend and I are entitled to wrap the Union Jack about ourselves, and we do so.

Kashmir

21. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with other Commonwealth Governments regarding the situation in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have frequently discussed the situation in Kashmir with both the Indian and Pakistan Governments. They are the Commonwealth Governments most directly concerned.

Ms Lynne: I am grateful for that answer. Has the Minister had discussions with his Commonwealth partners about setting up an eminent persons group to visit Indian-held Kashmir to see for themselves what the situation is? Does he agree that the Indian Government's refusal to allow an all-party group of British Members of Parliament to see for themselves leads one to believe that they may have something to hide with regard to human rights abuses?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: If it were the wish of the Indian or the Pakistan Government to have a special group from the Commonwealth to visit Kashmir, one or other would have drawn the attention of the Commonwealth secretariat to that matter. It would be for them to draw it to the Commonwealth's attention, not for us.

As to the latter point of the hon. Lady's question, I said in an earlier answer that there have been many impartial visitors to Kashmir in recent months.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I do not need bogus points of order. I want a point of order from Mr. George Foulkes.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful, Madam Speaker. The Minister of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), refused to answer a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on some spurious grounds. Would he, on the same grounds, refuse to answer a question from the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath)? Would he refuse to answer—

Madam Speaker: Order. I did say I did not want a bogus point of order. The hon. Gentleman might have something to say about the manner in which questions are answered, but that does not constitute a point of order.

Mr. Foulkes: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order. That does not constitute a point of order. If there is a point of order, I will listen to it. I have to deal with the point of order. It has to be something that I can deal with.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker. Members of the House, are elected, represent their constituents and have every right to have their questions answered. Is it not within your power to direct Ministers to answer those questions?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Speaker of this House cannot direct Ministers—or Back Benchers for that matter. All Ministers, all Back Benchers, are responsible for the comments that they make.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The ballot for motions and the box and book are kept in the No Lobby from half-past 2 and the normal closing time should be half-past 3. Do you not think that the latecomers' queue that forms in front of you and obscures our view of you should now be ruled out of order because it also militates against the more assiduous of us who get in there and put our names down earlier?

Madam Speaker: That is the most— *[Interruption.]* I must answer that because it is the best point of order I have had for a very long time. I have always been annoyed when Members like this— *[Interruption.]*— interfere in the business in the Chamber. I believe very firmly that the box should remain out until half-past 3, and at half-past 3 the procedure should be finished with. As those are the procedures at the moment, I have to allow Members to do this, but I certainly deprecate what is happening at the present time. I understand I can now stop it. In that case, I am going to. Finished.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I was standing for virtually every question during Question Time. I was the only Conservative Member standing at the last question and you had not called an end to Question Time before the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) got up on a point of order. Is that correct parliamentary procedure?

Madam Speaker: Yes, I watch the clock very carefully. I know that the hon. Gentleman is very assiduous at Question Time. It is not possible for me to call all Members, but I know how keen he is. It had reached half-past 3. There was nothing further that I could do.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does it not say in "Erskine May" that a Minister has a responsibility to give an answer, and did not the junior Minister at the Foreign Office give the impression to the House that he would not answer my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway)? Surely he has to provide an answer. Some people may not like that answer, but I think that he has a duty to provide one.

Madam Speaker: As far as I heard, the Minister did answer— [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Order. The Minister did answer; it was the content that the hon. Gentleman did not like.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I know that you will not comment on the rudeness and the lack of parliamentary manners shown by the Minister of State, which is legendary among Members on both sides of the House. However, if you consult the record you will see that the answer that the Minister of State gave was a stricture that I should abstain from asking questions in the House. Will you confirm that I have as much right as any other hon. Member to ask any question that is in order on behalf of my constituents? Leaving aside the question of manners, will you confirm that I have that parliamentary right and that you will uphold it?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman certainly has that right and that is why I call him on what may be regarded as a number of contentious issues—I want to hear all points of view expressed in the House.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I have heard enough.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Faulds: Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There is no further point of order. I have just given a ruling on the issue.

Mr. Faulds: There is another aspect.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I must hear it.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful to you, Madam Speaker. You are most reasonable, as always.

Madam Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be equally reasonable.

Mr. Faulds: Invariably, Madam Speaker. There is another aspect. By what right does the Minister claim that he can refuse to answer a question because he disagrees with an hon. Member's views? In the House of Commons that is wholly unacceptable and although, of course, you cannot reprimand this little Minister, perhaps he will have heard what I have to say and listen to my wise advice.

Madam Speaker: As I said, the Minister answered. What grieves some hon. Members is the answer that was given, which is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Riddick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to get back to this box. The box for the ballot for motions is always placed in the No Lobby. That might give an unfair advantage to Labour Members because at least some of them enter the Chamber via the No Lobby whereas we on the Government Benches enter through the Aye Lobby. Will you consider putting the box in the Aye Lobby next time?

Madam Speaker: I think that that would be far too confusing for hon. Members. The box will remain in one Lobby. Most hon. Members have been here long enough to know where to find it, so it stays in the No Lobby. We have the ballot now; let [illegible] see who is lucky.

Ballot for Notices of Motion for Friday 18 March

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Richard Alexander

Sir Jim Spicer

Madam Speaker: I wish that hon. Members would write more clearly. The third name looks like "Nicholson", but the Clerks are good at reading hon. Members' writing. It looks like David Nicholson; he should write better next time.

Mr. David Nicholson

Severn Bridges Act 1992 (Amendment)

3.38 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend sections 9 and 10 of the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

The Bill would freeze tolls on the Severn bridge at the January 1994 level. An observer standing on the English side of the Severn crossing will quickly notice that traffic going out of Wales moves freely, motoring as it should, whereas vehicles going in the opposite direction grind to a halt, belching out their fumes while drivers queue up to pay their tolls for the privilege of entering Wales.

I am reminded of the words of the Welsh poet Harri Webb, who said:

"Two lands by a span connected
By a bridge o'er the waters wide
And all the tolls collected
Are on the English side."

Hardly a day goes by when I do not receive a protest about this iniquitous system. The Severn crossing is merely a short stretch of the M4 motorway and there is an increasing tendency for traffic entering Wales, especially heavy lorries, to divert around Gloucester and thereby avoid toll charges.

In a letter to me dated 7 February, Mr. Richard Wigginton, the Gloucester county surveyor, mentioned the results of surveys that he had conducted from April 1992, when tolls began to be collected only for entry into Wales. The latest monitoring report of September 1993 shows that, on the A40 west of the Highnam roundabout, there has been a 59 per cent. increase in lorries travelling into Wales, compared with a 33 per cent. increase in traffic travelling in the opposite direction.

Similar trends are occurring on the A48 and on the A4136. Mr. Wigginton states that the issue has a very high profile in Gloucester. The effects of heavy lorries chugging through Gloucestershire villages can be readily understood.

Mr. M.S. Owen, the Gwent county surveyor, has complained of what he calls severance problems in Chepstow— people being unable to cross the road because of heavy traffic that is diverting from the Severn bridge.

The monitoring of traffic bears out the findings of the influential Lex report, which was published on 19 January 1994. The report shows that most drivers feel that they should not have to pay motorway tolls, and they divert accordingly.

The difficult position has been aggravated by the decision that Severn River Crossing plc took about six months ago to end the concession agreement for bulk ticket discounts. An electronic tag system has been introduced that requires substantial payments up front of more than £200 per account and £30 per vehicle. Mr. Brian Colley, director general of the Road Haulage Association, said in a letter dated 30 October 1993 that the company did not initiate any consultative discussions about the new arrangements. The system enables the company to bypass the Severn Bridges Act 1992 and to increase substantially its income in the process.

Mr. John Whitehead, the local secretary of Transport 2000, volunteers the suggestion that the arbitrary ending of the concession agreement is directly linked to the loss of revenue due to heavy goods vehicles travelling into Wales via Gloucester. He said that a more equitable arrangement

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

would have been to wipe out the £120 million debt on the existing bridge. After all, it is only a notional figure on the consolidated fund and no bank charges are involved.

Mr. Brian Colley compares the actions of the Severn Bridge River Crossing company with arrangements for the Dartford crossing, where there is no tag charge, tags are interchangeable, and there is a substantial discount of 7.5 per cent. for tag holders. Why is there that discrimination against Wales?

For toll purposes, there are three categories of vehicle. Lorries coming into Wales pay £10.10. A lorry coming to unload a ship in Newport docks would pay that toll, yet if the same lorry crossed the Clifton bridge into Avonmouth docks it would pay nothing. That is another illustration of discrimination against Wales.

The second category of toll is £6.80 for a small van. That charge is punitive for small business enterprises. A plumber or an electrician may need to cross the river two or three times a day, and that exorbitant cost is a disincentive to enterprise.

The third category is £3.40, for a car. Some years ago when Lord Tebbit was a Member of the House he urged people who were out of work to get on their bikes. Many redundant steelworkers in south Wales have followed his advice and secured employment in Avonmouth. But for showing a bit of initiative they are charged £3.40 per day on top of their normal motoring costs. All those charges increase annually at well above the rate of inflation, and even the right to a public inquiry to contest the increases has now been arbitrarily withdrawn under the Severn Bridges Act.

Tourism must be affected on both sides of the channel. After all, in economic terms everything is decided at the margin. The burghers of Bristol, too, must be concerned about the hundreds of Welsh people who, because of those iniquitous tolls, no longer cross the channel on shopping expeditions. In that context, I am glad that my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) and for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) have agreed to be sponsors of the Bill.

Why should south Wales be discriminated against in that way? We have to compete for new jobs with towns and cities in England, and all we ask for is a level playing field. My Bill will be a step towards ending that discrimination, and I appeal to hon. Members on both sides of the House to give it full backing.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roy Hughes, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Win Griffiths, Ms Jean Corston, Dr. Roger Berry, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Alan W. Williams and Mr. Ray Powell.

SEVERN BRIDGES ACT 1992 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Roy Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to amend sections 9 and 10 of the Severn Bridges Act 1992: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 March, and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[6TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Manufacturing Industry

Madam Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I have also had to limit speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm to 10 minutes.

3.48 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

> That this House is of the opinion that there are industries, such as the steel industry, the car industry and the airframe industry, which cannot be allowed to fail if Britain is to remain an advanced economy; believes that the future of the sole remaining British owned and British controlled motor manufacturer, Rover, must continue to be a matter for Her Majesty's Government; observes that all these views which were expressed by the President of the Board of Trade prior to his appointment are at odds with the continuing redundancies in steel and aerospace and the acquisition of Rover by BMW since his appointment; notes that, under this Government, employment in manufacturing has fallen faster and that output of manufacturing has risen more slowly than in other major industrial countries; regrets that Britain has run a deficit in trade in manufactured goods in every one of the past twelve years and has run an unprecedented balance of payments deficit even in the years of recession; rejects the Government's policies of promoting a low wage, low skills workforce; and calls for an industrial strategy both in Whitehall and in the regions to achieve competitiveness through a high-tech, high investment manufacturing base.

The motion stands in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself, but I had hoped to be able to move that wording on behalf of the President of the Board of Trade, too, because, in an attempt to achieve cross-party unity on the question, the first quarter of the motion consists of direct quotations from the right hon. Gentleman's writings before he was appointed to his present job.

Sadly, however, it is not possible for me to include the name of the President of the Board of Trade in the motion, because he has put his name to the amendment to delete even those passages culled from his own writing. In case it has slipped his mind, I refer him to the passage, which he will find on page 113 of his book "Where There's a Will", where he said:

> "The future of the sole remaining British owned and British controlled motor manufacturer of Rover will continue to be a matter for the Government...Otherwise, the British motor industry will find itself further down the cul-de-sac to extinction."

There is no doubt that, when he comes to speak, the President will explain precisely at what point between 1987 and 1994 he changed his mind, because Rover, the sole remaining British-owned and British-controlled motor car company, has ceased to be British owned and British controlled and it happened while he was President. No wonder that at the Tory party fringe meeting in 1989 the President warned the meeting that they should watch for the Conservative's claim on industrial performance in case:

> "Your empty words will come back to haunt you."

Perhaps the President will follow the words of the Minister who said, when we discussed the matter in the House, that the purchase of Rover by BMW was somehow a triumph of the industrial strategy of the Government. If that is the case, it is an industrial strategy which the rest of Europe does not seem anxious to emulate. Italy still has two volume car manufacturers, France has two, Germany has three and Japan has five. Britain is alone in having, as some hon. Members have already prompted me, only Rolls-Royce and the Reliant Robin under British ownership.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall happily give way. I was about to refer to a Conservative central office research department brief, but I am happy that the hon. Gentleman's remarks will anticipate that.

Mr. Mills: Are those car manufacturers in Italy and France productive and making money?

Mr. Cook: They are making cars, they are providing jobs—[*Laughter.*] Hang on. They are making cars, they are providing jobs, they are providing exports, they are also providing contracts for the suppliers to those industries and they are fulfilling a vital role in their economies. Part of that role, which is endangered by the loss of British control, is that they provide high technology, high design and the opportunity to take strategic decisions in the car industry. That is now at risk.

I was about to refer to the Conservative research department brief on Rover and BMW because it attempts to put in perspective the purchase of the last volume car manufacturer by a foreign firm, by contrasting it with UK firms that control and own apparently foreign companies and brands. It lists Häagen Dazs, Fabergé, Courvoisiér and, to bring it to a climax, Jacuzzi. I will not take anything away from those market industry success stories, but they are not in the same league as the last major British car volume producer.

Häagen Dazs has its virtues, but it does not play the same role in Britain's engineering base. Courvoisiér does not make the same contribution to developing our engineering skills. I suspect that not even Fabergé provides the same orders for supply industries in Britain. If I must choose between the British ownership of Rover and Fabergé, I can express myself best with another quote from the President. In the past week, I reread the President's speech in the debate on Matrix Churchill and was much taken by a sentence of his which I rediscovered. He said:

> "If I must rely on the Attorney-General or the hon. Member for Livingston it is the simplest decision that I have ever had to make in my life."

At the time, in my naivete, I assumed that the decision was simple because he was going to rely on his colleague the Attorney-General. I now understand that that was a coded message that he preferred the advice of even his opposite number to the advice of the Attorney-General. To echo the President of the Board of Trade, if I had to choose between British control of Fabergé and Rover, it would be the simplest decision that any of us could make.

Clearly, it does matter whether Rover is controlled in the midlands or in Bavaria, for the reasons that the President gave in 1987:

> "Foreign investment is of course to be welcomed, but control has its dangers. For the major parts of the British motor industry to fall entirely into foreign hands would leave it a hostage to decisions in foreign capitals."

The threat to Rover is that those decisions will now be taken in Munich rather than the midlands. The risk is of a "headquarters effect" in which there will be a concentration of advanced technical skills and strategic management decisions in Bavaria. Youngsters who want to get to the top of motor engineering design will have to go to Munich to get there. There will be a gradual increase in import controls on the content of Rover models and, ultimately, BMW will take the up-market, high value-added models, leaving Rover the low-cost, mass-volume cars that are most vulnerable to competition from low-wage economies.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): The Leader of the Opposition has now said that the ownership of companies is no longer important. Will the Labour party therefore drop clause 4 from its constitution? If not, why not?

Mr. Cook: I am not entirely clear how that intervention arises naturally from the matter that I am rehearsing before the House. However, the issue is adequately and clearly distinguished in the writings of the President of the Board of Trade. What is at stake here is not just the question of ownership; it is the question of control. Just as Germany and BMW would not dream of letting the control of BMW pass outside Bavaria, we are also right to be concerned about the control of our last major volume car manufacturer. That point is understood in France, Germany and, most certainly, Japan.

Mr. Riddick: What about clause 4?

Mr. Cook: May I tell the hon. Gentleman that British Leyland was taken into the public sector because it collapsed in the private sector. While in the public sector, it was turned round and the Government passed it on to British Aerospace for a song. Given the profit that British Aerospace has now made on that ownership, Conservative Members would do well to keep quiet about public ownership.

The real disgrace of the Rover purchase is not that it has been bought by a foreign firm but that there was no British bid to purchase it. The real indictment of the Government's stewardship of this nation's industrial financial affairs for the past 15 years is that no company, organisation or consortium had the capability or will to put up the £800 million necessary to keep Rover under British control. The most telling criticism of the Government is their lack of commitment to manufacturing industry and the fact that they made no attempt to put together a British solution.

I presume that the President knew that British Aerospace was trying to sell the whole outfit and about the financial pressures on British Aerospace. I presume that he read the report presented to him last year by his aviation committee, pointing out that levies from the Treasury on aerospace sales now exceed current Government contributions to grant aid for research and technology in aerospace.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I should like to continue this passage. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall give way to him. I have never failed to do so because it is always highly worth while. If he will be patient, his turn will come.

I presume that the President noticed his aviation committee's conclusion that our level of support has declined relative to other countries, that we are the only country that now deducts EC research funding from

[Mr. Cook]

Government funding for research and technology in aerospace, and that unless we match other country's budgets we shall be

"forced out of key areas of aeronautics".

British Aerospace has advertised that very danger in the past two months by declaring 1,900 redundancies since the beginning of this year. Is there any doubt that there were troubles at Rover's parent company? They were banished when British Aerospace decided to sack its chairman with a payment of £3.2 million for his year and a half in office. That is enough to meet the redundancy payments of 1,000 ordinary workers. When the Prime Minister was asked about it, he told the House that it was not a matter for him.

The Government cannot insist that work forces should be flexible and on low wages and casual terms and conditions, and then stay silent when top executives take small fortunes when they are sacked by the same companies. That is a double standard which will destroy any attempt to build a common purpose which is necessary to regenerate our industrial base.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does the hon. Gentleman have any recollection of the state of the British car industry when Labour was in power? Does he have any shame for Labour's record when they were in power? Is not it true that under the last Labour Government we lost the chance of having a genuine British global player in international car markets? It is both a miracle and a tribute to what this Government have achieved that we have brought the British car industry back to this state when companies such as BMW are willing to take it over.

Mr. Cook: I remember what the situation was like at the end of the last Labour Government. I remember that we had a trade surplus—and we had run a trade surplus in every year of that Government, in a way that this Government have never managed in any year. I remember that we achieved an investment rate of over 3 per cent. of gross domestic product in manufacturing industry in a way that this Government have never managed to achieve. I remember that we had an unemployment level that this Government would regard as a major triumph if they ever once achieved it.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No. I remember one other thing, since this Government are so adept at claiming that they have no responsibility for what is happening in industry: I also remember that we had a mining equipment industry. I know what has happened to that industry over the past two years. Butterly Engineering has laid off one third of its work force since the President took office; the Dale Group has more than halved its work force since the President took office; and the Anderson Group is down one quarter in its work force.

There is no point in the Government congratulating themselves in their amendment on achieving low inflation and creating the conditions for business success and then telling those companies that the conditions for business success have been put in place. Those companies are going down because the President has destroyed their market by presiding over the closure of the most profitable pits in Europe with the richest coal reserves in Europe. Let us not hear the Government say that that is not their responsibility.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way in a moment—I want to conclude this passage.

There is an evasion of responsibility in the Government's amendment. The opening line of the amendment invites the House to regret the Opposition's denigration of the achievements of United Kingdom companies. For the record, the achievements of United Kingdom companies over the past 15 years have been heroic, given the background against which they had to operate. But I must disabuse the Government. The subject of the debate is not how well companies have done against that background, and it is not the achievements of United Kingdom companies over the past 15 years—it is the Government's record as the stewards of Britain's industrial prosperity over those 15 years.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will the hon. Gentleman include in that list of heroism of British industry British Steel, which cost the taxpayer £300 million a year when it was in the state sector and which is now a major contributor to this economy? That is the real success of privatisation under this Government.

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to debate steel—I know that a number of my hon. Friends intend to speak on steel—and if he speaks to senior executives in British Steel, he will not find a warm echo for the Government. Those executives remember how only last December a Minister of State, having given an assurance that he would agree to no deal rather than a bad deal, went to a meeting in Europe and agreed to the continuation of subsidies for companies that are undercutting British Steel. The problem for British Steel now is that it has in Britain some of the most successful and most efficient plants in Europe, which are now at risk.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Cook: I appreciate the enthusiasm of hon. Members to take part in this debate. I wish to ensure that there is some time for them to take part when I conclude, so if they will forgive me I shall continue my speech. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) presents me with some advice with regard to the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes). It may be advice that tempts me to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene at a later stage, which I would not object to.

Why have we seen that decline in investment in British industry over those 15 years? In case we are accused of running down the British people as well as United Kingdom companies, I must say that there has been no reduction in the inventiveness or creativity of British people. British designers are working all round the world. They are designing Yamaha motor cycles, Pentax cameras and Tefal kettles and they are providing two thirds of the software for Nintendo and Sega. Any other nation would be harnessing that wealth of talent to build its own manufacturing base.

The Government must explain why, after 15 years in charge of Britain's industry, those creative designers, at the top of the global profession, are not working in Britain on goods to be made in Britain. One reason is that we have been through 15 years, during which at least one of the predecessors of the President of the Board of Trade told the nation that we need not worry about the decline in manufacturing, because we can all get jobs in the service industry, showing tourists round museums of industrial archaelogy after the factories have shut down.

There is another reason. Those 15 years include two of the worst post-war recessions into which the Government tumbled Britain, by a combination of record high interest rates and an overvalued exchange rate on both occasions. Both recessions closed more industrial capacity than was destroyed by enemy action in a world war. It is permanent loss of capacity. If any Conservative Members doubt that, let them look at the trade figures. In every year until the recession in the early 1980s, Britain ran a surplus in manufacturing trade. In no year since that recession has Britain had a big enough industrial base to avoid running a deficit in manufactured trade.

Last June, the Prime Minister addressed the National Conservative Women's conference. He urged that audience to

"look around Europe. Look at France, at Germany, at Italy. Wherever you look things are worse than they are in Britain."

Let us look at France, Germany and Italy—those industrial sick men of Europe. The last six months of trade figures that we have for those countries cover the period conveniently up to June 1993, which was the month of that speech. In the six months before that speech, every one of those countries ran a surplus with Britain—a surplus of £17 million in manufactured goods in every working day. Since 1985, they have all increased their exports faster than Britain; they have all had a smaller loss of manufacturing jobs than Britain and they have all increased manufacturing output faster than Britain. Those are the countries with which the Government invite us to compare their record.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how British manufacturing exports to Malaysia are assisted by the antics of the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)?

Mr. Cook: There is one reason why British exporters to Malaysia now face the possibility of disruption of their trade and that is the corrupt way in which the Government put together the Malaysian dam deal. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) received an answer to his question. It would be nice if, just once in 15 years, Conservative Members were prepared to accept responsibility for an error they made and which is now hitting manufacturing industry.

We know on whom the Government will try to dump the blame for the poor figures of the past 15 years. We know who stands in for the Attorney-General as a scapegoat for the decline in manufacturing—it is the workers. They are not flexible enough or cheap enough or they are too wedded to what I suppose is now seen as another damaging excess of socialism—an ambition to hold a secure, full-time, well-paid job.

I give the Government this: if their strategy was to destroy secure, full-time, well-paid jobs as the obstacle to growth, their policies have been a runaway success. There have never been so many people working in this nation without a permanent contract of employment, without protection against unfair dismissal or without security at work.

Mr. Sykes *rose*—

Mr. Cook: The hon. Member for Scarborough is not secure in his place of work, but I will give way to him.

Mr. Sykes: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how many manufacturers he has met during his career who agree with the Opposition's policy on the social chapter?

Mr. Cook: I must say that I addressed 120 industrialists before I came to the House, and not one raised the issue of the social chapter. The concerns that we constantly hear from the Government—that the social chapter in Britain would deter inward investment—sits oddly with the recorded fact that employees of companies working for foreign firms in Britain receive an income 25 per cent. higher than those working for British firms.

The Government have chosen to create a casual, part-time and low-wage labour market. They not only chose to create it—they boast about their success in creating it. They advertise for foreign companies to come here because British workers are worse paid. The central office brief on the sale of Rover congratulates Conservative policies in creating a work force which is paid one quarter less than the work force in Germany.

We must be the only democracy in which the elected Government hope to run for re-election on the slogan that one is worse off under them. There is a problem. A casual, short-term and low-paid work force will also be a poorly motivated, badly trained and low-skilled work force. One does not get a competitive and keen work force if the workers know that they are treated as disposable assets. One does not get a commitment to invest in the training of a work force from a company that has no commitment to that work force.

Last autumn, the Chancellor of the Exchequer attended the World Economic Forum, which published its 1993 report. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not a great reader, but he might take the report along with him the next time he slips into the back row of Ronnie Scott's. He might then consult the table that ranks the 22 member states by the availability of skilled labour. He will find that that table puts Britain plumb bottom. That is a measure of the damage that the Government have done by building a deregulated and casual work force.

We will not compete with the low-wage work forces in the far east economies on the basis of wage costs. Not even this Government could advertise for investment on the basis that we can pay workers one quarter less than China. The only way to survive and to preserve a quality of life in Britain is not to trade down in wage levels but to trade up in the value that is added to the things we make, and that takes investment.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: What a revelation.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Member for Gravesham finds that to be a revelation. That brings me to the central crashing failure of his Government's industrial record. They have presided over the collapse in manufacturing investment, which is now at its lowest level as a percentage of GDP since the Central Statistical Office started taking records.

In 1979, investment in manufacturing as a percentage of GDP was 3.5 per cent. I invite the hon. Gentleman to pay attention to the next line, because he will find it to be a revelation. It is currently at just over 2 per cent. For the hon. Gentleman's edification, that is a drop of one third in real terms. Never once in any of those 15 years have the

[Mr. Cook]

Government matched the level of investment in manufacturing as a percentage of GDP of any year under Labour. Even the Government's best year is worse than the worst year under Labour.

I will be even more insulting to the hon. Gentleman, who may find this more difficult to swallow. Even in the Government's best year, the figure was lower than in any year under the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) which it was once fashionable to denounce even more virulently than the Opposition.

The Government cannot come up with another alibi —they were present at the scene of the crime. They have been in power throughout the period in which investment in manufacturing industry has declined. They share some of the responsibility for that historic low rate of investment because, during the same period in which they weakened trade union power at the workplace, they strengthened the financial power over industry.

The results are there for all to see. Under the Government, the proportion of profits paid out as dividends has gone up from about 50 per cent. to almost 70 per cent. We are now distributing in dividends almost double the proportion of profits of Germany or Japan, which is why our investment performance is weaker. They retain two thirds of the profits to be reinvested in the company; British companies retain only one third of their profits for reinvestment. That is why every German worker and every Japanese worker is backed by more capital, more plant, more machinery and more investment than every British worker. I concede to the hon. Member for Gravesham that industrialists know that.

Industrialists are aware of the need to invest more and to pay out less in dividends. They keep their dividend up because if they do not the price of their shares will fall and they will become vulnerable to a takeover. They know that if they become vulnerable to a takeover, they will receive no help from the Government, who have presided over a record number of takeovers with a minimum number of interventions. They have not once referred a hostile takeover to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the grounds of its threat to a technological base, its threat to employment or its threat to the regional balance of our economy. Even in the recession, dividends went up one sixth while investment went down one fifth. How can it be right to increase dividends when we cannot afford to invest?

The real problem in British industry that the Government should attempt to resolve is not the high cost of wages, but the high cost of capital. The question that the Government should ask is why the rate of return expected on a research and development project in Britain is 50 per cent. higher than in Germany and 200 per cent. higher than in Japan. They should ask why Britain is the only one of those three countries that invests less in research and development than it pays in dividends.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the reason might be that we have had high inflation, which is why returns have had to be higher?

Mr. Cook: I am confused. I do not know how often the hon. Gentleman has dropped into Treasury questions, but I understood that we were now in a permanent non-inflationary economy. I understood that the Government's prime claim to achievement was to have knocked inflation on the head. But last year investment in manufacturing industry did not rise in response to that decline in inflation; last year, investment in manufacturing industry fell by 2 per cent. Therefore, while I welcome the hon. Gentleman's doubts about the Government's inflation record, he cannot use that as an explanation for the figures that I have given.

We live in an age of rapid technological change. The future belongs to those nations that develop new technology and manufacture the products that other nations want to buy. The method of entry for joining those nations is to be found not through low wages and skills, but by putting Britain on the road to high investment and advanced research.

Central office briefs for such debates always contain another traditional feature. Somewhere in the brief—no doubt it will appear again today—is the accusation that Labour has no policies. If Conservative Members cannot put their finger on the passage in today's brief, I can tell them that it is usually found at the end of a three-page attack on Labour for making too many commitments. In case a Conservative Member, such as the President of the Board of Trade, is tempted to try that one on, I shall spell out how Labour will put Britain back on the road to higher investment of the sort that was achieved under the last Labour Government.

The proposals are contained in the document published last year. It proposes reforming the tax system to encourage investment and reviewing the changes to corporation tax that were introduced by a previous Conservative Government who placed bigger taxes on profits invested and lower taxes on profits paid in dividends. The document contains a proposal to provide industry with the security to retain profits for investment by protecting them against hostile takeovers that threaten our technological base. It proposes examining what new institutions are needed to step into the investment gap, such as a development bank on the lines of the German KFW, which specialises in providing support to help small businesses grow into medium-sized enterprises.

We will set up a network of regional development agencies to decentralise to local people the initiative to promote their own local economic development and to encourage them to match local savings to local investment. We will set up a defence conversion unit so that we can make the best use of the skills that are now being taken out of the defence economy. That would end the waste of those skilled resources that have been going through the door of redundancy into the waste of the dole queue.

Two months ago, I produced a document showing how we would encourage the development of small businesses by providing them with a statutory right to interest on late payments from big businesses and by providing a moratorium on insolvency proceedings to give them the possibility of being rescued as going concerns instead of simply joining the swelling ranks of bankruptcies.

Only last week, I and my hon. Friends the Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) published a document showing how we would take the Treasury straitjacket off public sector enterprise to give it the freedom to mobilise financial investment.

If anyone outside the House wants to see one sharp difference between our commitment to manufacturing industry and the Government's absence of commitment, they can find it best in the months that the Government have spent dithering over the proposal by London Underground to lease new stock for the Northern line from the Derby works. That proposal is urgent because the present rolling stock is near the end of its life and the Derby works is near the end of its contracts. It would save the Treasury cash by keeping 1,200 people off the dole queue.

If the President wants to persuade us that the Government are serious about boosting British manufacturing, let us hear from him that he will throw his weight behind a project that will both improve the quality of public service and hold together a skilled production team for the future of the British manufacturing base.

When we published the documents that I have placed on the Table, setting out an industrial strategy that realises a vision of Britain in which we are once again a manufacturing nation, leading and not lagging behind our competitors, we were accused by Conservative Members of socialism, interventionism and other things that they pronounce with distaste. Conservative Members are the only people I know who can make a four-syllable word such as interventionism sound like a four-letter word. The irony is that it is they who are out of step; all the rest are practising interventionists. Every other country in Europe provides a higher level of support to its manufacturing industry. Even Ireland and Portugal provide a higher level of support per capita for manufacturing industry.

In the far east, the state plays a leading role in industrial strategy. In Taiwan, the state identified 10 new sectors for high-technology production and where the companies did not exist, the state brought in the private sector to set them up.

In north America, home of capitalism, the Clinton Administration have brought the automobile industry together in a national project to design the car of the future: a car low on gas and pollution and high on safety and export orders. What a contrast that is with the British Government, who look the other way while Rover is taken over. They are the real oddballs; they are the odd ones out, the only ones who believe the future of a sophisticated industry can be left to the market. They are the only ones who believe their own rhetoric about the market always producing the best result. The real result is the worst performance among our competitors. In 15 years, it has produced the slowest growth in output and biggest drop in manufacturing investment as a percentage of GDP.

It is a measure of the extent to which the Government have spiralled out of touch with ground control that Ministers still make speeches in which they claim that the worst industrial performance is actually the best. They have had 15 years to try out their ideology and the result is that, of all the British Governments of the post-war period, they have clocked up the lowest growth in GDP.

Fifteen years is long enough for a social experiment; it is time that they accepted one of the principles they keep pushing on everybody else—that the great advantage of a flexible work force is that we can dismiss it when the enterprise fails. The Government have failed Britain. The time is coming when Britain will dismiss them.

4.24 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'regrets that the Opposition persistently denigrates the achievements of United Kingdom companies; recognises the importance of manufacturing to this country's economy; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its success in achieving the conditions for sustained non-inflationary growth-low interest rates, low inflation and good industrial relations; and welcomes the fact that both the OECD and European Commission are forecasting that the United Kingdom will be the fastest growing major economy in the EC in 1994 and 1995.'.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) spent the morning with the CBI. It has been helpful to the CBI that he spelled out this afternoon the policies of the Government of which he would like to be a member. My colleagues and I listened with interest as he went through the strategy—the proposals—with, if I may say to him frankly, refreshing detail.

I had not known until today that we would have dividend control under a putative Labour Government. I had not known, although I confess that I had suspected, that the one condition that would not matter in the conduct of the future business of a company was that it should make profits. It could make cars, toothbrushes, refrigerators or notepaper, but the one thing that would not matter is profit, because that was the one thing that the hon. Gentleman did not know about all the companies that he lauded so much on the continent of Europe.

The difficulty with making no profits is that one cannot get investors—with one exception. The state will invest in non-profit-making businesses. But there is a difficulty, because the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the Leader of the Opposition, who has wisely left the Chamber, has promised us that there will be no ownership of companies by the state.

Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) kindly asked—he seems to have gone as well, which is a shame but his question was nevertheless a good one—whether, within the purpose of the Labour party, there would be any further ownership as laid out by clause 4. That is a good question. I, too, have asked that question. I took the trouble to write to the Leader of the Opposition and ask for an answer. He wisely did not give one.

What has been revealed in the House this afternoon beyond peradventure is that, if companies do not make profits, only the state can intervene; but the state is apparently not going to intervene. The logic of that is that we shall not have any companies. That seems to me to be a fundamental lacuna in the argument of the hon. Member for Livingston.

I have to say to my hon. Friend with due apology, if he will bear with me—he will see this if he reads *Hansard* tomorrow—that I have tried to address the pertinent question which he put to the House, and which in his absence I have answered.

The hon. Gentleman went on to deal with competitiveness. It is a remarkable achievement to address the House on one of the single greatest challenges that faces this country—the competitiveness of our industrial base, on which the hon. Gentleman is about to produce a report—without going through any of the significant factors that add up to competitiveness. I will take a little time of the House to address the real issues.

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

The next step forward of the hon. Gentleman's brave new policy initiative was regional development agencies. They are mini national enterprise boards. There will not be one granddaddy National Enterprise Board, with great and worthy figures chosen from national life. Instead, they will be chosen from local and regional areas, will do the work locally and will therefore be much less exposed to national scrutiny than was the original National Enterprise Board.

I single out one issue on which apparently there are real difficulties. We are to have a defence conversion unit. For most of the past decade, when it fell to me to comment on these subjects, the Labour party tried to close down the defence industries. Now that, mercifully, we do not face quite such an international threat as previously, the Labour party wants to spend time converting the defence industries, which, if it had had the power, would have already been closed down.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to ponder the spectre of those defence conversion units. Where will the civil servants who will give advice to the leading British industrialists come from? We would have some trade unionists, presumably to give them a representative view from the shop floor. We shall need some academics to bring that searching analysis that we have heard from the Labour party, which is based on one conviction; its Members have never spent a day in their lives making anything in any company. Then we shall need some bishops to draw up a code of morality to ensure that no British product goes to any company in the world whose practices can be found in any way to be undermining those of the party in power. All those people will then sit down in a great huddle to design the car of the future.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The right hon. Gentleman said that Opposition Members had not worked in industry. Would he care to tell us how many coal mines he had worked in before he closed them, and how many industries of any kind he has worked in, as part of a Government who have presided over the destruction of manufacturing in this country?

Mr. Heseltine: I have never worked in any industry as part of a Government. I have spent my life trying to take industries out of the hands of Government—and, as a result, we have returned the commanding heights of the economy to the private sector, where they are winning for Britain in the markets of the world.

Perhaps I may digress by taking the House back to the essence of the motion, which concerns the competitiveness of the British economy. The hon. Member for Livingston may not wish to deal with that in general and wide terms; it seems to me, however, that anyone making a serious analysis of the state of the British economy would want to consider the exchange rate, which is competitive. I think that such a person would want to ask questions about the state of British exports, which are now at an all-time high —63 per cent. higher in volume terms than when Labour was last in government.

We have low interest rates: the United Kingdom base rate now stands at 5.25 per cent., the lowest rate since 1977 and among the lowest in the European Union. Interest rate cuts since 1990 are worth more than £13 billion per year off companies' interest charges. Inflation has fallen dramatically: the retail prices index, excluding mortgage interest payments, is 2.8 per cent. Over the past four months, underlying inflation has been the lowest since 1968. UK inflation is below the European Community average on all measures.

Manufacturing productivity is at an all-time high: it is more than 3 per cent. higher than a year ago. Between 1979 and 1992, total plant and machinery investment increased by nearly 50 per cent. The only way in which the hon. Member for Livingston can make any kind of case is to select one sector of the economy. I shall deal with his reasons for doing that in a moment.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): The right hon. Gentleman said that we should be posing questions about the exchange rate. He will recall that, at our last Trade and Industry Question Time, I asked him a direct question on the subject, and was given the usual brush-off of an answer that we expect on such occasions.

The right hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the exchange rate is crucial to our competitiveness. Will he now state categorically that we want no further appreciation of the rate against the dollar or the deutschmark, in the interests of maintaining that competitiveness?

Mr. Heseltine: How can the hon. Gentleman sit on the Benches of a party whose Front Benchers hardly ever make a speech without demanding larger and larger items of public expenditure, which would stoke inflation and cause the depreciation of the exchange rate? That is why the Government's counter-inflationary policies are fundamental to competitiveness.

We now have the best industrial relations for over 100 years. Moreover, nearly 1 million new small businesses have been formed since 1979. If the hon. Member for Livingston had analysed our competitiveness against that broad horizon, and explained how his party would address and improve the position, I would have respected him.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

Our industrial production has increased by 3.5 per cent. in a recent quarter; it fell in France, Germany and Japan. Both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission are forecasting that the United Kingdom will be the fastest-growing major EC economy in 1994 and 1995. To make a speech in the House against that background is simply to indulge in the traditional practices of the Labour party—mischief-making and running the country down.

So, because he dare not face up to the realities of addressing competitiveness, the hon. Member for Livingston has to single out three specific issues, three industries—and I want to deal with them.

Let me start with cars. I doubt whether a sector of the British economy has been so transformed over the 1980s as our car industry. The motion calls for high investment. Let the hon. Member tell us how much higher the investment by Ford, at £3.4 billion, he thinks should have been. Let him send a message to Vauxhall, complaining about the £650 million that it has invested here. Let him tell Nissan to take its £930 million back to Japan. Let him explain to Toyota that its £840 million was not welcome or Honda that its £370 million was insufficient.

If he were prepared to tell all those companies that, I would at least understand what he was saying, but to pretend that it has not happened and that it does not matter is a travesty of the truth.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose—*

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston did one thing for which I am grateful, one thing that I praise and admire: he quoted from my book. I was going to tell all right hon. and hon. Members that it is available from the Library but, much better than that, it is available at all good booksellers. I did write the words that the hon. Member quoted and that many other commentators have quoted, and I do not in any way draw back from them.

As Ministers responsible, when faced with the issues surrounding the recent sale of Rover, we did not stand back from them. It so happens that I was in the far east on a trade mission, but my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry (Mr. Sainsbury) saw the leading figures in BMW, as a result of which assurances were given. Are Opposition Members going to sneer and laugh at those assurances? No, they go very silent.

The fact is that Rover now has a major interest in working with BMW, and Labour Members are longing to find a way to undermine the credibility of that position. They are at it again, as they always are; when faced with straight questions, they go quiet—and they should go quiet.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Heseltine: My right. hon. Friend the Minister for Industry received assurances from the BMW chairman that Rover would be maintained as a separate enterprise, based in Britain, with independent manufacturing, design and development facilities and with purchasing and distribution functions. I am proud that it was one of my Ministers who asked for and received those assurances.

It means that Rover now has the opportunity to take advantage of the international dealer base and the expertise of BMW in increasing the scale and strength of the British motor industry, so that it will be a part of what we now perceive to be the opportunity to close the deficit in our balance of trade.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Heseltine: So I have no apologies to make. Indeed, I would go further. As many right hon. and hon. Members will recall, we had a debate in the House not that long ago about Leyland DAF, when the hon. Member for Livingston was at it again. He wanted us to do what the Europeans do, but we refused. We gave every possible help to the receiver to find people who would take over those businesses.

Today, the three businesses are back in the private sector in their own names and are increasing production, and the Government have contributed, at the very most, £5 million-worth of regional aid. What the Europeans did was to become deeply involved. It cost their taxpayers over £100 million, and the European Commission is investigating the aid programme that they put forward.

I can imagine that that would have squared the hon. Member's circle. What a joy. He would have pushed us further into Europe, he would have put social costs on the backs of those companies, the whole thing would have been referred to the European Commission, and the Labour party could have paraded it as a triumph for the internationalisation of the European process.

Let me now move on to the second of the hit targets that the hon. Member for Livingston singled out—our steel industry. The motion is very interesting, because it refers to industries that should not be allowed to fail. I do not think that anyone thinks that those industries should be allowed to fail, but what did the hon. Gentleman have in mind when drafting the motion and referring to the industries that must not be allowed to fail, including steel?

The hon. Member for Livingston said that the British steel companies were among the best in Europe. Why? Because we privatised them. Because they have improved their output and their cost structure and their profitability, we no longer have to subsidise them as taxpayers, and the hon. Gentleman said that they are among the best in Europe.

In that case, why are they in this Labour party motion? Why should anyone think that they are in danger of failing if they are the best in Europe? The answer is that it is only the Labour party that wants to create the impression that they will fail in order that Labour Members can pander to the worst anxieties of their constituents in order that they can do what has to be done in their party interest, regardless of the interests of Britain's companies, which are undermined in the process. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

The third issue singled out by the hon. Member for Livingston was, interestingly enough, airframes. I have been Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Aerospace and Shipping. I have been deeply involved in the aerospace industry. *[Interruption.]* There is not much point in talking to Opposition Members. They do not listen —and, much worse, if they did listen they would not understand.

I have spent many political years involved with that industry and I have never yet heard anyone in that industry say, "We want a policy for the airframe industry." We do not build gliders in this country. We have an aero-engine industry; we have an avionics industry. Why, therefore, did the hon. Member for Livingston single out airframes? I will tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker—because if he had mentioned aero-engines he would have had to face the fact that the triumph of Rolls-Royce plc is a triumph for privatisation, and he cannot bear success.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am sorry to disabuse the President of his hypothesis. The reason why those three words are there in the second line of our motion is that they are a direct quotation from page 111 of his book.

Mr. Heseltine: Absolutely— *[Interruption.]* I will do a deal with the hon. Gentleman. If, from now on, he will follow my policies and my quotations, I will cease to attack him across the Dispatch Box.

The aero-engine business is a critical one. Rolls-Royce is an example of just how successful British manufacturing industry can be, with an order book of £6.4 billion and 25 per cent. of the world market.

The hon. Member for Livingston asks again for a strategy. Perhaps I can tell him the strategy. For example, in the case of the airbus, we have provided £700 million of financial support to British Aerospace. The EH101 helicopter, a joint Ministry of Defence/Department of Trade and Industry project, costing £57 million; the

[Mr. Heseltine]

Tornado, with £7.5 billion of Government money; the European fighter aircraft, with £1.4 billion of support; and the Hawk, one of the most successful aircraft of its type that has been launched in this country, were all built with the help of British taxpayers. Those are the facts; those are the results.

The hon. Member for Livingston wants to substitute, for that real support for real projects and real success, a vague range of platitudes, which will add not one whit to national wealth.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The President, as he chooses to call himself, tells us that he spent all that taxpayers' money. Can he explain to us why he spent that taxpayers' money in that way? Why?

Mr. Heseltine: I did it to help Britain's defence industries and to help Britain's defence capability. I have always been prepared to acknowledge that, if we do not understand that, we shall not be able to face the fact that other countries—America, France and a range of other countries—support their defence industries, and it is a world competitive process. I have always argued that case, and I have never heard it seriously questioned by Conservative Members.

Let me discuss one other aspect.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central) *rose—*

Mr. Heseltine: Forgive me: I want to make some progress.

Let me mention one other major fallacy of the motion. It points out that employment has been decreasing in some of those industries—the major manufacturing industries —and the solution, apparently, is more investment and the use of more highly skilled people.

What the Labour party cannot understand—has not begun to embrace in its analysis of the world that confronts us—is that more investment and the use of more skilled people might lead to fewer people being employed. That is the dilemma that confronts the advanced technological world in which we move. Any suggestion—that is what the Labour party did with the steel industry—that one can stop or slow that process leads to the loss of markets, to increased subsidisation and, in the end, the rationalisation which too often takes one out of that business altogether.

The very things that the Labour party is speaking about, therefore—increased investment to secure the increased productivity and competitiveness—are likely, in many cases, to result in a reduction in employment. There is no point in the House and the country not understanding that, and explaining it to a work force who will have to have better and more widely based training precisely to enable people to move from job to job more frequently, several times during their working life.

That brings me to the question that I asked at the beginning—why did the hon. Member for Livingston choose manufacturing? There is an answer to that. Why did he choose those three industries? He did so because it so happens that, in this regard, they produce a case which does not extend across the range of the British economy. The answer to that is very important.

Manufacturing accounts for only 27 per cent. of the wealth-producing sector and 20 per cent. of the whole economy. Of course it matters, but every sector matters, and the only reason why the hon. Member keeps using those statistics is that he cannot find any way of applying the general case to the general state of the economy.

The only intellectually honest way to deal with comparisons of that type is to compare peak with peak and trough with trough; the high point of one economic cycle, compared with the high point of another. However, the hon. Member for Livingston cannot do that because, if we compare the high point of 1979 with the high point of 1989, his case falls apart. Manufacturing investment was greater under the Tories, up from £13.5 billion to nearly £15 billion between 1979 and 1989.

Let us therefore take the hon. Gentleman's own phoney way of dealing with those issues, which is to consider the whole economy. Investment for the whole economy in 1979 was £75.8 billion. The comparable figure for 1992, comparing a peak with a trough, was £94.7 billion. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Comparing a Labour peak with a Tory trough, what do we find? A growth of 25 per cent. in investment.

The news gets rapidly worse for the hon. Member for Livingston. The ground is already being cut from under his feet. The figures in the latest Confederation of British Industry surveys show—I would be the first to recognise that not many hon. Members have seen the latest CBI surveys; they were so good that they hardly received a mention anywhere in the national press—that the gross domestic product in the last quarter of 1993 was 2.5 per cent. up on the previous year. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast is that manufacturing output in the United Kingdom will grow by 3 per cent. next year—one of the fastest rates in the European Union. Certainly manufacturing matters, but it is myopic to pretend that the energy, tourism, construction, communications, entertainment and invisibles industries do not matter at all. They all contribute to the national economy, and they include some of the most successful and largest companies in this country.

As the hon. Member for Livingston is prone to publicise good news, I am sure that he will want to congratulate the Stakis Hotel Group, which recently announced a £6 million project to build a hotel in his constituency. I hope that there will not be a row of placarded pickets outside demanding that it be closed because it is not manufacturing, because such an action would not come across very well.

I refer now to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who will be winding up the debate for the Labour party. I hope that he too will celebrate the good news of the £1 billion order from the Ministry of Defence for Challenger tanks and a £140 million order from Oman for tanks and vehicles—unless Labour can find a way of upsetting our relationship with that country which would lead to the cancellation of the order.

Why did we not hear anything from the hon. Member for Livingston about the small and medium-sized economy of this country? Why did he not tell us about the 1 million extra companies that have been formed despite the world recession? The fact is that, every time the hon. Gentleman talks about competitiveness, he has to resort to generalisations and vagueness. He is not capable of producing solid policies relating to the wealth-creating process.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My right hon. Friend mentioned intellectual honesty and the macro-economic situation. He may recall that our 1992 manifesto committed us to the exchange rate mechanism as the centrepiece of our counter-inflationary policy. Does he accept that it was a failure, and that we should under no circumstances re-enter it? In view of the good news to which he has referred, and in the light of his views on the role of the Treasury in these matters, does he agree that we must ensure that we do not go back into the ERM, and that we will not take a single step further towards economic and monetary union?

Mr. Heseltine: I can say only that I helped to write that manifesto, and there is not much point in my hon. Friend trying to re-write it now.

It is very important that we deal with competitiveness. Nobody can seriously doubt the nature of the challenge we face in the world of wealth creation. The Opposition parties—the Liberals play the game as ruthlessly as the Labour party—talk of the national preoccupation that great care must be taken before we take risks with the national reputation and self-interest of our companies overseas. The fact is that Opposition politicians have become expert at undermining by innuendo and smear the interests of our exporting companies.

Let me explain to the Opposition parties that Britain does not rule the world. We do not dispense justice to the world; we do not police the world; and we do not establish the customs and practices of other countries. But we do have to sell to the world, and everything that is said here is used to harm our interests and is exploited by our competitors.

On the shop floor and in the boardrooms of this country, every sanctimonious posture is seen for what it is—the desperate parading of Opposition parties trying to get cheap publicity, regardless of the damage they do to British firms and investment. For that reason, I believe that the House will want to support the Government tonight.

4.53 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Listening to the President, as he likes to be called, giving his prospectus for the future of manufacturing, one would believe that we were living in a paradise. He could also perhaps have explained why the Government are so electorally unpopular, for unpopular they are. Many people would not begin to recognise what the President of the Board of Trade tried to explain to us.

Conservative Members, especially those sitting on the Government Front Bench, are like false rain doctors who keep saying that the rain will come tomorrow and the famine will soon be over. The truth is that the rain is not likely to come—we are as far from prosperity as ever.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): My hon. Friend shares a constituency boundary with me. Is he aware that SmithKline Beecham today announced the closure of the Beecham's factory in St. Helens with the loss of 480 jobs, thus ending a 150-year association with the town? Is he aware that, seven days ago, the company reported an increase in profits to £1.2 billion but did not have the courtesy to inform the work force or the trade unions of its intention to close the factory? Is that not typical of the way in which British employers treat their work forces?

Mr. Hoyle: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. I see that the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) is smiling. If redundancies in the north-west amuse him, it is perhaps something about which he should search his conscience.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester) *rose—*

Mr. Hoyle: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Brandreth: Will the hon. Gentleman please give way, as he mentioned me?

Mr. Hoyle: Oh, very well.

Mr. Brandreth: One is, of course, always concerned about any new unemployment. I am grateful that unemployment in my constituency is about 27 per cent. lower than five years ago because of all the inward investment. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us something about the social chapter, which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) failed to explain? The Department of Employment reckons that the cost of the social chapter would be about £5 billion. What do manufacturers in the hon. Gentleman's constituency believe that the cost would be?

Mr. Hoyle: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that there will be no manufacturers in my or any other constituency if the Government continue as they are. It was significant that when my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) gave the House the grave news of the factory closure, the President chose to ignore it and left the Chamber. He left and the hon. Member for City of Chester smiled—I do not believe that that is the way to treat such news.

It is all very well for the President of the Board of Trade to tell us about his wide experience in industry, but he has never worked in industry in his life. The same is true of all Government Front Benchers and, indeed, of many Conservative Back Benchers. I should have preferred the President to consider the underlying problems which could occur and which have occurred in the north-west.

In Lancashire alone, 40,000 people work in the defence industry. All their jobs could be affected by the imminent defence cuts, but we heard the right hon. Gentleman try to decry my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and our attempt to think of other industries and products to create new jobs. We would establish a defence diversification agency to examine what we could be doing. That idea was received with laughter, despite the fact that jobs are disappearing. The hon. Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover) is as worried as I am. He nods his head and shows sympathy and concern because 823 jobs might go at the royal ordnance factory in Chorley. In fact, notice has already been served. The 800-acre site in Chorley should be developed, yet the President of the Board of Trade said nothing about it.

The matter is of grave concern in the north-west. In Cheshire, Cammell Laird recently closed down. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North expressed concern about the rundown of the work force base. There has been a rundown of industry at Pilkington. In the past two weeks, 109 jobs have been lost at BICC in my constituency because of the state of economy. My hon. Friend said that the Parkside pit, the last in the north-west and one of the most modern, has also shut.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): Does not the hon. Member welcome the Government's new policy for the north-east, the east midlands and Yorkshire to designate enterprise

[Mr. Den Dover]

zones in old coal-mining regions which have experienced an enormous loss of coal-mining jobs? That policy proposes 100 per cent. capital allowances, 10 years without business rating and free planning criteria. Will he therefore welcome the changes in the defence industry in the north-west and the introduction of an enterprise zone at the royal ordnance factory in Chorley, which, as he correctly said, has 800 acres of land available? We should be flexible and quick on our feet and should come up with new industries and job opportunities.

Mr. Hoyle: I should welcome an enterprise zone in Parkside, where the colliery has closed. The other day, I heard the hon. Gentleman question the Prime Minister without obtaining a positive answer on enterprise zones. I should welcome any measures that would create new jobs in not only Chorley but Newton-le-Willows, St. Helens and Warrington. We need those jobs.

Redundancies have been announced at AEA, which is one of the more successful companies in Warrington. The hon. Member for Chorley did heed a few words of sombre warning. He joined me in condemning the sale of the highly successful truck division of Leyland to DAF. We were right, because Leyland was sold off to a village company that was not large enough to provide the opportunities that the then Secretary for Trade and Industry said would develop. We were told that the sale provided a great opportunity, but we know what happened. The bus company was acquired by a management buy-out, and in turn it was sold to Volvo. We have witnessed the destruction of the bus and coach industry in this country. The modern bus manufacturing plant in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has closed.

Leyland, what is left of it, has experienced difficulties; but thanks to its management, it is holding its head above water. It is no longer the powerful firm that was recognised worldwide for its trucks, coaches and buses. We should take that lesson on board.

Rover, the last British car company, has been sold to a foreign company. We do not need to look into the crystal ball to learn any lessons: we recall what happened to the British truck industry. Rover has been sold to BMW, one of its competitors, with all the possible dangers of that. I am sure that the four-wheel drive vehicle, which was the jewel in Rover's crown, has a future, but the future of the other models is less certain, especially since Honda's announced withdrawal. Honda helped to create Rover's success. It invested money in new models and in research and development.

Will such investment continue? What will replace the co-operation and collaboration between Rover and Honda? Will BMW fill that vacuum? What will happen when there is competition between BMW and Rover models? The Opposition know and have tried to make the point that such decisions will be taken not in this country but in Germany. There is a danger that Rover's future models, especially its larger ones, will merely be badge-engineered products.

I should have thought that that would be of some concern to the President of the Board of Trade, who again outlined the prospectus and told us how successful we are. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said that that success was due to our leaving the fixed exchange rate system. That enabled us to compete. We were taken into that system by the previous Prime Minister, who became one of its foremost opponents, but hon. Members should not forget that the Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time was the present Prime Minister. Entry might have been desirable, but the Government took us in at the wrong rate and at the wrong time. It is only because we left the system that we have had success with exports.

We must get rid of the structural difficulties that still exist in many of our industries. I noticed that the President of the Board of Trade again steered away from addressing the economic indicators. All hon. Members welcomed the falls in unemployment, but there was a rise in January. The retail sector and the previous Chancellor expressed fear about what might happen as a result of this year's Budget. They warned that tax rises would cut consumer spending and reduce the chances of a boom. The underlying rate of inflation, which has been the jewel in the crown of the Conservative party, is beginning to increase again. I should have thought that the President would spend some time examining those indicators.

As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North knows, the aluminium industry is important to Warrington. People in the industry told me recently of the consequences of free-market conditions. We are always told that everything must be left to the market. Free-market conditions in the world mean that the aluminium industry in this country and in Europe is being undercut by supplies from previously uneconomic plants in Russia, which use outdated smelters and pollute the environment. That puts the aluminium industry in this country, Europe and worldwide under great strain.

One understands that, given their position, the Russians are seeking to find what markets they can, but environmentally advanced smelters in this country are closing because of imports from countries whose plants pollute the atmosphere. Again, the President of the Board of Trade made no comment on that. What help and advice has he given to that important world industry?

The Minister might note and pass on to the Department of the Environment the importance of recycling in the aluminium industry. There is an aluminium plant in the Warrington, South constituency, the neighbouring constituency to mine. When considering how we can achieve greater success in recycling, I hope the Minister will tell the Department of Environment that the aluminium industry should be involved in its survey. There should be co-operation. Such matters cannot and should not be left to the market.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will speak later on the steel industry, but I may say in passing that, once again, we appear to have got the rough end from the Commission. We have already heard that we have the most modern steel industry in Europe, which was created under public enterprise and then sold. We have seen many redundancies and many closures of what were economic and viable plants, yet, despite all that, fines are being imposed on British industry while subsidies are given to the industries of other countries. We heard nothing about that from the President of the Board of Trade at the Dispatch Box, except that it was a matter for the Commission.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My hon. Friend will be aware that the achievement of the British steel industry today is to be able to produce steel at a cost of £413 a tonne, compared with Germany's £558 a tonne and Japan's £572 a tonne. Does he think that the Japanese or German Government would be as daft as the British Government?

Mr. Hoyle: No Government anywhere could be as daft as our Government. One despairs of them and of what they are doing to British industry.

Rover has been sold. Yet Gareth Rhys, a motor industry expert who offered his expertise to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry when I was there, reported that there could have been a management buy-out of Rover instead of its being sold to a competitor such as BMW—*[Interruption.]* I cannot hear what the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) is saying, but Gareth Rhys said that that could have happened. But to prop up the British aerospace industry, Rover was sold for £800 million.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West) *rose*—

Mr. Hoyle: Let me finish what I am saying, and then of course I shall give way.

What did Mr. Cahill, the tax exile who was appointed, get for the master stroke that put the British motor industry in jeopardy? He got a £10 million pay-off. And what did the Prime Minister say? Like the President of the Board of Trade, he said that that was not a matter for him. I expect that the workers at British Aerospace, the royal ordnance factory and Beecham would have liked redundancy terms such as those, yet the pay-off was for delivering a blow at the economy of this country.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, especially as I am hoping to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am afraid that the dream of a management buy-out, which many of us would have found attractive, must remain just that. It is common knowledge that even if £700 million or £800 million could have been found to buy out the equity, another £600 million or £700 million would have been needed to develop the model range, and that sort of money would not have been available to such an operation.

Mr. Hoyle: It was the undue haste with which British Aerospace sold out Rover, with the full backing of the Government, that alarmed many of us. The hon. Gentleman says that the management buy-out must remain a dream. Yes, it must now, for ever more, because control of the last British motor manufacturer has passed from this country and in future decisions will be taken in Germany.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): My hon. Friend is right about the impact of the sale of Rover, but I remind him that we have one other British-owned car manufacturer left—Beans Engineering of Tamworth, which produces about 1,300 Robin Reliants and Rialtos a year, and about 150 Scimitars. That makes it slightly larger than Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Hoyle: I praise Beans Engineering for what it turns out, and I hope that it will continue to turn out those products and will expand its production. That firm makes an important contribution because, as my hon. Friend says, it is slightly larger than Rolls-Royce. But now we are down to talking about the odd one or two companies. Let us hope that what remains of the indigenous motor manufacturing industry has a future.

I despair, however, because we have heard nothing positive at all from the Government. The President of the Board of Trade gave his usual knockabout performance, the kind of performance that we have grown to expect from him. He may talk about honesty, but it might have been more honest of him to have come to the House a while ago when we had a debate on Matrix Churchill and told hon. Members what had happened, instead of waiting until he was called before the Scott inquiry and then saying that he was almost forced to send innocent people to prison.

We need no lessons from the Conservative party about credibility or honesty. I was disappointed that the Secretary of State did not take his office seriously and say what he intended to do about the vital parts of the economy, instead of engaging in a knockabout performance. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston was right when he spoke of the civil and the defence sides of the aerospace industry, and about the continuing demise of companies such as Beecham and BICC. Even successful companies such as AEA Technology are continuing to slim their work forces.

If Ministers would get out of their black cars into the real world, they would find despair, disillusion and disgruntlement among many people wherever they went. Despite the figures that the Government publish every month, they would see factories closing—

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): My hon. Friend has made an important point about companies continuing to close, especially in view of what the President of the Board of Trade said about the steel industry. Steel companies throughout the country are continuing to close, and one of the reasons why—apart from the fact that companies in Europe are operating in a manner that is totally devastating to our competitiveness—is the 70 per cent. increase in scrap prices over the past 12 months. A company in my constituency is struggling with electricity prices. It is paying 54 per cent. more per kilowatt of electricity than its parent company is paying in France. That is supposed to be the competitive—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The interventions have been very long.

Mr. Hoyle: That may have been a long intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my hon. Friend was expressing the concern of his constituents and mine, and that of the constituents of my other hon. Friends and of many Conservative Members, too.

As I was saying, if Ministers would get out of their cars when they made their rare visits to plants and would talk not only to the directors in the boardroom but to the office staff and the people who produced the goods, the people on the shop floor, they would get a different message.

I have no faith in the future of our industry if it rests with the Government—with jaded John, careless Kenneth, miserable Michael and the rest of the motley crew. It is time that they got out and we had a general election to elect a Government who believe in industry and in bringing about investment and employment and who will restore our manufacturing industry to what it once was—profitable and expanding. That will never happen so long as the present Government remain in power.

5.18 pm

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) said that he doubted whether many hon. Members had industrial

[Mr. John Butcher]

experience in their own right. I preface my remarks by saying, as co-chairman of the all-party manufacturing group, that that weakness of the House does indeed sometimes manifest itself. I recall debates in the past on the engineering industry where we could muster only about 18 or 20 colleagues who had direct experience of the engineering industry at that time. I hope that the hon. Member for Warrington, North will accept in a non-partisan manner that the way in which Members of Parliament are recruited, selected and elected is something that the major political parties should consider if, with integrity, we are to defend the interests of a key sector of our economy which produces tradeable goods to the tune of about 80 per cent. of its output. Sometimes we must recognise our weaknesses and recognise that, although we may be brilliantly equipped to comment on the fortunes of manufacturing industry, due to the way in which Members of Parliament are recruited we have not brought sufficient numbers into the House who have truly understood an industry in which they have worked and earned their livelihoods. I add immediately that I include myself in that minority of people.

I shall make two suggestions. One is about an issue which both parties deem important—training and education and how those factors affect the performance of manufacturing industry. The other is about the cost and availability of capital to a sector which distinguishes itself from the service sector by virtue of the fact that it is more capital intensive than a service sector activity. I shall return to those points in a few moments and I hope that I can lay before the House a couple of proposals which may at least be worthy of further debate, even if they may not find complete consensus.

Before that, I shall refer to our current position as a trading nation. In our debates we tend to work in time frames in which industry and commerce do not work. When I listen to speeches, I sometimes think that we forget about leads and lags and trade cycles. I was refreshed and encouraged by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he brought that point to the centre of his argument. In considering trends about which we ought to worry, I shall lay one set of statistics before the House. In 1964, Britain enjoyed around 14 per cent. of the world's traded exports. By 1979, that figure had fallen to 8 per cent. If my memory serves me correctly, we did stop the rot in the 1980s and have kicked up just above that 8 per cent. in recent years.

There are a number of reasons why that remorseless decline occurred during a period in which both Labour and Conservative parties had time running our economy. First, an intensification of competition occurred. There was not too much competition in certain key sectors in the Pacific Basin in 1964. Now there is intensive competition in the sectors in which we are currently fighting in our domestic and international markets. We threw away a large number of the advantages that we held in the 1960s, but we now have an opportunity, in the first investment cycle out of the past five since the war, to be real winners in the international markets.

Something is going on out there which is exciting and tangible. If one considers the growth in productivity in this country over the past half a decade, one sees a rate of growth which cannot be explained away merely by the occurrence of surplus capacity as we emerge from a recession. It is a normal and natural phenomenon to see an increase in productivity when we come out of recession, but the current rates of increase in productivity are virtually unprecedented in our post-war history. That means that for the first time we are out-performing our competitors in Europe in the application of certain investment programmes and especially in some of the high-tech investment programmes as they apply to manufacturing systems engineering, to design work, to computer-integrated manufacture and to computer-aided design. Those special technologies have been applied faster and in a more sophisticated manner in Britain than by most of our competitors. To a certain extent, that explains the sea change in our performance over recent years. Let us bank that as an asset that we can continue to use.

We have had a bonus in the exchange rate position, which may be short or medium term. There is no doubt that the Germans especially are deeply worried about the rate at which we can capture some of their markets in north America, for example, and at which we can begin to penetrate their domestic market. The exchange rate competitiveness has been of great help, but one cannot run a country, an economy or a manufacturing sector for ever counting on an advantage given through exchange rate competitiveness. As hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber have said, we must get into higher added value, higher productivity, and apply new technologies to our basic industries.

However, we must beware of taking German economic history and applying it to Britain. No one in the House will deny that Germany has had 40 brilliant years as a manufacturing economy. It has built its Wirtschaftswunder and has been immensely successful. Germany developed a social market economy which in its terms worked and which gave it an economic dominance in Europe which many of us envied. However, it developed a social market economy which has become more social than market. German industrialists are now worried that their wonderful years are coming to an end. They can see only an erosion of market share, higher on-costs and their competitors giving them a hard time.

One can take two views of the German problem—one can either assume that it will bulldoze its way through that problem in three or four years, or one can take the slightly more apocalyptic view that some of its current structural defects may continue for some time and be the devil's own job to put right. I veer towards the latter view. We must not adopt the Germans' policies, which are beginning to fail them, with social chapterism and loading on-costs on to employers. If we do that, our German competitors will start to smile again.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. Will he comment on whether he has experience, as I have, of recently visiting a German manufacturing factory and realising that they not only do not have the technology that we have but they do not have our industrial relations either? *[Interruption.]* It is similar to visiting a British engineering plant in the 1970s in terms of management fear of the unions.

Mr. Butcher: I notice the response of Opposition Members and I repeat what I said earlier. We must be aware of leads and lags and investment cycles. Opposition Members may smile, but it is indisputable that in the five investment cycles since the war Germany has outperformed us in three and one was a shaded bet. However, in the recent investment cycle, we have done better in the application of new ideas—

Mr. Corbett: What about Germany's industrial base?

Mr. Butcher: I am not disputing that Germany's base has been built up faster than ours, but when one puts things right in 1985 one sometimes does not see the benefits until 1995. The Germans know that and we know that. Why can the hon. Gentleman not accept that and celebrate the fact that we have a chance to be winners again?

In some areas there is a consensus in the House on objectives, but unfortunately there is dissent about how to achieve them. I refer to training and to the shortage of capital in key sectors such as small and medium-sized business and manufacturing. When I was an education Minister, I enjoyed a trip to Germany. I did not take an entourage—just one inspector—and we did not see any Ministers, but spent our time intensively in German schools talking to German children, German students and German parents.

The German tripartite education system has Hauptschulen, Realschulen and Gymnasiums—high schools, technical schools and grammar schools. We abandoned such a system, but the Germans retained their free-place, state technical schools for 11 to 18-year-olds. Interestingly, the middle-class parents of children in Germany were fighting to get their youngsters not into the equivalent of grammar schools but into the technical schools because they saw the vocational opportunities to be gained from such an education.

In the past two and a half decades we have abandoned that system. May I tell my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, who used to be responsible for education, that we may be giving technical schools a push now, but why cannot we give children of statutory school age of all backgrounds, in every city, an opportunity of a technical education, paid for by the state? More than anything else, that would help us to overcome what many hon. Members are worried about—an anti-industrial culture in education and the media.

Mr. Ken Purchase (Wolverhampton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to speak of the culture in which we live, particularly for manufacturing, although I suspect that it has more of a class nature than an educational one. Does he agree that the tripartite system that he mentioned operated in this country post-Hadow from 1935 until the 1970s, yet failed to deliver as the German system has delivered? If he thinks it through carefully, he may accept that this country has a class bias towards engineers and their status which is different from Germany's. The truth lies more in that than in the tripartite system.

Mr. Butcher: I am being tempted into making a longer speech than I had intended. I have thought carefully about this matter and it is a chicken-and-egg situation. The Germans have kept their strong industrial culture because they have kept a strand of their schooling through which they put a third of their children. They continue to value that culture whereas I am afraid that we tend not to give children the opportunity to be exposed to simple questions like "What is a balance sheet?" and "What is a production control system?" No one under the age of 18 knows what those are.

Given the two hats that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has worn in the Government, my plea to him is that we should stop mucking about with the introduction of technical schools for statutory-aged school children. Let the state fund them, let us have at least one in every city of any size, and let us restore the opportunities that have been denied to many of our young people in the past quarter of a century. Let us start putting ladders up against the wall again. When I hear the manager of a big manufacturing company say that he failed his 11-plus and went to a technical school, I wonder whether future generations who could have had the opportunity to say the same will be thinned out because they will not have had that alternative opportunity.

There is still a shortage of risk capital in the small and medium-sized manufacturing sector. We can produce schemes to give incentives to people to invest by exempting them from certain taxes. At first sight my proposal may be dismissed as indulging in the worst aspects of class warfare, but I propose that we abolish capital gains tax for investments where there is a real risk of loss and where a long-term gain is sought. We already have some history on that. We know that we need not necessarily abolish capital gains tax where the gains are short term and virtually guaranteed, but the manufacturing sector and the small and medium-sized firms sector would benefit most from the abolition of capital gains tax under the criteria that I have placed before the House.

If there is agreement that we have a problem with capital, let us try that route—and if we do so, for Pete's sake let us not argue about whether capitalists or workers will benefit because everyone will benefit.

5.34 pm

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): From time to time in the House someone makes a gem of a speech and we have just heard such a speech from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher). It is a great delight to follow him.

First, may I declare an interest in ICL Computers? It seems particularly appropriate, when Britain appears to be experiencing a gradual economic recovery, to examine the current state of UK manufacturing. How has it fared during the recession and as a consequence of 1980s economic policies, and what does the future hold? Many hon. Members—we have already heard one or two in this debate—are bound to condemn the Government over their policy void towards manufacturing in Britain, but this debate is a chance to put forward positive ideas for creating jobs and wealth, both now and in the future.

Britain has traditionally earned its way in the world by inventing and making quality products. In recent years, as technology has forced change, the number of people employed in manufacturing has diminished. Other countries have adapted to that change better than Britain. No one in the House will sit back and say that all is well today with British manufacturing industry. Since 1979, large-scale industrial manufacturing has declined almost to the point of extinction in some areas. Our position in product manufacturing is certainly insecure. The

[Mr. Nigel Jones]

perception outside is that everything seems to be made in Japan, Germany or Taiwan and that Britain has, essentially, a service-based economy.

I spent more than 20 years in the computer industry before being elected to Parliament and I share the worry of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West about the make-up of Parliament today. In my 20 years in industry, I learnt that British people are not the problem. We have the best inventors and designers in the world, although we may not have enough of them. Britain has long been associated with inventions, but rarely with their practical application in recent years.

Television advertisements are widely acknowledged to be best made in Britain, but the televisions themselves are made abroad. The best cars in the world are widely acknowledged to be designed in Britain, but they are made either abroad or in Britain by foreign companies.

Britain lacks a vision for the future. The Government have a key role to play in defining that vision. We must acknowledge that the best of British manufacturing is first class. We cannot and should not criticise it. But that is not enough. Given our £12 billion trade deficit in a recession, we must be worried for our manufacturing industry as a whole. I am concerned about the state of small and medium-sized British manufacturing companies as they are the base of our wealth. Where are they? Why are there so few of them? How well are they doing? And what can the Government do to help manufacturing companies so that they thrive and Britain can pay its way in the world?

To put it bluntly, we must be able to apply enough national wealth to keep us in the manner to which we have become accustomed. How are we to ensure a manufacturing base that is strong enough to earn the money to keep up our standards of living? How are we to ensure that that is not done to our country's environmental detriment?

The future of British wealth is in high technology. Hon. Members may think, "He would say that, coming from a computer background". In the mid to late-1980s, the increase in manufacturing output, much of which later proved to be unsustainable, was strongest not in high-technology, high-growth product manufacturing sectors but in more dated, low-growth areas such as spirits, tobacco, asbestos goods, munitions and small arms. Each of those markets is now facing a decline.

We cannot return to manufacturing of the past, but we can have a strategy for the future and a proper integrated plan. It should include support for research into new technologies, targets for sustainable developments, and ensuring high educational standards for future generations and for those currently trying to get back into the work force. That must be led by the Government. It is not the Government's job to run industry but they must support it. As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West said, the Government must provide the opportunity for industry to take long-term decisions, and they must encourage industry to take an environmental view and an investment-led view.

In 1987, before I entered the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) introduced the House to the concept of a fibre-optic communications highway reaching into every home in the land. That was his vision and we should aspire to it because fibre-optics are with us. I have a piece of fibre-optic cable with me which was made by BICC.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Is it not the case that fibre-optics were being developed by British Telecom years before the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made his speech?

Mr. Jones: Fibre-optic communications are a miracle which was invented in Britain. [*Interruption.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware of this, but it is not acceptable to bring what could be considered a missile into the Chamber.

Mr. Jones: I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is nothing subversive in a one-foot length of fibre-optic cable.

My right hon. Friend's vision in 1987 was a fibre-optic communications network—a broad band highway reaching into every home in the land. Every time the utilities —gas, electricity, telecommunications or water—dig up the road, it pains me that they do not put fibre-optic cables everywhere. There is a map in the office of my Chief Whip showing the areas of the country that are currently being set up for cable television. Eighty per cent. of the country is completely untouched.

For the future well-being of our people and our businesses, we should ensure that Britain plays its full part in that exciting new information revolution and gains a decent slice of the market. What are the benefits of a communications highway? It would create jobs—jobs in manufacturing the fibre-optics, installing the network and making the terminals that people would need in their homes and offices to make use of the highway. I am not simply talking about cable television. I want to see a two-way multimedia information flow, for example, to allow distance learning.

In yesterday's debate, hon. Members discussed the need for investment in education to equip our people with skills so that our work force can compete in an ever more competitive world. Distance learning is one way in which we can open the opportunity to study and learn from home cheaply, for example, for young mothers wishing to keep up to date with their skills and for those who have lost their jobs to retrain for a new career. There will also be a chance for companies to make use of teleworking so that their experienced staff, who, for one reason or another, wish to change their pattern of work, can still contribute their experience from home.

If traditional markets are lost or declining, we must look to new and growing markets. There is a substantial market for environmental products and processes, to which the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) referred. The market is currently estimated to be worth £200 billion a year and is expected to treble in size in the next six years.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall give way once I have developed this point. The United Kingdom is not matching its competitors in seizing these opportunities. Germany's share of the world market for environmental technology is 21 per cent; the United States, 16 per cent; and Japan, 13 per cent. Britain's share of this huge market is estimated at only 1 per cent.

Mr. Arnold: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House how we will maintain our traditional markets for our manufactured exports if the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) continues to attack Malaysia, which is one of those principal markets?

Mr. Jones: We had that debate yesterday—I am not entirely sure that I saw the hon. Gentleman in the House then.

Many people think that to be environmentally friendly means closing things down, but it is not like that. The future demands that we pollute our rivers and air less. If we give scientists a problem to solve, more often than not they will produce a solution. Environmental technology is big business and Britain should be in it. It pains me when I hear that Johnson Matthey, which is developing fuel cell technology—making energy from water—is doing its research in Reading, but will manufacture its products in Belgium because it is getting help from the Belgian Government.

Another area in which we are about to lose our world lead is clean coal technology which is carried out at the Coal Research Establishment in Stoke Orchard just outside my constituency. We are investing peanuts in that industry, compared with Japan. There are huge opportunities for British business to reap rewards from measures to promote environmental sustainability, but the Government have yet to show the necessary commitment. Indeed, included in an overall strategy to build a new manufacturing base for Britain should be three distinct areas that have already been mentioned: research and development, in which we must invest more; education, which we talked about yesterday; and infrastructure, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is always banging on about in the House.

A recent report, "The 1993 UK Research and Development Scoreboard", revealed that only 11 of the top 200 world companies are British. The companies were ranked according to research and development expenditure as a percentage of sales, profits and dividends. That is a sorry score. There is a strong case for providing incentives to encourage research and development in small to medium-sized firms.

In my part of the country, there is a serious structural problem caused by the rundown in orders for defence equipment. Good local firms such as Smiths Industries and the Dowty Group have been hard hit with thousands of job losses and, in the case of Dowty, takeover by TI.

There has been much talk in the House and outside about defence diversification and the so-called peace dividend. This country must not spend less on research and development because defence spending has gone down. The money should be transferred to civil research and development. Engineers and design teams are there. There are not enough of them, but there are many good people out there. They are as skilled as anyone in the world and they are ready to make world-beating products for civil markets, just as they produced world-beating military products in the past. The aerospace industry is vital to Britain as an export earner.

I was confused by the word "airframe" in the motion. I thought that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) scored a direct hit on the President of the Board of Trade when he said that the word "airframe" was included in the President of the Board of Trade's book. I am sure that if the President of the Board of Trade had drafted his own motion, he would have used the word "aerospace" because aerospace is the net contributor to the balance of trade of some £2.5 billion. It is one of those high value-added industries where Britain has enjoyed, and still enjoys in certain areas, a world lead.

In a debate on aerospace in the House last December, I said that the programme on launch aid should be extended to aerospace equipment manufacturers, rather than being limited to airframe manufacturers. The Leader of the Opposition is right to say in the motion that we cannot allow our great industries such as aerospace to fail. However, there is a danger that they might fail because the Japanese Government have—

Mr. Purchase: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in my constituency of Wolverhampton, Dowty, which he mentioned, has lost more than 400 jobs recently, demonstrating the clear way in which the aerospace component industry has shrunk almost irrevocably? Is not that indicative of the way in which our aerospace industry has shrunk recently?

Mr. Jones: It is indicative. As I said, we have a world lead in certain parts of the aerospace industry including, for example, landing gear, which Dowty makes, and propellers. That sounds like old-fashioned technology, but the propellers produced in Staverton just outside my constituency involve sophisticated modern technology.

There is a danger that the older industries in which we have enjoyed a world lead could fall. For instance, Japan has announced its aim of producing a complete aircraft by the year 2015. Only a fool would bet against their achieving that.

High research and development priorities are of limited use in isolation unless we have properly trained people. The Government's record on training and education is woefully short of what is needed in an industrialised nation such as Britain if we are to succeed in the world.

I should have liked Rover to remain independent under British ownership. It is not a happy situation that the only British car manufacturers remaining under British ownership are Rolls-Royce and Reliant and specialist car makers such as Marcos, TVR and Morgan. They are excellent companies, developing new products. I went to the launch of the Marcos Le Mans GT, which, sad to say, few people will drive, as the company makes only one a week.

Mr. Purchase: How much are they?

Mr. Jones: They cost about £30,000.

Rover needed access to investment funding which British Aerospace could not provide and which did not appear to be available in Britain. Honda was offered a 100 per cent. buy-out, but turned it down. Rover's success in recent years has been because of positive practices within the company by management and workers. It had a positive attitude to partnership and its success was nothing to do with Government legislation. The management made a deal with the work force that they would guarantee employment in return for flexible working conditions. BMW has a lot to learn from Rover on management techniques. It would be illogical if BMW were to do anything but build on Rover's success, but there seems to be no guarantee of that.

[Mr. Jones]

At the Conservative party conference last year, the Prime Minister made some encouraging comments about manufacturing industry. He said that he wanted British industry to be the best and to

"compete on a level basis with the rest of the world . . . make pounds for the UK; don't make dollars for other people."

He said that industry should

"sell abroad and buy at home".

I was encouraged by those statements. I thought that the Government had at last learned of the importance of manufacturing industry.

To survive in world industry, we must invest. As the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West said, that investment must be long term and large. Our competitors understand that. Japan, Germany and the United States all have strategic plans to help their industries. I was disappointed when not much happened in the Budget. There was no vision for the future, no statement of direction and no tangible support for industry.

I urge the Government and the Opposition to fire people's imagination with a vision for the future. The United States document, "The National Information Infrastructure—Agenda for Action" is as good a start as any. Investment in infrastructure is vital. Deregulation is also critical to explosive growth, particularly in communications highways, not just in Britain but throughout Europe.

I look forward to the report of the Bangemann high-level group, which is looking at issues surrounding the creation of a European information infrastructure. The group consists of some exceptional people, including Peter Bonfield, chairman and chief executive of ICL, and Pehr Gyllenhammar, former executive chairman of Volvo. They are people with vision. Their report to the European summit at Corfu should be studied and acted upon.

There is nothing wrong with British people. Given a vision of a better future, they will work for it and make it happen. I hope that today's debate will start to create that vision.

5.53 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): My hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) made some interesting points about the comparison between Britain and Germany. They will have heard—the Opposition do not seem to have heard this—of the recent remarks by Gunther Rexrodt, the German Economics Minister. He said, almost in despair, "If only we had done what Britain did in the 1980s. If only we had privatised, deregulated and reduced the tax burdens on industry in the way that the Brits did in the 1980s, we would be in a wholly better position than we are in today."

Such a comment would not come easily to the Germans. After all, Germany is a great and proud industrial nation. It is the home of Vorsprung durch Technik and has a great commitment to technical industrial innovation. Despite that, Germany is prepared to say that what was done in Britain in the 1980s was a real revolution in our approach to industry and manufacturing.

I am pleased to say that that revolution has continued, despite the problems of recession in the 1990s. I welcome what has been done by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and his Ministers in connection with competitiveness, which, as he said, is the heart of the matter. It is what manufacturing and commerce are all about. I am glad that he has set up the competitiveness unit because it has provided a focus for comparison with the best practice in other countries, which we badly need and from which we can learn.

I am glad that the Government have introduced the deregulation Bill. That continues the wide and virtuous approach to industrial practice which we started in the 1980s and which we are now carrying on so successfully. One consequence of that approach is that, apart from anything else, it has provided a raft of new companies in the private sector—British Gas, the electricity companies, British Steel, British Airways and British Telecommunications. They are in the mainstream of big international industries and are major players in a way that they never were in the nationalised sector. Those companies can be added to the existing private sector companies. It is not surprising that we have 22 of the 50 largest companies in Europe. That is the strength that we now have in major industries and we can claim legitimately that it is a product of the supply-side policies of the past 10 or 15 years.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) spoke with great interest about information super-highways. I am sorry to say that that industry was not fathered by the Liberal Democrats or that party's leader. The hon. Gentleman will know that what is happening in that business worldwide is extremely interesting. It is a major new industry which is divided into four or five different sectors, each of which is worth billions of pounds. He will know that Japan has just cancelled £4 billion worth of investment which it got wholly wrong, while British Telecommunications is beautifully placed to take advantage of the wise decisions that have been taken in the past 10 or 15 years.

The hon. Member for Cheltenham said that there is no cable under the streets in his part of the world. In Orpington, the cables are being put in, in the right place —not here—so that my constituents can have free local telephone calls and obtain every television service that they want. That sort of development is happening throughout the country. It shows that Britain is at the forefront of advanced technology, as well as having sizeable companies that can make a major contribution.

We are not talking just about large companies. We are developing medium-sized and smaller companies which we need in order to develop a proper industrial base for the future. Orpington may be seen by most people as a constituency in which the majority earn their living by travelling to the City of London. Indeed, about 15,000 of my constituents travel to the City each day from the various stations in Orpington. Therefore, it is important to us that the City is restored to something like its former health. However, I have found that a new set of high-tech companies is arising before my eyes. For example, A.C.Egerton is in the cable-activated television industry to which the hon. Member for Cheltenham referred. It exports 85 per cent. of its product, employs 400 people and is expanding all the time. That is the sort of modern company which is springing up in Britain.

In Orpington, we also have major companies involved in the earth resources industry. For the cognoscenti, that involves the technology used in drilling for oil in the North sea, in which we are a world leader. That is happening at the forefront of technology and is a result of the policies that we have developed over the past 10 or 15 years.

Whether we are talking about small or large industries, the whingeing and snivelling Opposition motion is backward-looking and wholly irrelevant. We need not talk in terms of constant redundancies, high unemployment or low technology. We are involved in high technology in a major way. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West that we are winners once again, and that we have major opportunities if we will only grab them successfully.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned that he had spent the morning at the CBI, and that is a valuable thing for a shadow spokesman to do. The hon. Gentleman should have picked up the fact that the CBI is not altogether happy with the industrial policies of the Opposition. What clearly worries the CBI above all—apart from the interventionism and the raft of old-fashioned ideas, reminiscent of the 1960s and 1970s, which the Opposition will bring back if they come to power—is the Opposition's tax policy.

Opposition Members have made a lot of the Government's taxation policy in the past few weeks, but their tax policy for companies and for industry would be extremely damaging. The shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), produced a pamphlet before the Budget about tackling tax abuse. He proposed that a number of tax loopholes be closed, and he alleged that those loopholes were exploited mainly by companies in this country. If he were to close those loopholes, he would, by his own calculations, increase taxation on industry. It is estimated that that would put an extra £3.6 billion on the tax and costs of industry during two years, which is roughly equivalent to an increase of about 25 per cent. in the rate of corporation tax.

The hon. Gentleman also proposed, almost in the same breath, a windfall tax on the profits of utilities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will be aware of exactly what that would do to investment and jobs in those industries, and to costs in the rest of industry. That is typical of the Opposition's attempt to square the circle, which they still have not done, between their spending plans and their tax plans. To try to pretend that individuals can be somehow let off and that all the burden can be put on industry is totally misconceived, and will not work.

While I would say that the Government are going in the right direction, there are two threats which I should like to point out. One is the threat that I perceive from the European Union, and the other is the threat that I perceive from the Treasury. I do not put those in any particular order of importance or incompetence, but I will deal with the European Union first.

Many of us have been struck by the fact that the European Union has spent so much time contemplating its own navel. It has built a carapace of new institutions—some of them have merit, while others have not. In the meantime, however, the world outside has moved at an almost frightening pace.

For example, the countries of the Pacific rim, such as Indonesia, with 185 million people, have grown. We always think of China with more than 1 billion people, but there are other countries with huge populations and of huge economic significance which are now growing extraordinarily fast. Those include Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia. The far east is a huge market, and will soon account for 40 per cent. of the world's GNP.

In addition, there is India—a giant which is awakening at last. India has ditched its socialist policies, after 40 years of attempting to make them work, in favour of a more capitalist approach, and is now growing at 6 per cent. a year. Countries in Latin America have ditched even crazier ideas, and are growing steadily. All those countries are advancing and, looking from a purely European perspective, that is extremely dangerous.

In its latest policies, the European Union has begun to show that it is aware of the dangers of some of its practices, but the Brussels bureaucrats are still too embroiled in their ideas of good regulation, good subsidy and protection. That is looking the wrong way, and the world is moving towards a lower taxation, deregulated and privatised regime which the Union still does not understand fully.

My hon. Friends should be aware that, while we must take advantage of the single market, we must play our cards extremely carefully when it comes to subsidies for the steel industry, the GATT round and the common agricultural policy, which is the biggest single piece of damaging protectionism in the world.

I will say something about the link between industrial policy and economic policy. I have long believed that the Treasury, while it has many virtues—I cannot think of them at the moment—has never really understood industry as well as it might. I was glad that the Permanent Secretary, Sir Terence Burns, tried recently, in effect, to acknowledge that, with a fairly major reorganisation of the Department and the introduction of greater industrial expertise.

There has been a conflict over the years, and under both parties—I am not making a political point—between the macro-economic policies pursued by the Treasury and what makes the best sense for industry. We have suffered since the war from that conflict. Now that we have a better understanding of industry in the Treasury, I hope that we can proceed more sensibly.

The Treasury has not held down public spending in the way it ought to if industry is to prosper in this country. One of the great lessons from looking at world industry is that it is clear that countries with a low proportion of GNP in the public sector expand fastest, while countries with a high proportion of spending and high taxation expand slowest. The correlation is almost exact. The Conservative party, as we have always wanted to do, must get public spending and taxation down to a level which industry can afford and which would allow it to prosper. We have a lot further to go, and we have not done very well so far. I hope that my hon. Friends will continue to make that point to the Treasury.

The Chancellor faces difficult decisions about how to sustain the present recovery. There is the critical question whether we will go too slowly, which may make the recovery slightly shaky, and also how far my right hon. and learned Friend must help it by further interest rate cuts. We know the important role that international confidence plays in deciding whether a particular interest rate cut works, and whether it has a favourable effect. I hope that the Chancellor will remember all that when he makes his decisions.

Traditionally, the Treasury—and, even worse, the Bank of England—has always done too little, too late. A besetting sin of the Treasury is that its approach is too cautious, and it has often talked up a recovery to a level far beyond what is justified by the facts. I do not say that my right hon. and learned Friend must lower interest rates now, but he must keep the prospect firmly in mind over the

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next two or three months. The short-term prospects of British industry depend most of all on my right hon. and learned Friend getting those decisions right.

6.8 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I must say that the President of the Board of Trade's speech was absolutely disgraceful. Listening to it, I was reminded of how worried most Labour Members were when the succession stakes were running. There was not the slightest doubt that an overwhelming number of Labour hon. Members dreaded the prospect of the right hon. Gentleman succeeding Baroness Thatcher. We saw him as our most dangerous opponent, and that was not because we thought he had nice hair.

There was much in his critique of the lack of an industrial policy of Baroness Thatcher's Government with which the Opposition would have agreed. He offered a real alternative, and a break with the dreadful waste of the 1980s. Many felt that a Government led by the right hon. Gentleman and talking about rebuilding Britain's industrial base would strike a chord, and would be seen as a break with the past.

I suspect that many of us thought that, once the right hon. Gentleman finally got the job as President of the Board of Trade that he was after for so long, we would start to see some real changes and an attempt to rebuild our industrial base.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Does my hon. Friend realise that the closer the President of the Board of Trade gets to the leadership, the less sense there is in his speeches? Does not the fact that there was no sense at all in his speech today suggest that he is back as a contender?

Mr. Livingstone *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind hon. Members that there is a 10-minute restriction on speeches now.

Mr. Livingstone: I will not take too many more interventions.

I was struck by the fact that, in analysing the disaster of the past 15 years, one law which emerges from the way in which capitalism has operated during the past 200 or 300 years is that, year by year, the advantage shifts from those nations which export raw materials to those which export finished products. The Government came to power in 1979, and seemed to ignore that entire sweep of economic history. They threw all their weight and effort behind the oil industry, to the neglect of our manufacturing base.

Now, as the price of oil has collapsed, we find ourselves in a weak position. The Government fail to understand the evidence of the way in which capitalism operates. They have left us in a structurally weak position, which the President of the Board of Trade has done nothing to rectify since he has been in that post. All the talk of how he would intervene before breakfast and after dinner has come to nothing but empty rhetoric. At the same time, he has been winding down what remains of vital industries such as our coal industry.

The Government ignore the fact that no one objects to a strong service sector. No one would sneer at the profits that the financial sector could produce. But such factors must rest on a solid manufacturing base in an advanced modern industrial society. The Government cannot continue to sustain the rest of the British economy if the manufacturing base withers away. How long can London remain the financial centre if its industrial base continues to wither as it has over the past 15 years?

Financial power will inevitably follow industrial power. We will see the shift of power from the City of London to Frankfurt. I do not mind when Conservative Members do not understand our policies or socialism—that is true even of those Conservative Back Benchers who used to be Labour Members—but I object when they do not even understand their own capitalism, which they are so happy to defend.

The position is getting worse. I was struck by some of the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr.Cook) about taking dividends out of profits. We have heard the talk about British workers and their wicked trade unions who screw too much from the profits for wages. We have heard talk about how the last Labour Government forced tax rates so high that industry and commerce were unable to be dynamic. But let us consider the past 15 years and where the burdens on companies have been increased. Wages and central Government taxes constitute less than 25 per cent. of the extra sum being drawn out of companies through dividends.

There is a striking illustration of that on the border of Brent, East and Brent, South—which I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng)—where the last factory in Britain to make electric wall sockets is located. All other electric wall sockets are imported. I opened an extension to the factory a year or two ago. I was shown around the factory—an example of all that is best of what remains of British manufacturing.

The equipment that the workers were using was as good as anything in Germany or Japan—it was state-of-the-art equipment. Workers were given the necessary time to develop their skills. I then considered how the company was run. It was a family firm of two brothers. The first call on each year's profits was investment. The company did not have shareholders looking over its shoulder. It did not have to wonder whether Hanson might bear down on it if it did not make enough profits. The firm had the same aim as German industrialists—to stay ahead of the game. The first call on profits is investment.

We must break the psychology of the Conservative mob, who sit in the Chamber like the City of London at prayer. There are no industrialists among them—they are all fringe bankers, property speculators, lawyers, advertising executives and other sundry parasites. Like many other parasites, they have a valuable role, but they need a substantial and healthy animal on which to live. They are not a substitute for the healthy animal itself. There is no industrial lobby to take up the ideas advocated by El Presidente when he was Mrs. Thatcher's main critic in the Tory party. Until we have an industrial lobby in Britain, we shall continue to decline.

El Presidente harangued us about Labour's threat to the defence sector. That sector faces a threat because the balance of the world economy is shifting against it. The fact that we do not have a proper diversification agency and policy means that jobs will be lost because the Government will not intervene to save them.

We should sit down with those who own and work in manufacturing plants and, with a proper academic back-up, plan which of our present defence industries we should convert to produce many of the products that we now import because we do not produce them. We should do that plant by plant. Many of those defence industries will remain defence industries, but many will disappear whichever Government are in power in Britain.

Whoever is in power should plan to ensure that those jobs, skills and sites are not lost. Often, those industries have the most skilled work force, working with the most modern plant. They are exactly the workers and plants that should be retooled and retrained to produce in Britain the high-quality finished products that we now have to import from Germany, Japan and America because we do not produce their equivalents. If we were to adopt that approach, it would have the tremendous benefit of reducing the balance of trade deficit.

We heard the President of the Board of Trade talk about the tremendous opportunities in the British economy. That was not the message of the Oxford economic analysis that was reported in the newspapers at the weekend. It showed a continuing and horrendous balance of trade deficit that will soon choke off any incipient recovery in the British economy that is not already choked off by Government tax increases. The analyses and estimates of the British economy that are beginning to pile up are gloomier than I first feared, yet we are living in the boom time between the two recessions.

The position will not improve in three or four years' time; we will be tipping into the next recession by then. We are now at the high point, on an upswing in the economic cycle—we are now at the same point as we were in January and February of 1983, when we were enjoying a boom. That shows how shallow and weak the present recovery is. Back in 1983, the Tories were poised for a triumphal re-election victory on the strength of the recovery, but no one seriously thinks that that can happen now.

It is no good the Conservative party dismissing what we say and do. If it does, it will be defeated. The tragedy is that we could have three more lost years, with factories closing and the continuing erosion and decline of our manufacturing base. I wonder how much longer we can continue before the position becomes irrevocable.

We in the Labour party must consider why investment in nationalised industries did not work in the post-war period. It was largely because of Treasury rules. The Treasury strangled our nationalised industries by not allowing them to set a price policy to allow them to pay for investment through the prices that they charged. It forced them to remain dependent on the Treasury. That is why I welcome the Labour party's statement on that subject.

6.16 pm

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): I spent 20 years in the car and car component industry, much of it with Dunlop, and I continue my association with the industry through Committees in the House. I am a member of the Select Committee on Employment. I pay tribute to the late Ron Leighton, who was Chairman of the Committee for eight years and, sadly, left us last year. As the lead Conservative member on the Committee, I had a mixed relationship with Ron in terms of politics, but he was an extremely nice man. I regret his leaving us, and I know that members of the Committee will share my sentiments. I know that his absence from the House will be regretted on both sides.

In the 10 minutes that I have to speak, I hope to advance a number of arguments, some of which will be reasonable, and some very good. My comments on the lack of an interest rate cut will constitute the less good part of my speech. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to communicate to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade the fact that many successful industries, such as the car industry—and others that have been less successful, such as the machine tool industry, where sales have declined, but recently recovered—would be greatly aided by a change in interest rates.

I know that there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who believe that interest rates should stay high, but the undoubted recovery in some sectors of the economy would be stimulated by further interest rate cuts. I am not sure quite how the City manages to become so nervous —but only those within it know the reason.

As a member of the Select Committee on Employment, I should like to refer to a most important report that we have produced on the future of manufacturing. I do not say that in a self-congratulatory fashion; I know there are a number of members of the Committee in the House. However, it made a number of significant points.

We took the trouble to find out why Britain is the most successful base of inward investment from Japan and Taiwan. It is quite simple: we speak English, we have a similar culture and we have the best unit labour costs in Europe. They want a base in Europe.

As someone who left the motor industry in 1979 after the winter of discontent, when the Labour party had been in charge for an awfully long time and our labour practices were undoubtedly the worst in Europe, I find it extraordinary that the Japanese and Taiwanese come here because they judge us to be the best. The final reason in our report is that they come here because they consider our work practices to be the best in Europe; they actually admire the way our people work.

Mention has been made of the increase in productivity having nothing to do with Government legislation, but of course it is due to the legislative changes brought about by my right hon. Friend, now Lord Tebbit—to whom I was PPS—in the early 1980s, among others.

I enjoyed being on the Employment Bill Committees. I have probably been on just about every Employment Bill Committee since 1979. Against the wishes of the Labour party and the trade unions, we introduced democratic practices which to some extent are now accepted by some sectors of the trade unions. They led to productivity improvements which could not have been conceived in 1979.

The Japanese and Taiwanese say that our productivity and working practices are the best in Europe. That enormous achievement could have occurred only under a Conservative Government. It is interesting that Japan and Taiwan invest in Britain because their own unit labour costs are higher than ours. They do not invest in Germany because unit labour costs in the German car industry are about £16.9 per man hour. The costs in our industries are about half that.

Amongst those who are highly competitive in that regard is our own domestic company, Rover. That is one of the reasons why Rover became attractive to BMW. The all-party motor industry group—my co-chairman, the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), is in his place —has had a number of meetings on the matter. In reply to a question, a representative of BMW said that of course

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unit labour costs were a factor in the choice of Rover as a partner. BMW may have bought Rover, but it was looking for partnership and sees real advantages in Rover's high productivity and low unit labour costs.

It is my view that, although obviously no company would give solid and guaranteed commitments, Britain would be considered an extremely attractive country to manufacture a new small BMW. However, I deprecate some aspects of the sale of Rover to BMW and it is clear from a number of meetings of the all-party group that that feeling is shared on both sides of the House.

The unhappiness expressed by Honda has been caused largely because of the frankly insensitive behaviour of British Aerospace. The Japanese view companies and their involvement in companies almost as a family. It is as if a son were to marry without telling the family. So in selling Rover to BMW, British Aerospace took the huge risk of offending the Japanese company Honda. I deprecate that; I have said it before and I have now said it for *Hansard*. However, there is some hope.

Today, in a meeting with Honda, I expressed strong concern and my strong hope that the company would reconsider its apparent decision—according to the media—to leave Rover.

As an engineer and somebody who has worked closely with all three companies, I admire the engineering skills of them all. If one could coin a dream package to compete in Europe in future, the combination of BMW, Rover and Honda would be that dream package. It would have size, access to resources and complementary technology and engineering that would make Fiat shudder—and it is already shuddering—and Ford, the biggest car company, look again at what it is doing.

I urge Honda to reconsider. I am glad to say that the chairman of the British company told me that discussions with BMW have not been concluded. I urge Honda to reconsider as it would be a very powerful partnership.

In the short time that remains, let me move on to other aspects of employment in manufacturing industry. In its report, the Select Committee on Employment urged a number of important factors. We could not reach total agreement in detail on the lack of commitment to the social protocol and the social compact.

The evidence we were given by a number of people both here and in Japan was conflicting to some extent, so I shall put my own personal view with no reference to the Committee. It is my personal view that many of the people we spoke to felt that the cost of committing Britain to the social protocol and the social compact would be crippling. It would definitely disadvantage our manufacturing companies because of the high costs involved.

I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment that the direct costs to manufacturing companies in the United Kingdom for introducing those measures could be as high as £25 million.

I found no real conviction in discussions with people such as Padraig O'Flynn, the Commissioner for Social Affairs in Europe. I was given no real reassurance that the olive pressing in Greece and the Spanish wine industry and the collection of grapes would fulfil their obligations under the social compact.

The Committee agreed unanimously that deregulation, particularly that of European regulations, would be an extremely important encouragement to manufacturing industry. We have far too many regulations; perhaps some of them are carried out far too zealously by our own people in Britain, but many of them are imposed on us by Europe.

I finish by saying it is quite good news from the car world that we had new car registrations in 1993 of 1.778 million—12 per cent. above the figure for the previous year and we are looking forward to a slow and steady growth next year. Those figures include manufactures by domestic companies, but in the teeth of the recession Nissan, Toyota, Honda and Peugeot have had a very healthy export sale.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.27 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The northern region has a proud history of manufacturing excellence. We remain the top region in the country for manufacturing as a percentage of regional GDP. We are top for exporting—45 per cent. of GDP—top for implementation of BS 5750 certificates, top for Queen's awards for exports and technology and top for having the common sense to realise that our manufacturing base has helped us just tread water during the recession.

Despite all that, the region is nevertheless a pale shadow of its former self. We have a manufacturing culture in the north which has not been helped by the change in culture nationally.

The past 15 years have seen a declining interest in the fortunes of United Kingdom manufacturing by central Government and our world share of manufacturing trade has fallen still further.

It is now clear that, far from being characterised by a productivity miracle, the 1980s was a period of intensified industrial decline. While, according to current forecasts, it might just be that the bottom of the latest recession has been reached and there may be a slight upturn ahead, the forecasts for employment in engineering are still downwards.

Reductions in demand and improvements in technology might explain some reduction in employment, but they do not explain entirely our failure as a nation to maintain our position and our reputation as a world leader in manufactured goods.

The world still needs ships and power stations, buses and cars and trains and planes, and they are still being manufactured and sold, but less and less by British firms. As our share of world manufacturing trade plummeted, Germany, France, Italy and Japan were increasing theirs, the latter by a massive 400 per cent..

The northern region has seen many changes over the period. We were often told that changes were inevitable as old outdated smokestack industries declined. But the decline hit companies such as Plessey and Marconi, which are at the forefront of technology. Some of the most advanced shipbuilding facilities in the world could be found on Wearside, and Tyneside where Swan Hunter is still struggling to survive despite its skills and technological excellence.

It is not a question of outdated industry, but a combination of a lack of foresight, the absence of an industrial strategy, and a Government who do not understand, appreciate or support the manufacturing sector. Before I am accused of running down the northern region, let me say that there have been positive developments there. The northern region has been way ahead of the Government and, I must say, of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench, in realising the importance of partnership in the quest for improvement. The creation of the Northern development company by the region's trade unions and business and local government sectors is an example of how we are able to pull together.

The public sector, through local authorities, provided the light rail rapid transit system on Tyneside, which has proved such a success socially and economically. Again, a consortium of local authorities built and developed Newcastle airport to reach the international status which it now enjoys, and which benefits the regional industry and the regional economy.

As I have already mentioned, there have been some successes in manufacturing, too. Some local firms are enjoying huge success and are producing high-quality, high-tech goods. Again, it was the close co-operation between local authorities and businesses, particularly the work of Tyne and Wear county council—abolished for its pains—that brought Nissan to the north, followed closely by Komatsu and others. But we do not have to kid ourselves that the arrival of overseas branch plants represents a fundamental transformation of the regional economy. The most damaging aspect of the 1980s has been the neglect and decline of the region's indigenous manufacturing base. The branch plant character of the regional economy has become more and more prevalent. Increasingly, the region's future is determined by decisions taken in remote boardrooms, by unelected quangos or in Whitehall.

There is general agreement in the region that something must be done and that we will probably have to do it ourselves. Many in the north are impatient for regional devolution—allowing the region more freedom to set its own agenda and pursue its own priorities. High on the list is the regeneration of our manufacturing sector and improvement of the regional infrastructure.

In the private sector, the manufacturing challenge is the initiative of former north-east business man of the year Karl Watkin of Crabtree Vickers in my constituency. It sets the goal of doubling regional output and trebling exports over a decade. It has the widespread and active support of the region's manufacturers. But there is a common understanding that market forces alone cannot create self-sustaining economic growth any more than will an over-reliance on overseas firms and the service sector.

The ability of the region's manufacturing base to consolidate and grow, and attract and retain firms that have the capacity to prosper, will be critical to its prospects. Again, from within the region, that realisation has given birth to new ideas. I have mentioned the manufacturing challenge and the contribution of the public sector, but the region's academic and research groups are also lending their support. If the finance is forthcoming—I sincerely hope that it is, and that manufacturers, trade unions and local authorities will take note—the local trade union studies information unit and the centre for urban and regional development studies at Newcastle university plan to embark on a research project to contribute to the formation of a policy for the development of the north's engineering and manufacturing base as a means of overcoming the present industrial crisis and rebuilding the region's indigenous strengths.

Despite all of that regional activity, we will not make sufficient progress at the required rate without the backing of central Government and sympathetic Government policies. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition said last week:

> "It is important that the Government takes the lead responsibility. It cannot shuffle off these responsibilities to the private sector."

But are the Government up to the job? To date there have been few signs that they are. We will have to wait for a Labour Government to give us the kind of regional devolution that will have any meaning in that context.

The recently published paper about which my right hon. and learned Friend was speaking outlines the Labour party's policies on regional development agencies and commercial investment banks. It is dedicated to mobilising investment in firms within the regions—the risk capital perhaps to which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) referred earlier.

Other aspects of devolution policy will also help the regions. A northern regional assembly, for instance, with power to decide regional transport policy, would give a high priority to improving the communications networks in the region, not least of which would be the upgrading of the A69 and A66 to provide much improved coast-to-coast links, to the benefit of the regional economy. But if such policies are anathema to the present Government, they should at least be doing more to encourage investment in our manufacturing industry.

The current rules for tax relief on new plant and machinery should be changed to allow full relief in the first year on new equipment. That would provide a real incentive to invest, which is badly needed. I am no economist, but why cannot we have different interest rates, with borrowing to invest in new plant and machinery at a low rate and borrowing to buy imported consumer goods at a higher rate?

The Government could also provide industry with long-term planning. Manufacturing industry cannot operate on short-term decision making. That is what northern engineering employers told northern Labour Members at our meeting yesterday. They need a national view about what technology sectors we want to be in. They spoke of the need for a balanced energy strategy and a proper plan for the refurbishment and replacement of power stations, and the future of the nuclear industry. They seemed a little unsure, however, about how that can be achieved now that the industry has been privatised.

Another area of Government influence that is of major importance in manufacturing is training. A number of good apprenticeships are still running, particularly in the engineering industry. Firms are still keen to support and provide high-quality training. But the old concept of apprenticeships only at 16 must surely be out of date. I was the beneficiary of an excellent engineering apprenticeship —starting at 16 and finishing at 21. While that might have been appropriate at a time of high unemployment, the problem now is that thousands of young people—having left school at 16 or 18—are still out of work when they reach 19, 20 or older. That means that if apprenticeships are restricted to 16 and 17-year-olds—as intended by the Government's modern apprenticeship scheme—many will not qualify because of age. Surely that must be looked at again.

Training in a skill—particularly in engineering—is a rewarding and beneficial experience. Even if there is no

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immediate job at the end of it, it is worth while. The experience of work, of feeling that one is part of something, of making a contribution, cannot be replaced by Mickey Mouse training schemes that provide no real skills and do not develop personalities. The huge increase in juvenile crime is directly proportional to the level of youth unemployment, and the perception of large numbers of young people that there is no meaningful place in society for them.

The importance of proper employment is evident every time we meet someone new and invariably ask, "What do you do?" Too many young people have no answer to that question. Many more of them could have. One of the engineering manufacturers with whom we spoke yesterday —he runs a quality apprenticeship scheme—said that he would be quite prepared to take on more apprentices than he needed, and provide them with good training, if financial support was available to compensate. We should consider that seriously. We should be using some of the millions now wasted on schemes that young people have no confidence in—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

6.37 pm

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): It seems strange to me that the Opposition motion should be on the manufacturing industry, as there are many other parts of national life that they could have picked and made a critical attack on the Government. It is astonishing that the Labour party should stick their necks out on that subject. Labour Members should not be surprised that they got two black eyes. They were given half a dozen black eyes by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade in an effective and hard-hitting speech.

I notice that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who spoke earlier, is about to leave the Chamber. Perhaps he will come back. His only positive suggestion was to create all sorts of extraordinary units to advise defence manufacturers on how they should get into civil business. That is the most weird and peculiar suggestion that I have ever heard—we have heard some pretty strange suggestions over the years from the Labour party. It is a strange idea that politicians, civil servants and bureaucrats should visit Lord Weinstock in his office and say, "Lord Weinstock, this is how you should get your business into civil business." If they did that, I do not think that they would stay in that office very long. They would be out of the door pretty quickly—or indeed of any other company.

One has only to put the case to see the total absurdity for there to be a Government role in this. The truth is that the old Adam in the Labour party still lives on. Rather like the Bourbons, the Labour party forgets nothing and learns nothing.

If one strips away some of the more modern rhetoric of today's Labour party, one will see that it is back to its old policy of a national enterprise board, as my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade reminded us. But instead of having one board, it will be divided into many national enterprise boards all over the country, spreading like measles throughout the regions and employing all sorts of bureaucrats to make dud investments. God knows, we went through enough of that with the National Enterprise Board in 1975. When the Conservatives came to power, we had to wind up the NEB pretty quickly, drawing a line under the huge amount of bad debt that it had incurred. Labour, however, still seems to want to go down that route.

The idea of organising a debate on manufacturing industry in an attempt to hit the Government over the head is pretty stupid for a second reason. According to the Business Monitor report in last week's *Financial Times*, Britain is the most outstanding country in the European Community in terms of investment in manufacturing. That was said not by the Government or the Conservative party, but in an independent survey of the entire Community. The country is in a unique position to take advantage of its manufacturing industry, and to expand it.

As I think the Opposition would agree, we live in an era of huge change. The real challenge is this: how do we manage that change, and build on our manufacturing base? The crucial point is that Government's role should be to allow change to happen, to encourage it and to help it along by making supply-side alterations. We did that in the 1980s; we are doing it in the 1990s, and I trust that we shall continue to do it. I hope that we shall continue with deregulation and keeping tax rates low, especially corporate tax rates: our low corporate tax levels are very attractive. We should not stand in the way of change.

That strikes me as the greatest indictment of the Labour party: it is still standing in the way of change. It wants to stop change; as the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) just said, it wants the north-east to be exactly as it was in the 1920s and 1930s, producing the same goods. We now live in a different world, however.

The shipbuilding industry, for instance, has undergone a huge change. Should we go on producing ships that no one wants to buy, piling them up, although the world's shipping lines are not buying many ships now? Of course not. The challenge is to try to ensure that the great skills, techniques and experience of shipbuilding workers can be applied to different industries. Firms should be encouraged to change. I know that that is easier said than done, but we must urge the management of change so that people can join new industries.

If we take a global, bird's eye view of British manufacturing, we perceive that, as a medium-sized country, Britain is capable of excelling in a number of areas, but not in every area. For a brief time in British history, we did excel in almost every part of the manufacturing spectrum; but it was a very brief time. We had a captive market then. We did not need to sell goods; we simply shipped them out. That was just trade: we were not an industrial country in the true sense of the word.

As my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade pointed out, we now have to battle for every market. As a medium-sized country, Britain can excel only in certain areas. We are forced to concentrate on pharmaceuticals and chemicals, and motor manufacturing —we are very good at that; we have some marvellous motor manufacturing companies. Whether they are owned by British shareholders is relatively irrelevant. Most cars contain parts from many different countries: if we stripped one and tried to make the parts into a sort of United Nations, we would end up with something more like a pudding—a spotted dick, perhaps, composed of parts from different areas of Europe and the world in general.

I suppose that we all have a little bit of nationalism locked up in our heart of hearts, but we should try to suppress that. It is not relevant to the modern era.

As I have said, we must encourage change. We must run the economy so that the good industries in which we excel can do well, grow and attract investment. Inward investment has been a huge success story over the past 12 years. Investment has come from Japan and the United States; 3,500 American companies have invested in this country, and many hundreds of German companies are now investing in it, because they consider it a good place in which to invest.

Over the past 14 years, we have had stability of government—and, above all, stability of policy. [HON. MEMBERS: "What?"] Yes: we have had a Government who believe in low taxation—including corporate taxation—in deregulation, and in letting industry get on with its work. We have had a Government who have improved all the employment laws beyond recognition, encouraging companies to operate in much freer market conditions. As the report that I cited earlier makes clear, we are now the envy of Europe: Britain is seen as a good place in which to set up, manufacture goods and invest in manufacturing industry.

I hope that the Opposition will agree with my final comment. Undoubtedly, the growth area will be in the small and medium-sized companies. Our large corporations will not take on a huge number of people; one or two may start up businesses on greenfield sites and employ 500 or so employees, but that is very rare. The Government, in conjunction with the City and the banks, must meet the challenge to ensure that our medium-sized firms have adequate long-term finance. There is undoubtedly a gap there: we have not as many medium-sized firms as we should have. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Opposition Members will listen; I am trying to be constructive in the few minutes that remain.

There was a huge rate of growth in very small businesses in the 1980s, as a result of good policy. That growth continues, despite the downturn that the economy has experienced in recent years. We must concentrate next on encouraging medium-sized firms with turnovers of between £3 million and £50 million—non-quoted companies. That, I believe, can be done successfully only if we introduce better terms for lending. More long-term structured loans for such businesses would enable them to survive during a downturn in the economy—which, as sure as eggs is eggs, will have its ups and downs in the next few years, like every other economy in the world.

We have not achieved that yet, and I hope that Ministers will consider the matter. Through the Small Business Bureau, we have suggested a number of ways of helping and encouraging the private sector to provide the right sort of finance, as some of our major competitors have done. That is where the growth in business and employment will take place—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.47 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The great tragedy is that the Opposition had to organise this debate. One would think that the Government would consider an important industry like manufacturing worthy of regular discussion in the arena. The Opposition, however, had to opt to discuss it in their time, and had to listen to the President of the Board of Trade telling us how successful the Government have been. One Conservative Member after another said what a great success manufacturing industry was. That speaks volumes about their ignorance of industry and the state of the nation in terms of manufacturing.

It cannot be denied that we have a chronic balance of payments problem, and 3 million people are unemployed. Manufacturing represents only 22 per cent. of gross domestic product, and only 18 per cent. of the labour force are involved in it. We must get away from some of the silly claims that are made from time to time. It was suggested again today that cheap labour, the exploitation of workers and anti-trade unionism attracted people to Britain, but that is not so. Low pay, long hours and bashing workers will not be the answer for Britain's future. Britain will never be able to compete on the basis of cheap labour because there will always be another nation round the corner that will make things even more cheaply. When that nation has been exploited, there will be yet another one. Companies will go to Brazil, to Chile, to India. It would be a great mistake to suppose that Britain's success will be built on cheap labour. Opposition Members believe that if we trade in excellence—and we can—there is no need to bribe customers for work. Firms will win contracts because their brilliant inventiveness is recognised and sought after.

It was interesting that the President of the Board of Trade referred to people in industry. He has never been in industry. Very few Conservative Members have been in industry, whereas some of us on the Opposition Benches have. That is why we sometimes speak a little emotionally on the subject, watching the nation going down the tubes, as we have for the past 15 years.

I put my cards on the table: I come from industry. I worked in machine tools and in turbines, so my credentials are as good as anyone else's here. I compliment the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) on saying that it is a tragedy that not many hon. Members come from industry. Instead, we have the City slickers who are so prevalent, particularly on the Government Benches, the wheeler dealers, the asset strippers, the City boys. If they produced more, this nation would be far healthier.

Let us examine some of the most successful economies in the world. Japan has succeeded because it is an all-manufacturing nation. Manufacturing companies such as Mitsubishi, Sony, Toyota and Nissan make ships, cars, computers, videos and television sets. Japan has not been successful through indulging in speculation, buying and selling properties and gazumping, exchanging bits of paper in the City, and all these other things. It is industries that have made Japan successful. Take Germany, one of the most successful countries in Europe. It, too, has built its success on manufacturing: Mercedes, BMW, Volkswagen, Bosch, world-class machine tools—all manufacturing. That is how Germany has come to lead Europe. We fail to recognise those simple facts.

Let us look at the situation in Britain. We have the slowest growth of five of the Group of Seven nations and we are only 18th in the 21 states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. That is the great success that we are now enjoying, yet Conservative Members, living in the clouds, keep on telling us that everything is rosy and successful. United Kingdom manufacturing jobs have fallen from 7 million in 1979 to only 4 million today. From the industrial revolution until 1982, we always had a credit in manufacturing; since 1982,

[Mr. Ken Eastham]

we have never had a credit. Our trade deficit in the five years up to 1992 exceeded £89 billion. So it is no good Conservative Members trying to kid the rest of the nation about how successful we are in Britain.

The tragedy for Britain is that the channels that do not make anything themselves—banks and other speculators—prevent the rest of the producers getting on with the job and making things. We are tied to the system of banks, interest rates and goodness knows what, including the whims of various companies, and as a result the people who are capable of producing are never even given the opportunity to do so.

The proof of that is that the Japanese firms that come here say that our talent is second to none and have no problem with using our labour which, they say, is as good as that anywhere; yet we in this country do not recognise it or value it. Other countries must think that we are big fools not to put all that talent to good use. That talent is even encouraged to go abroad. Very often, companies abroad recognise the talent of people from this country and encourage them to take it to them.

Nowadays, we have heritage parks where we used to manufacture things. At one time, they were places of real production; now it is like two men and a dog, with a bit of a caretaker going around and showing what Britain's greatness used to be and what we used to do. The Opposition believe that we should be making things, not kidding ourselves. The President of the Board of Trade implied that manufacturing was not important, but we recognise that it is the only solution for Britain. We need a proper strategy and plan for energy, transport, aviation, construction and communications.

These days, we never go in for any kind of plan or strategy. That is not the case in other countries. What we find in British industry is feast and famine. Today we have jobs and next week we have no jobs. Three months later we have jobs and three months later still there are no jobs. There is no continuity. People try to tell us that this is good business practice. Some of our competitors must laugh their sides sore when they consider what Britain could be doing and what it has been unable to do.

At the moment, we are seeing a boom in cruise holidays and orders are starting to be placed for cruise ships. It makes me sick when I think that we are in no position now to place an order or even to find a dockyard where we can make one of those liners. That is an example of the progress that we have made—we cannot build ships any more. We have all the talent. We have people on the dole, being paid £9,000 a year to do nothing, people in the north-east and north-west who were doing those jobs—and we pride ourselves that we are doing well in manufacturing.

Only this week, the Secretary of State for Transport announced that he would spend £1 billion on the road programme. If only the Government had the sense to spend £1 billion on medium and small manufacturing firms, we could imagine the number of jobs that that would create. We have hundreds of jobs under notice in the rail workshops and we have clapped-out rolling stock which should be on the scrap heap; yet instead of acquiring new and up-to-date equipment, we have decided to refurbish existing stock. When I was in industry we called it "soling and heeling". It was not making the modern stuff of which we were capable.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.57 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): In a world that changes as rapidly as ours does nowadays, there can be few absolutes and only a handful of timeless truths. Here are some that remain. The Government have no money of their own, only what they take from taxpayers, who are individuals or businesses. If we want to spend more on schools, hospitals, pensions and other services that we demand, we have to earn it. The world does not owe the United Kingdom a living; we have to carve one out. There will always be some people locked in a time-warp, unable to see that clocks cannot be put back in industry or in technology. The predecessors of Opposition Members stood blinking at the dawn of the industrial revolution in England; by the time they had taken hold of it, it had become the technological revolution.

The Opposition's motion and some of their speeches tonight seem to ignore the fact that industry develops and that business cannot remain static. Their motion takes no account of how rich and diverse a picture of industry we have in Britain. They are not on top of the fact that manufacturing takes many different forms. There was a whiff of nostalgia in the air, with Opposition Members lauding the old command economy. I felt that it was only a matter of time before somebody called for the return of Red Robbo.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) gave the figures. Seven million people made less in 1979 than 4 million make today. Why? Because of technology. That is the bald and simple reason, and it is a fact that must be faced. Many of my hon. Friends have said, "It is not such a problem if we become a leisure theme park. We shall still have to make the rides, the music, the games, the food, the booze, the crockery, the furniture and the sports equipment that they need." "Do not worry," other people have said to me, "people will still need new and revamped houses, other buildings, cars, fridges, televisions and holidays, so there will always be a demand for manufacturing." That is true up to a point, but the trick of success for the Government is to create that economic climate to allow British manufacturing to make it easy for people to buy British goods within the European Community constraints for which we have signed.

I mentioned diversity and I shall now focus on my constituency, which is not, at first glance, a rich and varied economic place. Even there, however, one finds food-related processing companies—Bird's Eye Foods, the Co-operative Wholesale Society factory, the Bernard Matthews plant, Buxted Chickens and Adnams the brewery at Southwold.

Fishing is a harvesting industry, but its back-up in servicing and engineering are manufacturing organisations. Coupled with offshore industries serving the southern North sea and elsewhere, and with shipbuilders such as Richards and engineers such as AKD and George Prior, they are all important and skilled creators.

In SLP we have the largest manufacturing capability for offshore accommodation modules in England south of Teesside. There is printing by Clowes of Beccles and Clays of Bungay. Plastics are made by Fiberoyle and M and H

Plastics and sports equipment is made by Harrods of Lowestoft. High-tech manufacturer Sanyo is to be found in Lowestoft and timber doors and frames are made at Boulton and Paul in Lowestoft.

Those companies are diverse and different, but they share some problems. The transport infrastructure in the coastal area east of Norwich is poor compared to that in many other parts of the country. That is part of the region's charm, but it increases the costs to industry of bringing supplies in and pushing goods out. We are 80 miles from the motorway network of England. The area has greater than average regional unemployment and is a low-wage, poor area compared to most other areas in the United Kingdom and certainly compared to the public perception of a prosperous East Anglia.

The handicap that confronts so many British businesses enforcing rules fairly, with no confidence of reciprocal regulatory respect elsewhere in the alleged European Union, is often keenly felt in a part of Britain that is only 56 miles from the European mainland—far closer than it is to London. All that does not help.

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill will help, and I hope that Parliament will pass that legislation. It is a pity that it cannot apply to the European Commission. The new modern apprenticeship scheme will help to improve the quality of the work force in years to come and increase its competitiveness. The economic good news will help, together with the gathering confidence of businesses throughout the region.

Getting the tax regime right must be good news, too. The lowest corporation and business taxes mean more money for investment, which means more profitability. I wonder whether we can build on those and go a little further. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy that we have heard a lot about downsizing the Department of Trade and Industry and the money that could be saved. I wonder whether almost doing away with the Department would be a real sign of our commitment to enterprise. It would be beneficial if we could put only some of the DTI's £3.7 million a year budget towards cutting business taxes a little further. As to the European business angle, the best help to industry is stability for a period. Let us concentrate on making the single market work before speaking about anything else in Europe.

Science and technology must be made more appealing to youngsters—boys and girls. Putting those subjects in the national curriculum has helped, but a young child's natural thirst for knowledge about how his or her world works must be translated into a real desire to invent, explore and make things in a career for young people that is challenging and rewarding.

Where are the new technologies coming from—the new jobs of the future—as machines make and repair machines? Twenty years ago, few people could have predicted that the tourist industry would be the biggest job creator in this country. Few of us here will be able to predict the ways in which technology and lifestyles will develop in the next 20 years, but obviously the making of things will still be at the heart of our future. If the real and exciting prospects for that crucial British industry are to be realised, we must put the red tape, the bureaucracy and the regulation in balance and get our attitudes right, from Government onwards.

Manufacturing is the goose that lays the golden tax eggs of this country. We neglect it at our peril.

7.4 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): I heartily endorse the clarion call of the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) for the dismissal of the present incumbents at the Department of Trade and Industry. I am sure that the President of the Board of Trade and the Minister for Energy will read with great interest his view of their effectiveness in their present roles. I hope that it will do great things for the hon. Gentleman's ministerial career in due course.

The President of the Board of Trade, sad to say, has more or less given up on the job anyway, so he might even go along with the suggestion. He has no money. He has what he spends, but it is largely arms procurement, as he said today, and we must have that—as he also said—for national defence purposes. For the rest of it, the ideas that he once had have gone by the board and the DTI is a largely ineffectual Department in any event. That was evident because the President of the Board of Trade had nothing to say other than to turn the speech into the usual knockabout with the Labour party—the type of thing that we have at every Question Time. It is the sadder because he was a Minister of whom, for a while, many of us had expected something far better, and certainly something far better in a major debate such as this.

A debate in which we are considering, for example, the future of Rover must be of major significance. I shall make one or two remarks about that and reflect on it. We must face reality and realise that the independent British volume car business disappeared 10 years or more ago. In the past five to seven years, Rover never was an independent British company in a meaningful sense. It was tied into Honda in the way in which now, inevitably, it will be tied into BMW. I would not want to choose between those two solutions.

I noticed that the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) was suggesting that all three companies got together. In business it is difficult enough to get two companies together. I speak from the experience of having tried to create a joint venture between the Japanese and my own company—in which, of course, for the purpose of the debate, I declare my interest. That utopian idea is therefore not much good.

The best future for Rover might well have been with the Ford Motor Company. That may be a lesson for all hon. Members, and I mention it for that reason. I willingly admit that I did not support that solution at the time, and neither did any other Member of Parliament, to my knowledge. That choice was horrifically and horrendously opposed on both sides of House. When one recalls it now, the conditions on investment and the new model programme that Ford proposed were far better than anything that we could have obtained from Honda or anything that we are obtaining from BMW. One must remember that Ford already had a massive commitment in the United Kingdom, which it had to defend. BMW does not have that yet, but I trust that BMW will be as good as its word.

I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will recall that in the late 1970s the Chrysler Corporation gave the Government the most solemn of undertakings. A Mr. Iacocca, I believe, then came to this country and tore the undertakings up in front of the then Labour Secretary of State, saying, "It is your company—you have it or we close

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it down." Of what value were those undertakings from what was then a highly respected multinational American corporation?

For that reason, we must take exception to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls), who is not here at present, but who spoke earlier. The hon. Gentleman said that he had some little bit of nationalism in him somewhere, but we should never let that come out: it is bad and we should have nothing to do with it. I must tell him that nationalism is the driving force in most of the companies and managements in Europe and Japan. Perhaps some words will be said about that later. When one sells in those countries, they are nationalists to the extreme, and proud to be so. Why do we seem ashamed to admit as much to ourselves in the House and outside it when we go into business?

We have to cut the best deal for Rover that we can, and let us hope that BMW is as good as its word. In that respect, the experience of Linde, another major Germany company that heavily invested into our then privately-owned fork-lift truck industry in Basingstoke, has been extremely good. Investment has taken place, the models have been extended and the United Kingdom fork-lift truck industry has benefited tremendously.

We have a uniquely advantageous position as regards competitiveness. The hon. Member for Meriden said that our labour costs in the motor industry are about half those of Germany and even less than those of other countries in Europe. But is that such a great achievement? Is it something of which we should be terribly proud? It is merely a function of the fact that our wages and social costs are much less than those of other countries and that our currency has depreciated periodically to compensate for a higher inflation rate. There is nothing else to it.

I can quote chapter and verse on the levels of productivity and capital investment in Germany. Because of my privileged position as a trader in the motor industry I know some of the comparisons that major American and European manufacturers make of the wage and labour costs in various industries. The level of our costs is not something of which we as a country should be particularly proud, and it is certainly nothing of which the Government, after 13 years in office, can be at all proud.

Having said that, let us face the facts. We should accept that we have a unique competitive advantage. Let us capitalise on it and start to regain world markets and regress the massive deficit in the balance of trade. That is the only lesson to be learnt and I will join any hon. Member in endorsing that point of view.

For us to regain markets, we must maintain the present exchange rate with particular reference to the dollar and the deutschmark. In my experience, the present parity with the dollar is very satisfactory for us, and that probably reflects the experience of most companies involved in internationally traded goods. However, the tendency for the pound to appreciate against the deutschmark is most worrying. The Germans are in such trouble that they will cut prices in export markets more than ever before to maintain their market share and to keep their factories running and their employees employed. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): The hon. Gentleman is wrong. Unemployment in Germany has just gone through the 4 million mark.

Mr. Robinson: I do not want to respond to sedentary interventions because there is a 10-minute limit on speeches. However, I shall do so on this occasion. What the hon. Gentleman said is true, but the Germans are nevertheless doing everything possible to secure as many jobs as they can. It is in that highly competitive, cut-throat situation that we must ensure that we maintain the advantage that we currently have because of our exchange rate.

I do not expect immediate responses from Ministers because I appreciate that that can cause difficulties. However, I draw attention to another issue to which we have to pay great attention—interest rates. The Governor of the Bank of England is known for his obsessive concern about inflation. I understand that he feels like a father whose daughter says, "But Daddy, I'm only a little bit pregnant." It will get worse, which is how the Governor feels about inflation.

Tonight's evening press states that the Governor and the Chancellor are having urgent consultations about the level of interest rates that they envisage in the next few months. My clear, unequivocal view is that interest rates must come down further because they go with the exchange rate. If interest rates do not come down further, there will be a depreciation in the exchange rate, which could threaten the recovery.

We do not want a recovery based on yet another consumer boom which could in turn lead to yet another recession. We need a sustained investment and export-led recovery that will create the circumstances in which there will be a general domestic recovery. To achieve that, we need our policy on interest rates to be linked to policy on exchange rates. Both are within the power of the Government—of any Government—to deliver. However, we have an inexperienced, sometimes disinterested Chancellor up against an extremely powerful Governor. I hope that that balance will resolve itself in favour of British manufacturing industry.

7.14 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I must declare my interests: I am a director of Parliamentary and Public Affairs International; I am a consultant to EDS, which is an electronic data systems company, to Rothmans, Laing International, which is a building company, and KHD, which is a gas turbine manufacturer. I must also declare that I am one of the few engineers on the Conservative Benches and I am proud to be in that position.

My constituency of Brentford and Isleworth contains many multi-national companies that manufacture and export worldwide. Anyone who has travelled on the A4 or the M4 to Heathrow airport or elsewhere in the west will have seen those buildings flash by.

When we speak of manufacturing, we are speaking of a commercial sector which employs 5 million people. It is now a leaner, more competitive, more productive and more capital intensive industry base than it was 14 years ago. At the end of the second world war, British manufacturing was at its lowest. The war had been difficult for us, whereas our competitors in Germany and Japan rose afresh like the phoenix with new technology, new investment and new productivity capabilities through the Marshall plan and reconstruction aid. For 20 years from the period 1945-48, Britain had to struggle with Victorian factories and manufacturing techniques. We had old technology, overmanning and under-production.

Also at that time, Britain started the process of decolonisation and automatically began to lose the captive international markets of more than 1 billion people who had supported British manufacturing hitherto. The newly emerging countries started forming relationships with closer neighbours and importing goods from their factories. Some countries started putting into effect socialist or self-reliance policies and managed plans. Some understood socialism at the feet of Harold Laski, others from the London School of Economics, and they set about trying to develop in that way. They failed. After their socialist experiments, they began a process of liberalisation to the extent that they are now back in the international marketplace, competing in various sectors.

With its old industrial base, and while losing its international markets, Britain had to struggle on. The Labour Government established the National Enterprise Board and the National Economic Development Council and little Neddies to try to revive our industrial base. We all know what happened: they failed abysmally.

One has only to consider the loss-making British Steel in the 1970s, the loss-making British Leyland in the 1960s and the loss-making British Airways, British Telecom and National Freight. Those nationalised companies cost the British taxpayer about £1.5 billion in 1979. Today, they are all profitable companies and instead of costing the British taxpayer money they pay taxes to the Exchequer and are helping to reduce taxes in general.

Those companies are now competing in the international marketplace, winning contracts and export orders and setting up joint ventures. How did that happen? Did British workers, managers and investors suddenly find a vitality and vibrancy that outshone, outproduced, outpriced and outdesigned their European counterparts? What happened on the road to Damascus which created that revival in British manufacturing industry? Quite simply, the Conservatives won the 1979 general election and turned the country around.

Adopting a reflective attitude, I will read out something that was said by the director general of the NEDC in 1988:

> "In the present expansionary period which began in 1981, productivity has actually been increasing twice as fast as output, implying that further very favourable factors have been at work."

Apart from the shake-out of inefficient equipment and labour practices, he stressed the importance of supply side measures such as the trend towards deregulation, reductions in income and corporation tax and in nominal interest rates, and improvements in industrial relations.

Virtuous circle growth may now set in where rapid productivity increases mean higher profits and more demand for new equipment, which on account of its superior efficiency fuels further growth. In 1981, output of crude steel per man year in the United Kingdom was 167 tonnes. In Germany, it was 227 tonnes per man year. In 1987, the UK figure had increased to 320 tonnes per man year, while the Germans were at 282 tonnes per man year. Productivity increased because of efficient production methods and more investment. The main principles were a reduction in the number of management levels, flexibility between crafts and processes and manual and staff grades, increased mechanisation, the contracting out of peak local work and support services, raising yields, reducing production costs and enhancing energy uses.

Those principles have created one of the most efficient steel industries in the world. Yet despite that, the Labour party has learnt nothing. It still believes that it can pick winners and that civil servants and Ministers can run industry. We must learn that they cannot do so. Even the Japanese have tried to do it and failed. A study conducted recently by the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry showed that its attempt to spot winners had failed. The most recent copy of *The Economist* had a very good article on why MITI has failed to spot winners.

In 1979, manufacturing industry contributed £49 billion to the gross domestic product. Today, it contributes £114 billion and the figure is rising. Output per person is twice as high as in 1979. Between 1979 and 1993, output per hour rose by 75 per cent. Between 1979 and 1993, the volume of UK manufactured exports rose by about 56 per cent. Between 1979 and 1991, the value of direct inward investment in the UK manufacturing base reached £28 billion net. Even today, having weathered a worldwide recession, production is up in the UK whereas it is down in Japan, Germany, France and Italy.

Recently *The Economist* polled a group of independent forecasters who said that the UK would have the fastest growth rate of EC economies this year and next year. The recent recession is not a reflection on the performance of British manufacturing industry. It was caused by a lack of worldwide demand, not by an incapacity to supply. When that demand returns, we are fit, lean and ready to go out and sell.

Britain's export success is extraordinary. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on what he has achieved. Britain exports a higher percentage of its gross domestic product than Japan and it exports more per head than the United States. We have invested about £360 billion overseas through portfolio and direct foreign investment—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.24 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I shall not attempt to pursue the economic illiteracy of Conservative Members. The Opposition's theme should be that a great opportunity to expand and rebuild our manufacturing base, which is crucial to the economy, is being thrown away by a President of the Board of Trade who seems to have forgotten every word that he wrote while in opposition about intervention and managing the economy, and by a Chancellor of the Exchequer who has changed from being a bull-at-a-gate politician into a bear in a trap with the dead-hand keepers of the Treasury, who have been consistently wrong, and a Bank of England Governor who seems to think that he is a reincarnation of Sir Montagu Norman.

Manufacturing matters. Most world trade is in manufacturing; most of our deficit is in manufacturing. It is basic to the economy. The manufacturing base, on which we depend, has shrunk so far in the past two decades that we cannot pay our way in the world and support the superstructures.

Contrary to the success story told by the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), since 1970 manufactured imports have risen four times faster than manufactured exports. Manufacturing imports make up 42 per cent. of the domestic market for manufactures in this country. We have lost 3 million jobs in manufacturing

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since 1979. Manufacturing output has remained much the same—it is only 2 per cent. higher than it was in 1973. Such a story of failure cannot be found in any other country.

That failure has resulted in the double deficit. The trade deficit, which amounts to about £1 billion every month, shows that we cannot pay our way in the world. We have a fiscal deficit because the tax base has shrunk as a result of people being put out of work. We are wallowing in the trap of the double deficit.

The great prospect of white Wednesday, when we left the exchange rate mechanism, was that we would have a chance to escape from both traps. We could reduce interest rates and exchange rates at the same time. The Government saw the opportunity and promptly shifted gear. From prophesying economic success if we persevered in the exchange rate mechanism, they claimed that the economic success had already arrived because we had come out of the ERM. They did not feel that it was necessary to do anything but sit and gloat.

The Prime Minister discovered manufacturing, which should have served as a warning, because as soon as he attaches his support to anything, from the Manchester bid for the Olympics to Mr. Yeltsin, it is finished. As soon as he discovered manufacturing, I began to worry. The recovery has not happened. Burdens have been alleviated that the economy should never have faced in the first place. The recovery is similar to the relief that a lunatic experiences if he slows the rate at which he is banging his head against a wall. If he stops banging, he is much happier. That is our position. Manufacturing output has not yet risen to the level of 1990. Will it rise to that level by the year 2000? Not at this rate.

According to labour force surveys, unemployment has not fallen. We need 4 per cent. growth to achieve a substantial reduction in unemployment. Job losses in, and the winding down of, manufacturing industry continues. It has lost 7,300 jobs in the first six weeks of this year. *The Guardian*, amazingly, joined the Bank of England in saying that manufacturing industry had increased prices too much. Prices have certainly increased, but that industry must increase its prices if it is to generate a profit. Indeed, its prices need to increase still further. That is why we should allow it to increase its prices through the exchange rate, which will generate the profits necessary for its survival.

It is economic illiteracy to say that manufacturing industry, which has exported without making a profit for years just to keep going, should not take the opportunity of the alleviation of pressure to increase its prices. It must do that. The Governor of the Bank of England shows that he knows nothing about manufacturing industry when he criticises it for increasing its prices.

Manufacturing in this country is not profitable enough, and the economically illiterate way in which the Government have run the economy has kept it from being profitable. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, manufacturing industry is not investing but rather distributing the profits in dividends—making hay while the sun shines—because it has no faith in the future. It sees that, with the Government's record of keeping exchange rates and interest rates far too high, there is no point in investing. The Bank of England will take the opportunity to push exchange rates back up, so any investment will be crippled.

That is why the recovery is as evanescent and feeble as the Prime Minister's nervous smile. After white Wednesday, we had the opportunity to follow through with the devaluation, but we did not take it; indeed, the Government and the Bank of England have set out to reverse the devaluation. The Bank of England is deliberately undermining the competitiveness that we have. In a market economy, price is crucial, and the exchange rate is the key to price. We have been priced out of markets because the exchange rate is consistently kept too high for too long. The Government and the Bank are now resuming that policy. Since February 1993, the exchange rate has increased by about 14 per cent. against the deutschmark.

The Bank of England is obsessed with inflation, which is now a dead issue. Because of its fear of inflation, which it largely caused in the 1980s—[*Laughter.*] Hon. Members should read Lord Lawson's memoirs, about how the Governor of the Bank of England refused to stop the Bank lending on mortgages and the credit expansion that caused the inflation in the 1980s. The Bank was largely responsible for that and now it is obsessed with making amends. It is strangling the manufacturing revival because of its fear of inflation.

If we contrast this country's trade inside and outside the European Union, we see that in real terms the exchange rate in the European Union is now almost back to what it was before white Wednesday. That is why manufacturing exports to Europe have hardly increased at all. But outside the European Union—this is no credit to the Government—the exchange rate has depreciated and we are more competitive, because the dollar and the yen have risen. Manufacturing exports outside the European Union have increased by between 15 and 17 per cent.

It is true that now both kinds of exports are flagging, because the exchange rate is rising again—and both will peter out if that continues. However, the contrast is stark, as is the contrast between our failure and what has happened in Italy. Italy devalued much more substantially than we did, and kept the devaluation, partly through the useful device of undermining confidence by carting most of its politicians off to gaol. Italy's export success has, therefore, been far greater than ours; it has turned a balance of payments deficit into a substantial surplus since leaving the exchange rate mechanism.

That is the example which we should follow, because it shows that devaluation works. It would work by making it profitable to produce in this country, profitable to invest here and to begin to make again for the markets in which we have lost out. Most important, we could begin to fight back against the rising tide of imports to win back our own market. We can do that through the price mechanism, by making it profitable and competitive to invest, to grow and to expand in this country.

If we continue at the present rate, the profitability that has returned will be curtailed. Indeed, that is happening now. We are involved in a debtor's progress. Because the Government want to keep the money flowing in, so that people will invest in our public debt and close the fiscal deficit—between 40 and 50 per cent. of that debt is now covered by foreign money coming into the country—they keep interest rates higher than they should be to attract the investment in public debt. That further increases the value of the pound and weakens manufacturing industry. There can be no greater folly than such a process.

We must return to a competitive exchange rate, which is properly defined as one at which we can balance our trade with the rest of the world in conditions of growth and full employment. That means getting interest rates down and acting to make the exchange rate competitive. In 1945, Sir Ralph Hawtrey said:

> "Mass unemployment cannot occur unless central banks of set purpose bring it about".

Our central bank is now doing that.

7.34 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): The debate has reminded me that since becoming a Member of Parliament I have met only two types of people—people with problems and people who are right. I welcome the people with problems, because one can always learn from them, and occasionally one can help them. People who are right present more of a challenge—and there is no shortage of people who are right about manufacturing.

Quite a few such people have been on parade this afternoon. They have their own vivid picture of what constitutes manufacturing, and—at least among Opposition Members—it tends to be a somewhat nostalgic picture, more in the tradition of L. S. Lowry than anything else. Alongside that picture goes a conviction, an unshakeable belief, that everything in the world of manufacturing is bad news.

Those people say that manufacturing in the United Kingdom is in terminal decline, and they repeat the mantra so frequently that clearly they have convinced themselves. One's concern is that they may have convinced some other people as well. They seem unaware of the fact that, since 1981, as the President of the Board of Trade said, British manufacturing exports have increased by 66 per cent.—faster than those of any of the other G7 economies.

We are told that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was with the Confederation of British Industry this morning. I wonder whether he was shown a CBI publication called "Competing with the World's Best," which says:

> "recent years have seen a transformation in Britain's manufacturing base. The recent strength of exports confirms the widespread anecdotal evidence: companies based in Britain are able to compete successfully in some of the toughest, technology-intensive markets in the world."

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman was told that the CBI regretted that,

> "unfortunately, the extent of the transformation is not widely understood. Moreover, the experience of the recession has reinforced the widely held—though incorrect—belief that Britain's manufacturing base has been run down over the last decade and is unable to compete in international markets."

I imagine that the hon. Member for Livingston has learnt a lot today—a great deal this morning and, to his cost, a great deal this afternoon.

The fact that manufacturing output per head in the last quarter of last year was 3·2 per cent. up on the year before is good news—and the fact that manufacturing is not what it used to be is not bad news: it is inevitable. Everything changes; it always has, and it always will.

A century and a half ago, my namesake, Jeremiah Brandreth, bewailed the state of manufacturing in the midlands and the job losses that the new technologies of the time brought about. That Brandreth was the last of the Luddites. He was also the last man to be beheaded for treason in this country—but that is another story. They called him the hopeless radical. I see myself as the hopeful radical, and I believe that we have radically to alter our perception of manufacturing.

For a start, we must stop compartmentalising manufacturing and segregating it as though it were a sacred zone of business unrelated to the rest. We must abandon the false barrier that has been erected between manufacturing and services. It is outdated, irrelevant and absurd to imply that there is some intrinsic merit or special worth in something simply because it has been manufactured in the old-fashioned way.

We shall never succeed by harking back, but only by developing further the areas in which we have distinctive capabilities and competitive advantage, be those the elite sciences, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, retailing or financial services. In my constituency, we manufacture aluminium cans, but we are also a great centre for financial services. We can export the cans, and the financial services.

Where yesterday we might have exported widgets, tomorrow we might be exporting the design and management of airports or hospitals, or the teaching of English as a foreign language. Our success depends on recognising the areas in which we have distinctive capabilities and on retaining our competitiveness.

Over the past year, we have been able to strengthen our competitive position as a result of firm control of costs following the depreciation of sterling. It is not for Government to tell businesses how to run themselves, although the hon. Member for Livingston would not agree. That is no doubt why today he announced his plan for Government dividend controls, which were so warmly welcomed by his namesake, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

I talk to manufacturers and service providers in my constituency—I do not make a distinction, I see them all as business people—and they are all clear about what they want from Government. First and above all else, they want a stable economic climate. They want to know where they are so that they can plan with confidence. They want sustained low inflation, sustained low interest rates, sustained low corporate taxes and a flexible labour market.

Well, inflation has been brought down to its lowest level for 30 years, interest rates are down to 5·25 per cent. from 15 per cent., which represents £13 billion off the costs of industry, and we have the lowest rates of corporation tax in the European Union or among the G7 countries.

Also, we have created a flexible labour market, encouraging decentralised wage bargaining and strengthening democracy in the trade unions to make them more accountable to their members. Industrial strife, once the hallmark of manufacturing industry in the country, is now a thing of the past, thanks to the Government.

That is why we must continue to resist the blandishments of the Opposition and the dangerous nonsense of the social chapter. It is incredible that a major party is going into the European elections committed to the social chapter, to a minimum wage, and that some of the party's members are even committed to a 35-hour working week.

By talking to people in my constituency in manufacturing, I know that they are concerned with six key elements—banking attitudes and finance, capital allowances, export facilities, deregulation, research and development, and, in the longer term, education. In each of those areas, the Government are and have been taking

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action, and we must salute that. The manufacturers in my part of the world were concerned with those matters, but none—not one—was asking for a national business plan from Government.

Running businesses is not the business of Government. The Opposition will never understand that, and that is why they have opposed every privatisation since 1979. In 1979, the Government-owned industries, before we privatised them, cost the taxpayer some £2·6 billion in subsidies. In the past year, those same businesses paid some £2 billion in corporation tax.

Not surprisingly, when the Leader of the Opposition unveiled his business plan for Britain in Glasgow, the director general of the CBI, who was on parade this morning with the hon. Member for Livingston, found that Labour's policy contained "uncomfortable echoes of the past". We have been here before. Remember the Department of Economic Affairs, the national plan and the National Enterprise Board? As I recall, of 100 investments, two thirds went awry—half were sold at a loss, the other half went bust. It is incredible that the Opposition's policy vacuum should be filled with talk of another national business plan.

Today, the hon. Member for Livingston paraded himself as a latter-day Lord George Brown without the hiccoughs, and it will not wash. At least the late Member for Belper believed in what he was doing. He was a conviction politician. I do not believe that the Opposition Front Bench Members can believe in what they are doing, because it does not add up to a row of beans, and it certainly does not add up to a credible manufacturing strategy.

7.43 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I have never purchased anything but a British car, from a Standard Ten onwards, so it was a sad day for me when British Aerospace decided to sell the Rover Motor Company to BMW. Why did the Government allow that to happen? In recent years, Rover has been building a quality product. Its success could have been built on and expanded, but, instead, it was flogged cheaply to a foreign competitor.

Now that the decision has been taken to sell out, I only wish the new enterprise well, because so many jobs are at stake. There is a tripartite entanglement among Rover, BMW and Honda, and I hope that good sense prevails, because Honda has certainly been slighted. Despite the setback, Honda needs to be encouraged to continue its mutually beneficial association with Rover. Meanwhile, BMW must recognise the delicate nature of the relationship between Rover and Honda, which may benefit all concerned.

Newport, in my constituency, has a major interest in the steel industry, especially through the great Llanwern works. Llanwern supplies large quantities of quality steel to the motor industry, and I trust that that arrangement continues. However, there has been some suggestion that, because BMW uses galvanised steel, there may be problems.

Perhaps the Minister would look into that situation, because it may cause trouble in future. British Steel is an efficient producer and its product is reckoned to be the best in Europe. Of the total United Kingdom steel production in 1990, 87 per cent. was produced by the continuous casting method, whereas the world average was only 70 per cent. There has been success in the export market, and the productivity of British Steel is reckoned to be 10 per cent. above the European average.

However, such success has come about only through traumatic change. Since the mid-1970s, the United Kingdom steel industry has shed some 200,000 jobs. Many redundant steel workers, especially those in their mid-fifties, have not worked since. Alongside that job shedding, there was considerable investment in steel-making technology. The success of British Steel bears out the theory that what British industry needed was new investment.

Despite that success, a fresh crisis has arisen because of the recession and of over-capacity in continental Europe. That over-capacity is estimated at 30 million tonnes, which is equivalent to the steel industries of the United Kingdom and Spain. The position was made difficult because continental countries did not cut their capacity to anything like the extent to which it occurred in the United Kingdom. Germany, Italy and Spain are openly flouting previous commitments by keeping inefficient capacity running. The rules are being broken as those countries heavily subsidise their steel plants.

In the process, our industry has been undercut, and the jobs of our steel workers are being put in jeopardy. Unfortunately, the Government have not kept abreast of the situation. Resolute action was required from the Minister for Industry. He should have insisted that the Italians, the Spaniards and the Germans made capacity cuts to match ours. That has not been done, and the Minister has been left with half-baked promises which do not amount to much at all.

Meanwhile, the Government have aggravated the situation by announcing the ending of the iron and steel employees readaptation and benefit scheme. A statutory instrument to formally wind up the scheme was laid in Parliament on Thursday 27 January by the Minister for Industry, and it came into force the following day.

Incidentally, that same Minister has been weak-kneed in his dealings with countries which have failed to cut their steel-making capacity. Early-day motion 485, standing in my name and that of 120 other hon. Members, calls for a reconsideration of that decision, and I reiterate that call this evening.

The scheme is unique, as it is funded by the European Coal and Steel Community, using a levy on steel production by all companies. Since 1974, it has had no fewer than 118,000 redundant steel workers. If the Government terminate that agreement, the United Kingdom will be the only member state of the Coal and Steel Community without such a scheme. What a travesty that is, yet it is so typical of the Government. On and on they go down the path of deregulation. There have even been cuts in health and safety standards.

The Government now talk of an economic recovery, but that recovery is patchy, to say the least. It relies on increased consumer spending and the purchase of goods from overseas, rather than products manufactured in our own factories.

I sincerely hope that one day in the not too distant future the Government will be replaced by a Labour Government who truly believe in the importance of manufacturing industry. When that happens, Britain will truly be on the road to recovery.

7.50 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) in expressing surprise that the Labour party should choose a debate on manufacturing industry, for two reasons. First, our manufacturing industry is in a fundamentally stronger position than it has been in for many years. Secondly, I have yet to meet a business man who is impressed by the "business plan for Britain" which the Labour party recently proposed. One business man in my constituency said that the only business men he knew who would be impressed by it were his German competitors.

On the fundamentals of the British economy, I entirely agree with my hon. Friends. In terms of efficiency; productivity, which is still increasing; exports; market awareness; and trying to improve productivity, which has increased by an unprecedented 70 per cent. since 1979, manufacturing is leaner, more efficient and more decisive than ever. Small wonder, therefore, that this year our economy will grow by 2·6 per cent. while those of other European countries will either not grow at all or will contract. Last year, the German economy contracted by 7 per cent. and the French economy by 5 per cent., while ours grew by 2 per cent.

That view of manufacturing was emphasised by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), one of the few Labour Members with an active interest in manufacturing and business. He said that the recovery is happening and must be protected, a view shared by the London Business School which, only last month, said:

> "Our forecast suggests that the UK will settle down on a path of steady growth with historically low inflation."

That is the key to sustained improvement in manufacturing capacity and output, as we saw in the 1980s, as a result of three Government policies. The first is low inflation, which is crucial to the ability to plan and, therefore, to invest. If we are to achieve more realistic pay-back periods for investment, we need low interest rates. As we have already seen on long-term Government bond rates, low inflation is crucial to low interest rates. If we want to get rid of short-termism, which has dogged British industry for too long, we need an assured, long-term inflationary climate, unlike the inflationary climate that we endured under the last Labour Government.

The second policy is flexibility. The Government are right to prevent British industry from being taken over by the social chapter. Companies in Germany are already closing down and moving their plant to this country, particularly to my constituency, because the "on costs" —not the basic wage costs—which they must pay as a result of their social policies are far too high.

When companies nowadays have to operate with stocks of only 2 per cent. of turnover—I visited one such company on Monday—they need flexibility in terms of their work force. They need not lines of demarcation but co-operation and better industrial relations. That is precisely what the Government's policy of flexibility has delivered.

It is significant that Germany, which we all thought was the home of good industrial relations, should now see IG Metall and the public sector unions threatening all-out strikes because the German Government do not have control of their economic environment and are done down by high social costs.

A sophisticated economy cannot specialise in everything, which is why this country, with only 1 per cent. of the world's population, 3 per cent. of its output and 8 per cent. of its exports, must attract inward investment if it is to survive. It is right that we should have such a fundamental climate that allows us to attract 40 per cent. of American and 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in Europe. That investment is not just one way. This country, possibly more than any but three other countries in the world, invests overseas, adding £7 billion a year to our balance of payments.

By specialisation and encouraging inward investment, manufacturing industry has a rosy future, provided that it does not adopt the nonsensical policies proposed by the Labour party, to which it seems to be wedded in view of its ideological opposition to free enterprise and profit.

The most eloquent statement on that subject was made last September by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who said of the Labour party:

> "Where we are absolutely deficient is in suggesting that, in any respect, we have a clue about how to manage the economy or whether we should even try".

That was a senior member of the Labour party talking about the opportunity that his party has had, in 14 years in opposition, to get its industrial strategy together.

The Labour party's competence on forecasting is not much better. After the Budget in March 1993, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said:

> "I make one Budget forecast—that, after the Budget, unemployment will rise this month, next month and for months afterwards."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 289.]

Precisely the opposite happened. That month, the following month and for months afterwards, unemployment fell by an unprecedented amount—206,000 less than throughout 1993, and in my constituency, 10 per cent. less.

Not content with that, the Labour party wants to foist on this country two policies that would be totally disastrous. First, in the European context, they seem to have swallowed hook, line and sinker, the social chapter and what some members of the shadow Cabinet have been discussing, the 35-hour week. I was with one of my carpet manufacturers only last Friday and he told me that his work force—shop floor as well as management—voted almost to a man for the Conservative party at the last general election because they were terrified of the 35-hour working week which the Labour party said that they would impose on all workers as part of its European strategy.

The Labour party also talks about a minimum wage. The two European countries that have a minimum wage, France and Spain, have unemployment rates of 15 and 21 per cent. respectively. That is because the economy is fossilised and people do not want to invest there. One of the major manufacturing companies in Europe, perhaps even the world, Philips UK, if asked whether it is interested in investing in Spain in a manufacturing capacity, will say, "Sorry, no", precisely because of the high social and non-wage costs that must be incurred in that country.

The other major policy that would discredit the Labour party in anyone's eyes, let alone a sensible business man, is its idea of closing loopholes, which the Confederation of Business Industry rightly said would amount to no less than a 25 per cent. increase in business taxation in this country. That translates to £3·6 billion a year—it is not just a one-off—which equates to somewhere in the region of one third of all existing manufacturing investment on an annual basis. If Labour Members honestly think that that

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would assist the country in gearing up to improve productivity still further and reduce the productivity gap between the United Kingdom and our European competitors, which has been reducing over the past 14 years under this Government, they are living in cloud cuckoo land and deserve the support of the electorate and the business community in this country even less than I thought.

I think that the Labour party has a basic antipathy to profit and wealth creation. Labour Members are obsessed with the distribution of wealth, rather than the creation of it. Their current policies and, indeed, their argument about clause 4, which they do not want to give up even 50 years after the event, is evidence of precisely that.

8 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Secretary of State did not stay in the Chamber long. He was out of here like the president of a banana republic who knew the reality and recognised that his friends were all right, but understood that the problems that he had shallowly skirted round remained very serious. I wanted to intervene in his speech because, during it, I received news of the statement of United Engineering Steel for the past year. That company lost £48 million. It is interesting that one of the losses was in restructuring costs.

In 1961, at the Templeborough site near Rotherham, 9,500 people worked in the production of engineering steel. They produced 1 million tonnes of steel and made a profit of £16 million. Last year, 194 people at the same site produced 264,000 tonnes of steel—an increase in productivity of 1,200 per cent. However, the comapny made no profit and closed. So one of the most successful and effective steelworks in Europe closed not long after the Minister cancelled ISERBS and said that there would not be any more redundancies. There have been 500 more job losses in engineering steelworks in our area and the Minister knows why. It is a pity that the Minister for Industry is not here.

I hope that the Minister will answer some of my points and those of my hon. Friends because our people demand answers. They demand answers because they know that the engineering steelworks in the Rotherham area are the best in Europe. They know that nothing in the Community steel industry can match us. They know that we hold the world records and Europe does not. They know that our workers and management have put everything into that industry and achieved the potential of enormous success. However, they have not met success, certainly not on the scale that they should have done, simply because the Government have been taken for a ride by more intelligent and competent nationally interested Ministers from the rest of the Community.

During the statement about the fine on British Steel, I asked the Minister a supplementary question about unfair competition and subsidies being put into their engineering steel industry by our competitors. The Minister said that that had stopped. I asked him when it had stopped and he said now. Did it stop on that day? Has it stopped since? Will it stop? Under this Administration, I do not think that it will stop because the British Government are regarded as a soft touch by our European competitors. The steelworks in Spain which competes with the works in Rotherham is bankrupt so its Government picks up the labour costs and it continues to compete. The two German plants which compete with Rotherham cannot match us. However, the Bremen local authority proposes to buy the Klockner works in order to keep it operating at a loss.

We are all right on a level playing field but we are not getting a fair deal. What is worse, Ministers are not capable of ensuring that a fair deal is obtained. If we are not getting a fair deal, let them give other people the chance to ensure that areas such as mine are not destined for the label which it has been given by the Community of being one of the 10 most deprived areas inside the Common Market. The Government have destroyed the mining industry and a large part of our engineering industry. Would they happily see the most successful engineering steel industry perhaps in the world but certainly in Europe destroyed because of the incapacity of Ministers and the inability of Commissioners properly to pursue policies?

I shall give an illustration and then I shall have to finish because of the time limit. Since 1975, the steel labour force in Britain has fallen by 78 per cent. In Germany, it has fallen by 40 per cent., and in Italy it has fallen by 47 per cent. *[Interruption.]* Tory Members may not represent steelworkers, otherwise they would not be amused by these tragic figures. Germany had 220,000 steel workers and now has 132,000. The United Kingdom had 183,000 steel workers and now has 41,000—and it is going down further at a rate of knots. I have to live with those figures because I live in my constituency. Last year, at one of the schools in my constituency—it is a good school—only four young people got jobs. If we do not get the economy right and the industrial base of this country reinvigorated, fewer young people will get jobs and the consequences for this nation will be an unutterable tragedy. In the forthcoming by-election, I certainly hope that the people of Rotherham will cast the verdict on the Government's record that needs to be placed.

8.6 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I shall begin my remarks by apologising for not being here for the opening speeches, which I would like to have been here for, but I was attending the Select Committee on Health. I trust that the House will accept my apologies for that.

Manufacturing is close to my heart as I come from the north-east. Whenever I see the subject on the screen or the Order Paper, I want to take part in the debate because manufacturing is vital. I have a great love of the instinct of manufacturing, which is making things and selling things. That is a good instinct to have for an economy.

I shall respond to some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about the subject of British Steel. I share some of his views because I have British Steel at Skinningrove in my constituency. We also have the Teesside works which is one of the most productive works in Europe, if not the world. I also share the distinct anger at the fine imposed on British Steel which was completely disproportionate to the fines placed on other steel manufacturers by the European Commission.

Let us be absolutely clear on that point—the fine was imposed by the European Commission. I totally deprecate the decision to apply that level of fine to British Steel, especially when it is compared with some companies which have been involved in the same cartel. The fines imposed on the other companies amounted to the princely sum of 8 ecu. According to a newspaper this morning, that should be about £4·50, compared with £25 million. That is more than the half-year profit of British Steel. It will have a catastrophic effect on British Steel in my constituency and across the country.

I smelt something rather unsavoury in the announcement. I put two announcements side by side; the announcement in December related to steel capacity cuts and efforts to cut capacity within the European Community. We are at one in believing that everyone else should have the cuts. That is logical because we want to put Britain first. We believe that British Steel is the premier steel manufacturer in the world. However, it is a little rich for Labour Members to talk about British Steel because that was not the score in the 1970s. It brings a wry smile to our face because the Opposition fought privatisation tooth and nail and it is that which brought about the profitability of which we are proud and which we wish to protect.

We always want someone else to take the capacity cuts. We want the Portuguese, the Spanish or the Italians to take the cuts—in fact, there should be great emphasis on the Italians who ought to be bearing the brunt of the capacity cuts. However, we are part of a community and there must be agreement. That involves some tough bargaining.

We must remember that the Labour party signed up to the decision to give away our national veto at the Council of Ministers. Where would that leave us in our negotiations on issues such as this? I have absolute confidence that our Ministers at the Board of Trade are fighting our corner well and I wish them success.

I am certain that British Steel will appeal against the fine. I dare suggest that when the ink is dry on the agreement on capacity cuts, we may find that the heavy fine on British Steel is rescinded somewhat by the European Commission.

British Steel is very much a part of the manufacturing base of the north-east. That manufacturing base is important to us because we have such a history and we have done rather well. The first railway was built between Stockton and Darlington. The first electric lightbulb was in Gateshead at Thomas Swan's house off Kells Lane—I should know that because I used to live behind it. Steamships were built in the north-east and turbines were perfected by Armstrong. That great ingenuity has been the cornerstone of the north-east and provided its wealth. That manufacturing created the demand for raw materials such as coal and iron ore which then went to the steelworks. Therefore, there was interdependency between the industries.

I could tell stories similar to those of the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) about British Steel on Teesside. At the beginning of the 1980s it used to manufacture 1·5 million tonnes of steel a year with 25,000 employees. It now manufactures 3·5 million tonnes a year with 5,500 employees. That is industrial success. The separate issue involves the challenge of finding jobs and places for those who have lost their livelihoods and for the communities in which they live.

If one takes away the need for steel, that has an effect on coal. It has been a sad year for the north-east. The last deep mine in the north-east has closed. That affected members of my family. My father-in-law was a miner at Easington until a few years ago. I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary who is sitting on the Front Bench has great affection for the British coal industry. We feel strongly about those old industries. However, when we can import coal for a fraction of the cost of mining it here, questions must be asked.

We talk about demand and energy generation and the way in which industry should be directed to use coal. One of the great changes in the level of demand has come about as people switch from coal fires to gas in their homes. Individual consumers have made that choice because they think that it is cleaner and more cost effective, but they deny that choice to industry. Industry must have that choice.

New industries bring in their wake new jobs and new prosperity. In the north-east, on Teesside, we have the Enron power station. It is a £850 million investment and generates power from gas. We have gas from the North sea, supplied through the central area transmission system pipeline. That is another £1 billion investment and much of the pipeline is manufactured in the north-east. That brings jobs and prosperity.

Many people from the north-east work offshore. I had the privilege of visiting the Tiffany platform in the North sea. I saw many people from the north-east using their skills in the North sea in the construction of modules, in drilling and in the upstream and downstream aspects of oil and gas production. That was very encouraging. It is said that between 11,000 and 12,000 jobs in the north-east now depend on the offshore oil and gas industry.

There is a link with the past. We can think of our great prowess as shipbuilding manufacturers. People in Sunderland built ships for the Japanese navy. We look with pride and nostalgia at our past and say that that is what we want to recreate. We are not building as many ships on the Tyne now, but companies such as AMEC are building offshore platforms. It is the same type of work but in a modern generation.

Many people in the north-east feel that previous Labour Governments—Conservative Governments that preceded them must accept some responsibility—mollycoddled British industry. If tough decisions had been taken in the 1960s and 1970s, we would not have had the pain of the 1980s during the massive transition as Britain moved towards the 21st century. It renewed its ability to compete on all fronts and some painful changes had to be made. We must look to the future and see what can be achieved.

The north-east has had great success in attracting inward investment. About 40 per cent. of all inward investment into the United Kingdom comes to the north-east. It comes because of the skills of the population—the great indigenous skills of making things, building things and selling things which made our forefathers great and which are making us great now.

There is great pride at Nissan. That company wants to stick a Union jack on the cars exported back to Japan because the people there believe that that signifies a better-built Nissan car than those they build themselves. That is the modern equivalent of selling ships from the Tyne or the Wear to the Japanese navy. We should embrace it for what it is. It is a great transformation, demonstrating our skills. We must take pride in our nation and our region.

Another reason why people come to the north-east was shown by the recent decision of Black and Decker—we are not part of the social chapter. We cannot divorce the two. I remember reading the name of Karl Kratzenburg—that is the type of name one does not forget. He was a machine shop supervisor in Limburg in Germany. He believed that

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capacity at Black and Decker had been shut down in Limburg and moved to Spennymoor in County Durham because, as he said, "It's simple. Industry must be flexible, the social chapter is not."

He encapsulated it all in a short phrase. I do not know whether that was a translation or extremely good English, but he got the message across and we have accepted it.

If the north-east is to demonstrate its industrial and manufacturing prowess on the world stage, we must remain competitive; competitiveness is what the Government is all about. We are not about mollycoddling, or protecting industry from the harsh whims of the market. That does nobody any good in the long term. We are now facing up to the future and to new challenges.

I will give an example of those new challenges. Rather than calling in a statutory board to tell people where, when and how much businesses ought to invest, and rather than making the old mistakes, two men—Karl Watkin, a north-east business man, and Mike McCullagh of the Marske machine tool company—have set up an organisation called Manufacturing Challenge. The organisation has two objectives, which are to double output and triple exports in 10 years.

The Opposition would tell us that a big bureaucracy, and perhaps a quango, was needed to organise and help the investment. They would sanction billions of pounds to direct that investment to various plants in the north-east. The two business men involved in Manufacturing Challenge said that they did not want a penny, and that they wanted to rebuild the manufacturing base of the north-east and develop it themselves. Business men and entrepreneurs looking after business men and entrepreneurs—that is the way it should be.

Already, 1,000 manufacturing companies in the north-east have signed up to the Manufacturing Challenge. It is a great success, and the firms are helping each other, rather than providing subsidies. One company goes to another in the north-east before it buys goods from overseas and asks whether it can get the goods in the region. If not, Manufacturing Challenge will provide help to tell the company how to manufacture those goods to customer specifications, so that a firm is buying manufacturing goods and services within the north-east, rather than going overseas. That is the modern way—the Conservative way—in which to regenerate the manufacturing base of the north-east, and it is one which I support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. In the time available before the winding up, there are no fewer than six hon. Members who are hoping to catch my eye. I hope that, with a bit of co-operation, I will perhaps be able to call them all.

8.24 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I will be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) swept into the Chamber, made his speech and swept out again, because I wanted to say something about his speech. The hon. Gentleman talked about business strategy and about industry standing on its own feet and not needing hand-outs. That is the man whose own business setting up royal exhibitions collapsed after receiving a grant of £200,000 from the English tourist board. That money was lost, and not repaid. When I hear that kind of stuff from Government Members, it sticks in my throat. The Government Members who have directorships and who are Lloyd's names and receive grants and loans are always the first people to criticise the minimum wage and the social chapter.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) talked about inward investment. If one looks at their performance, foreign inward investors pay higher than the going rate for indigenous United Kingdom-owned companies. That is a fact. Wages paid by foreign inward investors per head are 24 per cent. higher than those paid by United Kingdom-owned firms. Their productivity is 45 per cent. higher and their investment per head is 92 per cent. higher.

I will touch briefly on the speech of the President of the Board of Trade, which was typically vacuous. He said nothing at all, like so many of his Government colleagues. Conservative Members exist on a different planet and they operate in another dimension where they see things that other people do not see. They see growth, productivity and a booming economy where the rest of us just see dust.

The President of the Board of Trade has a nerve. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred to the right hon. Gentleman's book "Where There's a Will", which was published in 1987. In it, the President said:

> "It is simply not an option for the British Government to tell the country's motor industry to make its own way in the world . . . An ominous development has been an increase in foreign ownership and control. Foreign investment and interest is, of course, to be welcomed, but control has its dangers. For the major parts of the British motor industry to fall entirely into foreign hands would leave it a hostage to decisions in Detroit, Paris, Turin and perhaps Tokyo."

The amazing thing was that, when challenged by my hon. Friend, the President said that he stood by every word. When Rover was sold to BMW, the right hon. Gentleman was somewhere in the far east on a trade mission and one of his Front-Bench colleagues had to deal with the matter. The President of the Board of Trade exists in a hall of mirrors where reality is not quite reality.

The Under-Secretary for Technology put his name to a document entitled "Manufacturing into the late 1990s". That document contained all the buzz words, but was selective with the statistics. The hon. Gentleman said in the foreword that from 1981 to 1992—it is always 1981, and never 1979—

> "UK manufacturing output rose by over a fifth".

I have had the Library recalculate those figures going back to 1979. They show that output rose not by one fifth but by 6 per cent.

The Under-Secretary added that investment had risen by one third, but the Library tells me that, when the figures are recalculated going back to 1979, there has been a 12·8 per cent. decrease in fixed investment in manufacturing. In the glowing foreword, the hon. Gentleman talked of exports rising by three quarters. Of course there has been an increase in the volume of United Kingdom manufacturing exports, but it has risen by 56 per cent. and not 75 per cent.

The Under-Secretary's own Department gave evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the competitiveness of manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, and it was recognised that things were spinning badly out of control. After 15 years of Conservative party stewardship, the United Kingdom has slipped to 18th of the 24 OECD countries. That is a pitiful record, yet the

Government tell us that everything in the garden is lovely. That does not correspond remotely to the perception of people outside.

In my area in the north-west, we lost 88,000 jobs in manufacturing industry between January 1992 and March 1993. There has been an acceleration since then, but I do not have the figures to hand. My constituency has the highest percentage of the work force employed in manufacturing industry of any constituency in Britain. We have had a cascade of job losses in recent years. In the past year, there were job losses at Smith and Nephew at the denim plant. The United Kingdom no longer makes denim for jeans and for clothing.

Mr. Oppenheim *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Prentice: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but it is an incontestable fact that the United Kingdom no longer makes denim. There have been job losses at Rolls-Royce in my constituency, where aeroplane engines are made.

My constituency makes not just boots and shoes but high-tech components. Baxter Healthcare is a United States multinational company that makes intravenous drips and high-tech equipment for the national health service. It has pulled up sticks and decamped to Malta where, apparently, they pay lower wages than in north-east Lancashire—which beggars belief. We have seen the closure of Project Engineering and Wadkins of the Colne, which made woodworking machinery. There has been a collapse of manufacturing in my region.

The rhetoric of the Department of Trade and Industry and reality diverge greatly. When the Department of Trade and Industry gave evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, it said:

> "Manufacturing is the key tradeable sector of the economy contributing roughly three times as much to exports as services."

The hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) said that there was no difference between manufacturing and services. He thinks that Britain can run itself by staging royal exhibitions——

Mr. Hardy: Not if the hon. Gentleman is in charge.

Mr. Prentice: Yes, not if the hon. Member for City of Chester is in charge. He thinks that Britain can run itself by staging royal exhibitions and developing tourism.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that manufacturing trade moved into deficit in 1983 for the first time since the industrial revolution. It did so under a Conservative Government and it stayed in deficit, reaching a massive £17·3 billion deficit in 1989.

The President of the Board of Trade said that our aerospace industry was a triumph. Rover was taken over by BMW in Germany because British Aerospace said that it needed the capital to develop the core aspect of its business—aerospace. British Aerospace told the Select Committee on Employment—the report was published in January this year—that its problem was the availability of capital.

In its evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry last year, the Department of Trade and Industry quoted the Confederation of British Industry approvingly. It said:

> "Uncertainty about the future demand and inadequate returns on investment are consistently seen as more important influences than the cost, or availability, of finance."

That is clearly not the case for British Aerospace, one of our biggest exporters.

I have a document from Rolls-Royce, which manufactures aeroplane engines in my constituency. It mentions the uneven playing field on which the aerospace industry in Britain has to compete with other countries. It states that it is a major concern that companies in the United States and other countries receive support from their Governments for research and technology that British companies do not. Since 1972, launch aid has provided £500 million, but it will have to be paid back. It is not a grant but a loan——

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): And the Government make a profit.

Mr. Prentice: Yes, the Government make a profit.

Rolls-Royce finds it difficult to operate in a competitive environment without proper support from the Government.

I should like to say much more, but I am conscious of the fact that many of my hon. Friends want to speak, so I shall close my remarks.

8.35 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): It was a little unfortunate that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) launched such a vitriolic attack on my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth). Had he not done so, I should not have been tempted to remind the House that the hon. Gentleman was the leader of Hammersmith and Fulham council which, under a Labour regime, indulged in the disastrous rate-swapping scheme that lost ratepayers millions of pounds. He should be careful before attacking Conservative Members.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: The hon. Gentleman referred to my alleged responsibility for rate swaps in Hammersmith and Fulham council, presumably when I was leader. An independent report completely exonerated me and all elected members.

Mr. Oppenheim: If I were the hon. Gentleman, I would also try to disown that disastrous policy.

On a more consensual and emollient note, I think that probably all hon. Members would agree that manufacturing is important; it is an important component of any advanced industrialised country. But the wording of the Opposition motion is particularly ill-chosen. I think that we would all agree that in an ideal world we would prefer to have a genuinely British indigenous player on the global car market. We did not lose that chance through the takeover of Rover by BMW; we lost it in the 1970s when British Leyland was the butt of international jokes and was churning out products such as the Allegro and the Marina—international jokes in themselves that were not seriously marketable on the home market, let alone on export markets.

We must ask ourselves why British Leyland got into that position. The answer, to a significant degree, is that Governments of all parties—the Conservatives were almost as much to blame as Labour—meddled and fiddled with the car industry. They told it what to do. They told the companies that they had to merge and told the British car industry where it could build its plants. They insisted—probably for well-intentioned reasons—that it should build plants in places like Liverpool and Scotland, well away from the core manufacturing areas. As a result, bodies and engines were shipped all over the country at great expense. We all know why that was done—it was a well-intentioned

[Mr. Oppenheim]

regional policy—but the net result was that the British car industry was severely handicapped. I have not mentioned the industrial problems that we all remember in the 1960s and 1970s. British Leyland suffered from meddling. Its successful parts—the truck and the four-wheel drive sections—were made to cross-subsidise the unsuccessful volume car sector. By the end of the 1970s, most people would not have given the British-owned part of the car industry much chance of surviving.

It is a tribute to the Government's policies and, more important, to the enormous efforts of the management and work force of Rover that it managed to grope its way back to a position where a company of the prestige and performance of BMW wants to take it over. To suggest that Rover is a jewel of British manufacturing that had a chance to be a global player is nonsense. The Rover Group, for all its successes in the past 10 years, was third in the home market and had a derisory share of the European market. It hardly sold anything in the United States or Asia and just about managed to crank up its four-wheel drive production by a few per cent. over a period when the Japanese managed to increase production by 1,000 per cent. We must get the Rover-BMW case in perspective.

It was unwise of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and Opposition Members to talk about the steel industry. During the debate, they have concentrated on criticising foreign subsidies for foreign steel makers. They have told us that the United Kingdom industry is the most efficient in Europe—about which I agree. In the 1970s, Britain had a £1 billion a year deficit in steel products; we now have a £1 billion a year surplus. By the end of the 1970s, British Steel was the world's largest loss-maker and cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds each year that could have been better spent on hospitals and schools. British Steel is now the most efficient steel maker in Europe and pays money to the Exchequer in taxes that help to fund the health service and schools.

British Steel has been transformed. Why? There has been an end to the national champion-style meddling that characterised Government policy towards steel in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Again, it was not just the Labour party. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the private steel mills wanted to build a huge integrated steel plant in north Wales, but the Government said, "No. For regional policy reasons, you have to split the plant in two—half in north Wales and half in Ravenscraig."

Ravenscraig is inland, so all the coke had to be expensively shipped inland to the plant and most of the finished product had to be shipped expensively to the markets, which were not in Scotland. We all know why Governments did that; it was well-intentioned, but such meddling with the steel industry saddled it with the burden of inefficient, uncommercial capacity.

In the 1970s, when the British steel industry was nationalised, Government policy became worse. It was no longer the market or the management who decided what capacity of production the industry should have—it was a combination of Ministers, bureaucrats and trade unions.

At one point, the management proposed one figure and the politicians suggested another. That was not enough for the unions and they ended up compromising with another figure that was way above what the market would bear. As a result, British Steel was meddled almost to death and by the late 1970s it was the world's largest loss maker. That was a result of the industrial strategy which the hon. Member for Livingston proposed for British industry today.

What brought British Steel back to health was a combination of privatisation and market discipline and the end of the meddling from which the company suffered in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The hon. Member for Livingston has an absolute cheek to tell us that British Steel is now the most efficient steel company in Europe, when he and his party opposed tooth and nail the policies —I admit that they were difficult policies—that had to be implemented to bring the company back from the brink of disaster. It is extraordinary that he attacks subsidies elsewhere in Europe, when his whole industrial policy is predicated on subsidies for British industry.

I should like to think that, in their maturity, the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends have reached a sophisticated realisation that markets work better than interventionist industrial policies, but I suspect that their conversion has more to do with opportunism and hypocrisy than with a fundamental realisation of where we went wrong in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and where we should be going now.

Dr. Liam Fox: Does my hon. Friend accept that the argument goes further and what he calls well-intentioned meddling is fundamental flawed? When Governments have industries in the state sector, they will always make decisions for political and employment reasons and not for economic and profit reasons. Therefore, industries in the state sector are bound to feel that they will never be subject to market discipline.

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I was coming to the fundamental reasons why state control of industries or state intervention is almost invariably doomed to failure. There are a number of reasons, and my hon. Friend perceptively put his finger on one.

First, for all their undoubtedly excellent qualities, politicians and civil servants are not business men. They do not have access to the same information as the market. The market is the aggregate of thousands or millions of decisions by investors, customers and business men and, by definition, their aggregate decisions will be better informed than those of civil servants and politicians.

Secondly, as with the steel and car industries, the decisions of politicians as to where to put investment are almost always distorted by regional and social considerations which, however well-intentioned, lead to uncommercial decisions.

Thirdly, when Governments give subsidies, they do not tend to support those industries that most need the money or could make best use of it; they tend to subsidise those industries with the most lobbying power, and they tend to be the industries that will not use the money most effectively.

Finally, all too often, Governments put money into projects that are unsuited to the underlying fundamentals of the economy. That occurs particularly in the third world. The Indians have poured money into a rocket programme and the Brazilians have poured money into a computer programme.

I venture to suggest that the billions of pounds poured into the British nuclear industry in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s fall into that category. When one considers the huge resources in terms of the highly skilled manpower, the brain power and the financial resources that went into that industry, and the result that was achieved in terms of high-priced electricity, one thinks of what could have been produced had all those resources been efficiently directed to where they could be used most productively by the market. One can see the errors that occur when politicians and civil servants have grandiose dreams of the great industries that they would create which almost invariably end up as disasters distorting the economy, draining it of resources and costing taxpayers large sums of money.

To return to steel, the European steel industry is a classic example of an industry which has been subject to politicians and state industrial policies for the past 30 or 40 years. Every European country, including Britain in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, has poured billions of pounds into its steel industry and the result is the mess of inefficient over-capacity from which we all now suffer.

Industrial policy is almost invariably a beggar-my-neighbour policy. At the moment, British Steel is suffering from the ill-founded policies that are still, unfortunately, pursued in France, Italy and Spain.

The American writer H. L. Mencken said:

> "For every complex and intractable problem there is a solution that is simple, plausible and wrong."

Industrial policy is just that: simple, plausible and wrong. However, the world is more complex than that. Markets may not be perfect, but they are a great deal less imperfect than business decisions made by politicians and bureaucrats.

One of the common theories from the Opposition is that we are trying to put Britain into a low-wage market to attract industry. The hon. Member for Livingston and his hon. Friends have completely missed the point.

To be sustainable, wages have to be matched by productivity. If wages are higher than is justified by the underlying productivity of the economy, the result will be high unemployment, as has happened in Spain in recent years.

How do a Government raise productivity in an economy? One of the key policies is improving education. The key industrial policy in Britain must be to improve standards of education, which over the past 30 or 40 years have slipped below those of our main competitors. That is why it is so important for the Government to press on with the reforms which they started in 1988 and which probably will be the most crucial component if we are to recover our manufacturing expertise and prowess.

Making labour truly productive requires good availability of capital. Opposition Members have told us that we need a German or Japanese system whereby the banks closely co-operate with industry, and with two-tier boards and supervisory boards such as those in Germany.

They should tell that to Metallgesellschaft or Philips in Holland. Daimler-Benz is another good example. Those companies had supervisory boards, and as a result they were not put under shareholder pressure. They became arrogant and took decisions that no company subject to the scrutiny of shareholders would have made. They have now made vast losses. That is why in countries such as Germany and Holland the system of supervisory boards and close links between banks and industries is being abandoned.

Shareholders are the crucial link in the chain of accountability. Countries such as Germany and Japan have greater availability of investment capital which allows their companies to take a long-term view. The reason is that they save more because the pool of investment capital for industry is pre-eminently private savings.

In Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, we clobbered savers with high taxes—98 per cent. investment income surtax on the savings of top rate taxpayers. That was no incentive to save. Under Labour, we had negative real interest rates, or interest rates below inflation. Who in their right mind would save when interest rates are below inflation and when what little profit is made is taxed at 98 per cent.? I am glad that the Government have reversed that policy, yet I do not think that Opposition Members have learnt their lesson, because they went into the previous election with a policy of reintroducing the investment and income surcharge. Until they realise that private savings are the real pool of capital, and that that is what industry must draw on to invest, they will carry on making the same old mistakes.

The key lessons from the experience of Germany and Japan are that they have an awesome, rigorously educated work force, which is their key competitive advantage. Until recent years, they maintained high levels of monetary and fiscal stability and maintained low taxes and incentives for savers, which allowed industry the pool of capital for investment. We are now pursuing those policies in this country. They are achieving results. Despite what Opposition Members have said, our performance has improved dramatically in recent years. In the 1960s and 1970s, we were consistently bottom of the Group of Seven and European Community countries on overall output, manufacturing output and growth in productivity. In the 1980s, and again now, we have been at least as good as the average of the G7 and European Community countries. In many cases, we have been near the top of the league tables. We are now at least average, if not higher than that, in the league tables.

Manufacturing output fell under the previous Labour Government, yet from the way in which Labour Members speak, one would think that everything was rosy in the garden. The truth, however, is that much of British industry was dead on its feet and multinationals, such as General Motors and Ford, were falling over themselves to shift production out of Britain and on to the continent. The opposite is now true. Under the Conservative Government, manufacturing output increased rapidly during the 1980s, and will again during the 1990s. Multinationals such as Ford and General Motors, and the Japanese manufacturers, are coming back to Britain. Britain is once again a good place to make things. We may not have made up all of the ground that we lost in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s relative to our competitors, but we have made up a great deal of it. If we maintain our policies of trying to improve education, maintaining monetary stability and giving incentives for savers, Britain will once again become a pre-eminent country for manufacturing.

8.52 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has just made a rather rambling presentation of the type of extreme free market views that I had thought—until earlier today—that the President of the Board of Trade was criticising within the Conservative party in his book.

I heard the President of the Board of Trade speak this afternoon, and clearly he has also signed up to the view that

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the Government should do nothing, make no intervention and create no institutions to develop effective manufacturing industry. Yet the persistence of that view in the Conservative party, despite the self-evident damage that is being done to manufacturing in this country, is one of the remarkable political phenomena of the past few years.

Any cursory examination of any part of British manufacturing industry today will show that, far from the Government being able to say, "You get on with the job. What you do is nothing to do with us," it is intimately related and affected by Government policy. That is as true today as it has ever been.

In the south-east of England, outside London—the part of England where I come from—we have lost about one in six manufacturing jobs since 1990. Fewer than 700,000 people in the whole of the south-east region now work in manufacturing industry.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, at least 13,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the Southampton and Eastleigh travel-to-work area. Those job losses are truly massive. The hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) argued that the job losses mean nothing, that they simply reflect changing technology or changing working practices. Although that element is there, it is clear from a look at industries operating in south Hampshire that the effects of Government policy have led directly to many of those job losses.

Let us take a tour of some of the major employers in the Southampton area. On Monday afternoon, I visited Aerostructures at Hamble—the visit was arranged well before this debate. It is a former subsidiary of British Aerospace and is now an independent company.

That company has shed, or will have shed when the latest redundancies are completed, some 20 per cent. of its work force in the space of three years. I was told that that is partly to do with changed working practices and the use of new technologies and processes; but a significant part is due to the fall in orders from the aerospace industry.

When we were talking about the work that that company does for the airbus project, the European fighter aircraft and the defence industry, it struck me that, although that company is working hard and successfully to move into civil aviation projects with no Government links, it is hard to argue the case because Governments —here, in the European Community, in the United States and in the third world—in terms of orders for the aerospace industry, directly affect the ability of that company to have orders to chase. The idea that a company such as Aerostructures can exist in some free-market paradise, unaffected by the decisions of Government, is quite wrong.

If one looks at it the other way round, that company does not want to be run by the Government. It wants a Government who have a vision of the future of the aerospace industry, who can back key projects, who are willing to invest in the very expensive costs of developing new projects and aircraft. That is where Government responsibility comes in. It is the way in which the Government, in so many areas of industry, have washed their hands of any responsibility for taking a strategic view of British industry that has been so damaging.

In my constituency, Philips used to have a fairly significant production of semiconductor products. That has almost entirely gone. Part of it went to the third world—that is perhaps labour cost competition—but part of it went to Holland, because the Dutch Government were prepared to work with Philips to provide the technology to develop the next generation of silicon wafers.

Conservative Members do not agree with a Government working with private industry. That is fine, but it is no use our not agreeing with it when such collaboration is under way in other countries. The result is that Philips has a high standard of research and intellectual property work going on, but without the production side to add value to the work on that site.

Pirelli, which had major job losses last year in Southampton and Eastleigh, is directly affected by the Government's failure to get major infrastructure projects off the ground, such as the channel tunnel link, with the requirements for signalling and communications cables. What Governments do, whether they have a view to the health of manufacturing industry, makes a difference.

Ford has thankfully returned just this week to five-day working. But nobody can deny that the long periods of short-time working were directly affected by Government mismanagement of the economy and Government failure to boost the small and medium-sized businesses that provide orders for Transit vans. One fifth of all jobs at British Rail Manufacturing Ltd. in Eastleigh are to go: that development has occurred in the short time since the passage of the Bill to privatise the railways. Government policies can directly destroy jobs.

It is true that there have been technological changes and moves towards more efficient working practices, but any examination of any part of manufacturing industry anywhere in the country will show that the actions of Government have considerable influence on the success of the manufacturing sector. The Government's real crime has been not to face up to the challenge—not to look at all the areas in which their actions influence the success of industry, and ensure that we make the best of that industry.

The result of the shake-out of jobs in manufacturing industry has been a large and significant change in the nature of the labour market. Conservative Members may wonder why, despite some fall in the headline levels of unemployment, they seem to be getting so little political reward for what they considered a great achievement. In fact, the well-paid, full-time, permanent jobs that used to exist in manufacturing industry are now being replaced by possibly a slightly larger number of jobs, but jobs that are poorly paid, lower skilled, often part-time and often non-permanent; they tend to be in the service industry.

One of the major reasons why the Government are given no credit for the small fall in unemployment is the current rise in job insecurity. Those in permanent manufacturing work know that the chances are that they will either lose their jobs altogether, or be shifted from pensionable permanent jobs to contract jobs with no pension rights and few secure employment prospects.

Mr. Purchase: My constituency presents a mirror image in terms of manufacturing job losses. I have a list of more than 2,000 full-time manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Wolverhampton. That position—which no doubt also applies in my hon. Friend's constituency—demonstrates beyond doubt the collapse in manufacturing output and jobs in this country.

Mr. Denham: I agree.

I have listed some of the ways in which Government policies have affected job losses in the recent past. Let me now mention some of the Government's responsibilities for future planning.

It is generally recognised that about a fifth of all jobs in the south Hampshire area depend on the defence industry, and the rundown in defence orders is obviously affecting that industry. A number of problems arise. One is that the Government's procurement policies show little concern for the health of defence-related industries. I know that Vosper Thornycroft in Southampton has had to wait far too long—more than two years too long—for the chance to tender for new minehunter orders; that has imposed a variety of costs on the company and its work force, because of the lack of orders for those world-beating ships.

It often seems that the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence feel no concern for the health of the defence industry. Even now, with the rundown in defence spending, the Government should be planning their defence procurement to give long-term security and a sense of direction to industries that are supplying the country's armed forces.

We know that the defence industry is contracting. The Government's second failure is that they have done nothing positive for, in particular, the smaller companies that rely on supplying the main defence contractors. I feel that it will be relatively difficult to second-guess the commercial decisions that major defence-related industries should make.

The real challenge for defence conversion, however, relates to small firms employing 25, 50 or 100 people—firms that supply the main defence contractors, have only ever worked in the defence sector, are used only to the rhythms and routines of supply in that sector and often have highly skilled work forces and a well-developed use of technology.

It is those companies that, all too often, are going under completely nowadays, as the number of major defence orders is reduced—and it is those companies that are likely to benefit most from advice and support enabling them to review their products and the development of new products, learn about new markets and shift into those markets, abandoning their dependence on defence.

It is a scandal that the only support available to small to medium-sized businesses wishing to reduce their reliance on defence has been the European KONVER programme. A welcome but relatively small amount of that money is finding its way to Hampshire. It appears that the Government are quite prepared to see many small defence industries go to the wall, rather than assisting them to develop new products and new markets.

The defence industry has a further significance. I did not understand why the President of the Board of Trade apparently defended public support for the defence sector, but for that sector alone. Much of south Hampshire's economy is based on successful defence industries, which are almost exclusively—or even exclusively—in the private sector.

That success is not a purely private sector success, however. It is the result of a partnership between the public and private sectors, which is very apparent in the defence industry, from research and development with the defence research establishments, through the development of the product, to the final purchasing of the product.

What I do not understand is why the Government cannnot see that, if that type of partnership can be used to develop a successful industrial sector, based on private companies but with the backing of the public sector, it can be used in other sectors of the economy as well.

I want to float one idea which is peculiarly relevant to south Hampshire and to the industries there at present, where a Government of vision would be backing a new industry, an industry of the 21st century, but where this Government, I fear, will not.

Any review of the scientific or professional engineering press will show a widespread prediction that, as we move into the 21st century, there will be a whole new set of technologies and industries surrounding the development, exploration and exploitation of the oceans, whether it is for energy sources—taking advantage of differential temperatures in the oceans—whether it is to do with deep sea fish-farming, whatever the technical term for that is, whether it is to do with mining minerals on the sea bed, or whether it is to do with understanding the way in which the oceans operate because of our need for detailed climatic knowledge. Even the Government's own reports over the years have shown that there will be a major deep-sea industry.

In the south Hampshire area, there is a concentration of different skills and expertise which could be brought together to put this country at the forefront of marine science and engineering in the next century. We build every type of ship, from small yachts to steel vessels. The department of oceanography at Southampton university is a world leader in oceanographic research. The Government's own deep-sea research ships are based in Southampton. We have the nautical skills, the communications skills, the underwater cabling skills, the electronic skills. All those different skills are available in the south Hampshire area.

What is required at this stage is to turn that potential base of support for a new industry into a real new industry—something that requires insight and foresight on the part of the Government. It requires the development of the science park which is envisaged for Southampton to enable new industries to develop, based on academic research. It requires a long-term commitment by the Government to seeing this country as a centre for deep-sea research and exploration.

It need not all be done by the Government themselves, but they need to show a lead. That would be to apply the model used in the defence sector, but with rather less money, to a new industry of the 21st century. The challenge for the Government will be to do that, to the benefit of the people of my area.

9.7 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I apologise for not being in the Chamber earlier, due to the fact that I was on the Public Accounts Committee.

My brief contribution this evening is based on the position of one who has consistently argued the need for a strong manufacturing base. That is not to decry the advantages of the service industries, which are to be welcomed; but, if the calculation is correct that we can export 80 per cent. of our manufacturing but only 20 per cent. of our service, it is folly to ignore our manufacturing base. The 80-20 split has never been seriously challenged.

I have never believed that service will save the day, so we must have a strong and powerful manufacturing base. When in the 1980s the noble Lord Ridley was looking

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forward to the abolition of his Department—he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at the time—I nearly despaired. The situation today, however, is different, and I believe that, with this Government, under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), we are seeing a commitment to manufacturing that has been lacking for several years. Some examples of a genuine improvement in our manufacturing base are coming through. I confess a personal involvement because I shall speak about the car industry, in which I did all my training and with which I have certain involvements.

In 1991, there were 1·593 million new car registrations. The next year, the figure had increased slightly. In 1993, the figure had increased to 1·778 million, and it is calculated that in 1994 there could be as many as 1·9 million new car registrations. I regard that as a barometer of success, because the tentacles of the motor industry reach forth and down into our economy more than those of practically any other industry.

I regard the machine tool industry as an even more important indicator. Machine tools are the fundamental starting point from which our economy can start to grow. It has been a disappointment to me for years that, as a percentage of our gross national product, the amount of money that we have invested in the machine tool industry has been remarkably small. We have fallen dramatically behind Japan and Germany. At long last, in June or July of last year, the number of orders for machine tools started to increase ahead of that for sales. That is where our country's growth will begin.

Before Christmas, I told you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one should always remember that a man with a JCB can dig a trench much more quickly than a man with a broad back and a big shovel. If we ignore that sector of our industry, we do so at our peril. Japan does not ignore it. Germany does not. In Japan, aid is targeted to specific sectors of industry. In one year, aid might be given for NCR machines; in another year, it might be given for small business machine companies. I sincerely hope that we shall make greater efforts to increase investment of that nature.

That leads me to the second and last argument that I shall make tonight, and that is the question following on from inward investment. We have already heard that more than 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in Europe has come to this country, as has nearly 40 per cent. of the investment from the United States.

My criticism is that I believe that many pension companies, and many of our various insurance companies, have an investment policy which depends on the size of the dividends rather than one which takes a slightly longer-term perspective. Japan looks to the long term. Unless we put the investment in—whether it be in machine tools or anything else—we shall not produce future growth, and we shall not be able to compete. Therefore, I would like to think that the message will go out from the House tonight to our industries, and to our pension and investment companies, that we must invest more, especially in our machine tools, to create growth in our companies.

I promised that I would be brief, and I will be. Finally, I shall discuss trade associations, of which there are literally thousands in this country. Some of them do a good job; some exist to choose the date of the annual dinner and the annual golf match.

The Department of Trade and Industry desperately needs to receive a coherent message from one trade association per sector of industry, so that it knows the views of that sector of industry. I know that the President of the Board of Trade has asked for that. I ask trade associations to combine, so that they can give the Government one coherent message and so that the Government do not become confused by a series of messages from all types of people that does not reflect the whole of that sector of industry. We need one trade association per sector to funnel through the deregulation requirements that we shall need for the future.

I conclude with those two points—that we need to have one trade association per sector, and that we need to increase our investment in manufacturing.

9.14 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): As I come from the west midlands, I have a great deal to say about manufacturing industry, but in view of the lack of time I shall concentrate on one issue—Rover—which has underlain the theme of the debate.

The sale of Rover to BMW means that, with the exception of Rolls-Royce and Reliant, the last remaining British-owned car manufacturer has been sold to a foreign firm. The reason why it is significant has nothing to do with petty nationalism or wrapping ourselves in the Union Jack; it has to do with the fact, recognised by other countries, that we need a strategic decision-making role in our strategic industries. The sale has destroyed that role. It is ironic that the need appears to be well understood by BMW itself—the assurances that it has given since it made its bid have, ironically, been much more constructive than the response from either British Aerospace or the Government.

The story of British Aerospace's takeover of Rover and the subsequent sale of Rover by British Aerospace is symptomatic of the short-termism, sleaze and complacency that masquerade as an industrial policy under this Government. I say "sleaze" because Rover was sold to British Aerospace for a song and the sale was financed by sweeteners paid for by the taxpayer. I say "complacency" because the Government allowed it to happen and, indeed, colluded in the process. I say "short-termism" because the decision to sell Rover on was made in the short-term interests of British Aerospace's balance sheet; it had nothing to do with the long-term interests of Rover or the British car industry as a whole. That is what the deal was all about, in contrast with BMW's responses since then.

The story has now jeopardised the future relationship with Honda which had been so successful. I quite understand why Honda reacted as it did, but I ask Honda to bear it in mind that the relationship with Rover has benefited both sides and does not need to end now. Honda's understandable and justifiable anger towards British Aerospace and the Government should not and need not be taken out on Rover, Rover employees or Rover plants. I hope that the relationship will continue.

It is sad that the Government are once again jettisoning and ignoring their responsibility to build bridges and to secure, even at this late stage, a strategic decision-making role within the new BMW-Rover partnership. They could secure that role, although doing so might present them with some ideological problems.

Discussions that are taking place in Europe could allow British Rover employees to receive information, to be consulted and to have an input in a new European-based BMW-Rover partnership, but the Government are doing all that they can to veto the development of European works councils and to stop British employees having a say in their own firms. Why are the Government prepared to stand by and allow Britain's last remaining car manufacturer to be sold to a foreign firm, while refusing to allow British employees to have a say in the same firm and to contribute to the defence of British interests in the merged company? I issue that challenge to the Government. As the discussions about works councils and supervisory boards continue in Europe and elsewhere, the Government will have questions to answer if they try to block the opportunity for British employees to defend British interests as the Government have failed to do.

A conference took place in Brussels yesterday which was attended by most of the major European car manufacturers and, indeed, by the unions and by Members of the European Parliament, but interest from the British Government was noticeable by its absence. The conference tackled the problem of overcapacity in the European car industry and dealt with the restructuring and reskilling that will be necessary if the industry is to thrive. That conference began to tackle the issue that the American Government are now prepared to tackle—producing a more environmentally friendly motor car and making available the necessary investment.

The Government say that their manufacturing policy is a success. Why, therefore, are they still looking the other way and refusing to face up to their responsibility? The sale of Rover should never have happened. The fact that it did is testimony to the failure of their policy and to their neglect of manufactuirng industry. The sale took place behind the backs of Rover's employees and over the heads of people who have made Rover such a success. The Government are responsible for that. Their collusion with British Aerospace's short-termism allowed that to happen.

It is now the Government's responsibility to ensure that, at this late stage, Britain has a strategic decision-making role. They can achieve that by talking to BMW, Honda and Rover and ensuring that the partnership continues. The Government should drop their opposition to British employees having a role and a say in the decisions of a firm that those employees have had made a success.

9.20 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I thank the hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) for his kind comments about our colleague, Mr. Ron Leighton, which will have been appreciated by all my right hon. and hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that Ron Leighton was one of the few people in politics who held strong views, but had mostly friends and very few enemies. His death is a sad loss to the House and his constituency.

The President of the Board of Trade asked why the Labour party was concentrating on manufacturing industry during its Supply day. If he had been here for the rest of the debate he would have heard the answer clearly articulated by all my hon. Friends. He would have realised the importance of manufacturing.

Indeed, if the President of the Board of Trade took the opportunity of talking to organisations such as the Engineering Employers Federation or to many manufacturing industries, he would be aware of the importance of manufacturing. Is it not strange that the right hon. Gentleman should have the audacity to ask such a question? Is it not clear that manufacturing is important to Britain because it is the wealth-producing sector of our economy? More than 70 per cent. of Britain's exports, which finance our ability to pay our way in the world, comes from the manufacturing sector. For the right hon. Gentleman to ask why manufacturing is important and why the Labour party devotes its time to it suggests that he is out of touch with British industry and is more concerned with his personal ambitions than with the ambitions of the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector is important because it produces our wealth and enables us to buy personal and public services. It is about time that the Conservative party recognised that and dropped the empty rhetoric of the 1980s.

The President of the Board of Trade said that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made no reference to competitiveness. When I heard that, I thought that the right hon. Gentleman's script writer must have written his speech before my hon. Friend delivered his. Then again, given the quality of the right hon. Gentleman's speech, that is unfair to the script writer. It would be better to say that the President clearly did not bother to listen to my hon. Friend's speech. When my hon. Friend talks about investment in plant, skills and people and in developing infrastructure, we can reach only one simple conclusion —that Labour Members are talking about increasing the competitiveness of British industry. It is sad that the President does not recognise that. I suspect that the real difference is not that he cannot see it but that ideologically he does not want to see it.

The Government are committed to some form of industrial policy based on the market, on deregulation and on cheap, flexible, throwaway labour and people. It is a vision that says that Britain in the 21st century can somehow compete by going down market in quality, in labour and in costs. That vision is totally redundant, and it is in no way shared by our world competitors or our European partners. Each of those countries will invest in people and in technology, and recognises their importance. It is a shame for this country that our Government are so divorced from reality that they want to turn the clock back to the economic and industrial strategies of the 19th century rather than going forward to the strategies and policies of the 21st century.

The President of the Board of Trade failed to understand the purpose of the debate, but he should know the importance of manufacturing and of what we say about competitiveness. If he had been here during the debate he would have heard important contributions from my hon. Friends about three key industries—steel, the motor industry, and aerospace and defence-related activities. The right hon. Gentleman did not speak in any detail about any of those during his opening speech.

My hon. Friends the Members for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made effective speeches about the future of the British steel industry. They recognised the growth in productivity and the extent to which the British steel industry is now a world leader, but they also recognised that the Government have failed to support the steel industry in European negotiations. Before

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going to Brussels, the Minister for Industry claims that he will stand up for British industry and fight his corner to save jobs in the British steel industry. Would that that be true: would that we had a Minister for Industry prepared to stand up and fight for Britain, but the Government have sold the British steel industry short again.

The figures speak for themselves. My hon. Friends the Members for Newport, East and for Wentworth explained the situation clearly. Percentage job losses in the German, French, Italian and Spanish steel industries over the decade from 1980 were considerably lower than percentage job losses in the United Kingdom. We have lost on capacity and on jobs. Yet our Government are not prepared to fight for our steel industry. I tell the Minister for Energy, who is to wind up the debate, that we need protection for our steel industry, just as we want a Minister who will argue the corner for British steel. At present that simply does not happen.

When the President of the Board of Trade was trying to pretend that all was well in the British steel industry he might have considered the United Engineering Steels figures announced this afternoon. A £48·1 million loss has been returned this year, £27 million of which has gone to pay for exceptional costs in connection with closures and redundancies; 1,000 jobs have been lost in the past year. And what company is the biggest single customer of United Engineering Steels? It is Rover.

That brings me to the second issue which has dominated the debate—the future of the car industry. The linkage is clear not only with United Engineering Steels but with what my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East said about Llanwern. Rover is a key customer of the Llanwern steelworks, and £4·3 billion worth of high-tech products are involved in the turnover of Rover and Rover-related activities. What has happened now? The key fact, and one that should dominate Government thinking, is that control over those activities—including research and development, and future products—has passed from the United Kingdom to BMW and to Germany.

The key question is not the simple debating point that Conservative Members use as to whether we are in favour of the change or whether we are talking down Rover. We are as interested or more interested than any party in the House to see that venture a success because it concerns jobs for our constituents. It is annoying when Conservative Members try to pretend otherwise. The key question is who will control the future in terms of Rover and Britain's car industry.

In the past week, the sight of the future of our last major car producer being determined in discussions between a Japanese car company and a German car company annoyed and irritated the British people. Does that not say something about the Government's failure and their abdication of responsibility towards a key industry which is at the heart of our industrial policy and our economic future? The Government have no interest. It reflects the comments of the Prime Minister the other week, when challenged about the practices of British Aerospace and the redundancy payment for their three-month-a-year chairman. The Prime Minister said that it was nothing to do with him, that it was not his responsibility and that he was only the Prime Minister. Are we not clearly being given the same answer to the question about the future of the motor industry? We have a Prime Minister who is not up to his task, a President of the Board of Trade who is more concerned about becoming Prime Minister, and Ministers who are not able to provide the leadership that is important.

The car industry lacks that leadership, and no other industries lack that leadership more than aerospace and defence. My hon. Friends the Members for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) and for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) talked about how we needed to look for ways in which the capacity and skills of the defence industries could be used for other purposes. We heard cheap rhetoric and debating points earlier from the President of the Board of Trade, but he is time-stuck and time-warped in his arguments. He must recognise that the issue of the 1990s is how those skills wil be used in the future. If there is to be a cut in the defence budget, which is clearly happening under the Government, we must ask how that industry's skills and technologies are to be used in the future. The Government have no answer. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), the Government Whip, seems to be full of ideas. He should talk to people in business.

If the hon. Gentleman considers paragraph 108 of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry report on the aerospace industry—a unanimously agreed document—he will see evidence from GEC, which was quoted at length. I would not see GEC as a socialist organisation or one dominated by card-carrying members of the Labour party, but I shall quote the report as an endorsement of what we have been saying on defence-related matters for some considerable time. GEC have caught up with the Labour party. When will the Conservative Government catch up on those issues? The important paragraph states that the division of responsibility is

> "if we are not careful, almost a classic recipe for eventual run-down and decline of the aerospace industry, because the Ministry of Defence is, in aerospace terms, the main procurer/buyer without having the responsibility for the health of industry. The DTI, of course, has responsibility for the health but has not got the clout to actually do anything about it."

That sums up the problem in our defence-related industries: it is not just that the DTI does not have the clout—it also does not have the vision of where we are going and what we need to do for those important industries.

The debate concentrated on three industries, but other issues clearly provided a backcloth for the debate. There were three important issues on which comment is needed. First, virtually every Conservative Member talked about the growth in productivity in our manufacturing industries.

Nobody could or would want to deny the statistics. There has been that increase in productivity. Sadly, Conservative Members have not looked at the next page of what should be a research script. The crucial question is not just productivity, but our ability to produce wealth and output. I will explain in simple terms what has happened. While our productivity has increased, our output has not increased compared with our European competitors.

In the 1980s, Britain's manufacturing output increased by an average of 0·5 per cent. a year. Conservative Members should go away and look at the comparable figures for our competitor countries, whose output was growing. The figures for each sector show that in key areas the annual growth rate is simply not sufficient. So productivity is growing, but output is not growing sufficiently and capacity is contracting.

In the 1980s the average growth in output in metals was 1·4 per cent., in metal goods 0·5 per cent., in motor vehicles and parts 1·5 per cent., in food 1 per cent., in textiles

0·8 per cent., and in printing 2·8 per cent. The total overall manufacturing output was 1·9 per cent. Services grew greater, with an economic growth rate of just under 2 per cent., but the growth rate in manufacturing output was not sufficient. Thus we come to the end of the 1980s with a clear condemnation of the Government's failure to protect our manufacturing base.

The figures for 1979-92 show that at the end of those 13 years output had increased by 3 per cent. under the Government. Despite three proclaimed economic miracles —the first in the early 1980s, the second under the Lawson boom and the third the economic miracle that is supposed to be just around the corner—output has increased by 3 per cent.

That takes us to the next crucial point about the Government's failure. They have argued that our productivity has increased and that we can therefore compete, but it is clear from the trade deficit figures that our base is shrinking. That is why, for the first time since 1982, this country runs a substantial trade deficit in manufactured goods with the rest of the world.

What has happened to investment in manufacturing? In only three years under this Government has investment in manufacturing been higher than it was during the last year of the Labour Government. Had Britain achieved the same investment in manufacturing in those intervening years as was achieved in the last year of the Labour Government, £20 billion of additional investment would have taken place. Had that investment gap been filled through the Government's policies, Britain would have been in the first division in terms of ability to compete and could have competed alongside other countries, but we have simply failed to do that.

Nothing better illustrates one of the deep problems of short-termism in British industry, the demand for a return for shareholders and the short-term demands on finance rather than long-term industrial strategic decisions than what has happened in aerospace and, more important, the figures for profits and investments. Will the Minister justify in his winding up speech figures which show that from 1922-93 there has been a 27 per cent. increase in profits but that at the same time investment in manufacturing has fallen by 0·3 per cent.? Again, the short-termism that has bedevilled British industry is evidenced in those figures. This debate is crucial because it shows that Labour Members understand the importance of manufacturing. We understand competitiveness. Above all else, we understand what has happened as a result of the Government's 14 years of neglect of our manufacturing base. Britain will never be able to provide its people with the living standards that they deserve and that we wish for them until we get effective policies for our manufacturing industry.

The Government have failed. Their belief in the market means that the Department of Trade and Industry is not at the centre of industrial policy. It hangs on by its fingertips as a marginal Department with a marginal President of the Board of Trade. We need a Government and a strategy committed to industry and manufacturing. The people of this country recognise that Labour can and will offer that. That is why my hon. Friends will vote tonight for a strategy which will not simply win for Britain but is already winning with the British people.

9.40 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Far from the debate illustrating how Labour Members understand manufacturing industry, it has shown how they uniquely know how to denigrate our manufacturing successes. It has shown that they uniquely are the purveyors of doom and gloom; they want to project the bad news outside the Chamber and they want to show what they regard as Britain's failures. If there is one area where they could succeed, it is in the export of doom and gloom. I am not sure whether they could succeed in exporting doom and gloom because in no time at all they would be in the business of managing, and planning and subsidising it.

I feel sorry for Labour Members. They could not possibly have known that when they were announcing to the world the failure of the British car industry—they have not bothered to do their research—there was a headline on the front page of the *Financial Times* which stated:

> "Car output at highest level for nearly 20 years".

Could not they find it somewhere in their hearts to pay a tribute to the British car industry—to say how well the industry has done in reaching that record level?

I do not want to be accused of being uncharitable. At 7.8 pm, the hon. Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), who knows something about manufacturing, was the first Labour Member to praise British manufacturers. He pointed out that we are doing well, the climate is right and there are successes to which attention should be drawn. At 7.8 pm, when the debate had been going for three and a half hours, he was the first Labour Member to recognise that there were real successes out there.

I shall tell Labour Members where the successes have been sector by sector, as did the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: I shall give way in a moment.

In the data processing and office machinery sector, there has been a 700 per cent. increase in output since 1981. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) should know that, because MIMTEC created 400 new jobs in his constituency, and Bull UK is planning another 200 jobs in that area. Output in the rubber and plastics sector has increased by 70 per cent; chemicals output is up by 50 per cent; data printing output is up by almost 40 per cent; and electronic engineering output is up by almost 35 per cent. Some of that is also in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Output in instrument engineering is up 26 per cent. Some new jobs in that industry were created in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Motor vehicle production is up 20 per cent. and metal manufacturing is up 11 per cent. Those are the facts. That is what the Opposition have sought to denigrate and run down over the past five hours.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: In case it is thought that the Minister has misrepresented me, it is appropriate for me to say on behalf of all Opposition Members that when British industry is doing well, we are the first to congratulate it and to recognise the joint efforts of management and workers.

I was trying to draw attention to the fact that a major part of our competitive advantage derives from the fact that, after 14 years of Conservative rule, our wage rates and social benefits are about half the level of our major competitors in Europe. Perhaps the Minister would care to refer to that. That gives us a competitive advantage, but at

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what cost? Is that such a major achievement? I agree that we have benefited from it, but the Minister cannot claim that it is a super-successful economic policy.

Mr. Eggar: I am disappointed in the hon. Gentleman. I always thought that he was an independent-minded Member. I had a great deal of respect for what he said in his speech and it does not reflect well on him that when picked out for praise, he feels that he has to reject it and ingratiate himself with his honourable colleagues by saying, "I didn't mean that" and attempting to rewrite his speech. He would earn more respect in the Chamber if he stuck by what he said in his good speech.

I want to continue with the good news because that is what the British people want to hear. Last night, by accident, I met John Neill, the chief executive of Unipart. I talked about today's debate. He told me about his company. Unipart was a buy-out from British Leyland in 1987. Its main midlands factory was losing £1 million a year when the company was bought out. It was regarded as one of British Leyland's worst factories. Seven years later, it is a highly successful and highly profitable business.

Cranfield university, working with "Management Today", voted Premier Exhausts the best factory in the midlands, the best engineering factory in Britain and Britain's best factory. In a detailed benchmarking study comparing nine Japanese plants with their nine British counterparts, conducted by Andersen Consulting, Premier emerged as the only world-class British factory ahead of six Japanese factories in terms of quality.

Forgive me, Madam Speaker, for giving a detailed analysis of success by a British company in a highly competitive area. If we do not send out from the House a clear message that companies have been successful and that we respect and praise them for their success, we do nothing but run down manufacturing industry.

Mr. Hardy: The Minister may have heard my short remarks in which I paid enormous tribute to the success and record breaking of the engineering steel industry. He may also have heard the question I asked him. I said that the Minister for Industry had said that the subsidies that threaten the existence of our steel industry in south Yorkshire had stopped. I do not believe that there was any justification or evidence for the Minister to have made that comment. I asked whether that point would be cleared up tonight. I hope that the Minister does so before 10 o'clock.

Mr. Eggar: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. I apologise to him, but I was out of the Chamber during his speech.

Mr. John Evans *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: The core issue that faces this country and the House is that of competitiveness. Unless we understand that nobody out there owes us a living and that we succeed as a nation by our own efforts and ability to sell in an increasingly competitive world—that was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and others—we will never succeed. The primary role for increasing competitiveness is for industry.

Mr. John Evans *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: The Government have a critical role to play.

It is not just the Department of Trade and Industry—all parts of the Government must concentrate on increasing competitiveness. We must work with industry and concentrate on those areas where we can make an improvement. That is why my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will publish a White Paper on competitiveness early in the summer, and we will be working hard to identify areas where further improvements can be made.

The House heard a thoughtful speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West who talked about the need to improve training, education and technical skills. I agree with a great deal of what he said, and that was very much what I tried to achieve when I was at the Department of Employment and the Department of Education.

The Opposition motion harks back to the dark days of the late 1970s. Those were halcyon days when the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) tried to save British industry by creating co-operatives. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) did not have the time to sit on quangos, because he was busy being the Minister with responsibility for small businesses.

Those were days when the Labour party dared to call themselves socialists, and when the nationalised industries got more than £2 billion at today's prices from the taxpayer in subsidies. The House should contrast that with the position in 1991, when those same companies—now privatised—paid £3 billion in taxes to the Exchequer at a time when those same companies were winning massive export orders for Britain.

I do not want to be unfair to the Opposition. The speech of the hon. Member for Livingston suggested that there was to be a degree of repackaging of their policies. We heard that, instead of one national enterprise board, the Opposition now want one national investment bank and lots of regional development agencies. They do not want one national enterprise board to be a failure, but lots of regional failures.

It is worth reminding the House about that great socialist invention, the National Enterprise Board. That board tried to pick winners, but more often picked losers because the board's investment performance was appalling. Instead of making an annual return of 15 to 20 per cent., it lost 15 per cent. My hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) reminded the House that the board made just over 100 investments in industry. In no fewer than 35 of those investments, the companies had either to be put into receivership or liquidation. Of the rest, 27 resulted in a loss to the taxpayer on disposal.

Whether making clocks, designing office systems, writing software, tanning hides, selling vehicles or making engineering products—it was all the same to the National Enterprise Board, which lost money on each of those investments.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Minister is running British industry down.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but I was not. I was running down the achievements of the National Enterprise Board which was started by the Labour party, and which the hon. Gentleman announced this afternoon that he wants to reinvent in not just one incarnation, but lots of regional agencies.

As if that is not enough, the Opposition want to go further. Instead of good, old-fashioned clause 4 socialism, the Labour party wants a new relationship—as they term it—between the Government and nationalised industries. The modern Labour party cannot bring itself to say what it means, and expresses itself in accountancy-speak. We were told the other day that it wants a new set of accounts and a new balance sheet. What the Labour party means is that it wants more state control, and more taxpayers' money spent on more nationalised industries.

The Labour party wants the private sector's money, but not its expertise. The test of the Labour party's intentions is not its glossy pamphlets or honeyed, well worked-out words, but what it will do when faced with difficult choices.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Evans: Coward.

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that the hon. Gentleman has been attempting to intervene for a long time and I appreciate his frustration. But he must understand that the word that he has used is unacceptable. I hope that he will withdraw it.

Mr. Evans: I apologise, Madam Speaker, and simply make one final appeal to the Minister to give way, but I withdraw the word "coward" as you, Madam Speaker, asked me to do so—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has withdrawn the word.

Mr. Eggar: Let me take an example that is hard for the Labour party to accept—the coal industry. A headline in the *Evening Standard* of 28 September stated:

> "Scargill defeats Smith in vote to renationalise British Coal".

Since then, I have been asking the Labour party for its policy on British Coal. Eventually, in a world exclusive interview gained by the *Yorkshire Post,* we were given the answer. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was smoked out. He said:

> "We ought not to hesitate to take back some"—

of the pits

> "into the public sector if their activities are not consistent with national energy policy. Or if there is a doubt about safety of their operation. Or they don't have the confidence of the workforce".

Let us examine that statement. If the Labour party ever comes to power, it will have an energy plan that details tonnages and quality for each pit. If the private sector does not produce from a pit in a way that the Government want, the answer is clear: the pit can be arbitrarily renationalised. That is not socialism, but Soviet planning of the sort that went out 20 years ago.

It gets worse—if the operation is not safely run, it will not be a matter for the tripartite Health and Safety Executive, but an excuse for arbitrary renationalisation. Even worse, there is the Arthur charter to pay off the National Union of Mineworkers. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, the Leader of the Opposition, has said that if the work force does not have confidence in the management of the mine, renationalisation will follow.

Presumably, all Arthur has to do to meet the confidence test is to make a single 10p telephone call to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and the pit will immediately be renationalised on the spot. That is not industrial strategy, but an extremists' charter. That is the reality behind the honeyed words, glossy pamphlets and fancy presentations that form such a part of the Opposition Front-Bench team.

The coal industry may be a difficult issue for the Labour party to confront, but where will it turn next? What about the privatised industries that it has got its sights on—it will renationalise British Steel, British Aerospace, Rover and British Gas. The Opposition should come clean and tell us what they are going to do. It is clear that they do not want simply to return to 1970s state planning and ownership—that is not enough—but are determined to destroy British industry's competitiveness. The motion does not mention that, but we should not forget that the Opposition are committed to a minimum wage.

The minimum wage will lead to the loss of up to 2 million jobs. The Opposition have never denied their commitment to it. It has never worked; there is no logic to it; it does not work in any other country and certainly would not work in Great Britain—*[Interruption.]* It is no good Opposition Members scoffing—those are not my words, but the words of Gavin Laird speaking on Channel 4 news.

They are not content with a minimum wage; they are determined to undermine competitiveness. They have signed up to the European socialist manifesto—to a 35-hour, four-day working week which is estimated to cost British industry as much as another £20 billion. If we add all that to the social charter, they will have destroyed British industry before they even get around to working out a strategy. The only right strategy is a competitive strategy followed by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 277, Noes 319.

Division No. 153] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean

Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John

Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn

Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'k'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John

Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John

Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*

Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):——*

The House divided: Ayes 315, Noes 270.

Division No. 154] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*

Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'[illegible]*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Cov'y SE)*

Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Turner and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House regrets that the Opposition persistently denigrates the achievements of United Kingdom companies; recognises the importance of manufacturing to this country's economy; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its success in achieving the conditions for sustained non-inflationary growth, low interest rates, low inflation and good industrial relations; and welcomes the fact that both the OECD and European Commission are forecasting that the United Kingdom will be the fastest growing major economy in the EC in 1994 and 1995.

ESTIMATES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 131(2) (Liaison Committee).

That this House agrees with the Report [24th February] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

Ordered,

That a half day not later than 18th March be allotted for the consideration of the following Supplementary Estimate for the financial year 1993-94:

Class VII, Vote 1, Housing, England, in so far as it relates to grants in aid to the Housing Corporation.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

"Back to Basics"

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.30 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn and Hatfield): I regard it as a great honour that you, Madam Speaker, have decided to stay in the chair for this Adjournment debate.

Last October, I was present at the Conservative party conference in Blackpool to listen to a succession of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, make speeches based on the theme of "back to basics". Their speeches won rapturous applause and gained the widespread support of the public as this new, common sense approach instinctively appealed to the hearts and minds of all those present at the conference and the millions of people around the country who saw it on television, listened to it on the radio and read about it in the newspapers.

"Back to basics" rekindles the spirit of the nation and the desire for traditional values, standards, discipline and order—the foundations of a peaceful, successful and stable society. It promises a return to common sense—something that that lot over there do not have a clue about.

In the past few months, a number of embarrassments and tragedies have shaken our party. The press has had a field day and has had great satisfaction in linking these individual and personal cases of misconduct and tragedy to the broad approach of "back to basics". This has made some of my colleagues go wobbly. Some have even turned into spineless jellies, wittering on about dropping this new approach. What has happened to the traditional Conservative values of principle, loyalty and courage? We had the strength and determination to face up to the chaos of 1979 and of five years of socialism, so surely we have the backbone and grit to put recent events behind us and concentrate on the central theme—"back to basics".

The media, urged on by the wriggler from Monklands, East, cynically dismissed "back to basics" by saying that the public have no idea what it means. What a load of rubbish. The people of Welwyn Hatfield and of Britain know exactly what it means. There is a line in the sand separating right and wrong that my constituents understand —yes, all of them.

Let me share with the House the ten commandments of Welwyn Hatfield. The people of Welwyn Hatfield know when to say please and thank you, and when to raise their hats to a lady—an example not followed by one Opposition Member, who instead of raising his cap pulls it down over his ears. The people of Welwyn Hatfield also know that when a lady needs a seat, they get up and offer theirs.

Commandment Three: the people of Welwyn Hatfield know when to help an old lady or gentleman across the road. Four: they know how to wait their turn in the queue. Five: they know that drinking and driving is wrong. Six: they know that stealing is wrong. Seven: they know that rape is wrong. Eight: they know that murder is wrong. Nine: they know that adultery is wrong. Even you, Madam Speaker, told me to stick with Janice—and that is exactly what I intend to do.

My constituents want to know what has happened to the basic value of parental guidance and responsibility. In many of our cities some people have only to look out of their windows at night to see gangs of pint-sized Rambos thieving, raping or—even worse—murdering. Their parents have no idea, or simply do not care, where their children are and what they are up to. By adopting a negligent attitude towards the upbringing of their children, thousands of parents have walked away from all responsibility, leaving their children to face new experiences and challenges with no guidance, no assistance and no discipline.

Who do children have to look up to now? When I was a lad, I looked up to the village bobby, but today children no longer seem to have role models—or if they have the models are wholly inappropriate. An unsupervised child can quickly fall under the disturbing influence of the televisual media, and before we know it the child is trying to emulate the blood-curdling acts of robocop, the exterminator or some other pathological video nightmare bent on death and destruction.

Parental responsibility is such a basic value, but it is sadly lacking in many parents. So it is up to the Government to force parents to take an active role in the development of their children. I applaud the Home Secretary's recent announcement of £1,000 fines for parents whose children defy court orders. That might give them the incentive that they need to show a bit of responsibility and authority. I suggest that if that fails to work with the worst offenders, the Home Secretary should strengthen the law to place the parents of persistent offenders in gaol with their hooligan offspring. That would provide them with the perfect opportunity to spend a little quality time together, and it might just persuade those pathetic parents that bringing up a child is a privilege which involves parental duty and responsibility.

"Back to basics" applies not only to the home but to the school. In the 1960s, some trendy socialist intellectual with a breeze block for a brain came up with the idea that traditional teaching methods were out of date. Reading, writing and arithmetic were old hat, and discipline went out of the window, too. People said then—some people are still saying it now—that what kids need is to read about lesbians and homosexuals. They could not read Shakespeare because he was an heterosexual oppressor.

I am glad to see the Government going flat out to give parents more control of schools, so that slowly but surely they will return to the basics. The national curriculum will mean a return to sensible and practical subjects.

Discipline, however, is still a problem. Since the abolition of corporal punishment schools no longer have effective means of controlling unruly children. There is no deterrent. We constantly hear horrific reports of classroom riots, but measures over a long period have diminished the power and the authority of the teacher to the point where they are scared even to touch a child for fear of being suspended. There are even more reports of teachers being subject to violent physical and sexual abuse by their pupils. What is going wrong? Are we all going crackers?

When I was at school, the class would stand to attention when the teacher entered the room and lessons were conducted in silence. If a child got out of line, he got the cane. The problem is now that children do not know when they are out of line because in the classroom there is no line. Let us get "back to basics", as they are in Welwyn Hatfield.

The breakdown of values in the home and schools has spilled into the streets. What has happened to neighbourliness, decency and courtesy? We now live in a country where millions of people do not even acknowledge their next-door neighbour. Pensioners can lie dead in their homes for days before they are discovered. The words "please" and "thank you" are fast becoming extinct and the idea of giving up one's seat on the bus for a pensioner or a pregnant woman would not even register in many people's minds. What has happened to the concept of community pride? Why do not people get involved in local groups any more? Why have people stopped going to church? I hear that we have a new Bishop of Durham—one who believes in God, so that may help.

"Back to basics" means a return to the old community values where people looked out for each other and displayed a little care and attention to those around them. We in Welwyn Hatfield are doing just that. "Back to basics" means a crack down on crime and the Home Secretary needs to lead an all-out war on the growing army of street thieves, muggers, crack dealers, car-jackers, armed robbers, sex pests and joy riders. We have allowed that scum to run riot for too long because we have listened to silver-tongued softies who told us that crime was the fault of society, not of the individual. Lord Woolf tells us that if we are burgled, we should be punished. The message from that statement shows just how out of touch some judges are with the real world. I feel sorry for that particular Lord, because, clearly, he has caught—probably from that lot opposite—mad judge disease.

The softly, softly approach has not only failed but it has done more damage than anyone could imagine. By counselling and cosseting every criminal, we have failed to instil any understanding of right and wrong. There is no discipline, no order. The hooligans have no idea about the value of hard and honest work and of earning their way in society. Some social worker has told them that society has given them a bad deal of cards. Oh, yes, it is society's fault.

Now those little hoodlums arrogantly believe that they deserve the right to a nice house, a car, a TV, a video, expensive clothes and all the works, but without any of the hard work that brings those benefits. They prey on society like a pack of jackals. One only has to watch the video footage of cocky young criminals disguised in baseball caps and scarves, ram-raiding shops and then browsing round them as if they are on a Saturday afternoon shopping spree.

Talking about baseball caps and scarves, it reminds me of a silly old fool—no fool like an old fool—who dresses in disguise, lurks in bushes in Belgravia and helps cement that special relationship between Britain and the United States. When he gets the signal, he embraces all that is good in such a relationship. It is nice to know that the Prime Minister is not alone in wanting to improve our friendship with the Americans.

We punish little hooligans with community sentences. If that seems a little harsh, we give them a caution or possibly a holiday of a lifetime in Africa. Why not give Government cars to those convicted of joy riding?—*[Interruption.]* Some people say that we already do. Setting up secure units is the first step, but I should like to see a return to the birch—hang 'em, flog 'em. That might wipe the smug grin off the ugly faces of persistent offenders who have wreaked havoc on society and damaged people's lives in the knowledge that they will not be punished.

"Back to basics" means a return to a law-abiding society, in which one can leave one's house during the day knowing that when one comes home it will be safe, and in which people can walk safely at night without being terrified that they may be raped or mugged. Those who contemplate crossing the magic line should be fully aware that it takes only one false move and the law will fall down on them so hard that they will never do it again.

"Back to basics" means prosperity, low inflation, low costs, high productivity and a high-skill economy. If that lot over there had their way, it would mean a return to the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s when the unions ruled the roost—beer and sandwiches at No. 10. They would sign us up to the social chapter, which would mean an inevitable return to the standard of living that we had in 1979 when we could not even bury our dead.

Building on Conservative values developed in the 1980s will create prosperity, enabling the work force to support those most in need: the old, the sick and the poor; not the lazy, the scroungers and the fiddlers who cream off billions of pounds in social security each year. "Back to basics" means new initiatives that will close off loopholes to the social security rat pack. I suggest here and now that we introduce identity cards.

"Back to basics" also applies to Ministers of the Crown, MPs, judges, headmasters, chief constables and other leading public servants who should set an example to the people they serve. As leading representatives of our nation, we are expected to keep certain standards. Nobody is perfect—that applies also to politicians. But when the line in the sand has been crossed and exposed to the public, it is time to go—goodbye and good riddance—not to hang on to office like some arrogant little schoolboy hanging on to a new toy. Standards in public life must be adhered to rigidly without exceptions or special circumstances. If we cannot keep up standards and set an example, why should we expect the public to do so? Any acceptance of double standards is an open invitation to moral anarchy.

It is high time that the Conservative party got the nation back to basics, which means a return to loyalty, integrity and decency. I am sick of certain individuals in my party sniping at our leadership from the shelter of television and radio stations. If they have not the guts to say what they have to say face to face, they should not say it at all.

In what is now all too often a pathetic attempt at political attack, the Opposition parties are attempting to associate "back to basics" with looking backwards. What a joke. We are not handcuffed to the unions; we do not bleat on about the social chapter; despite all their recent wriggling U-turns, we have no commitment to nationalisation in our party constitution. Labour Members have finally realised that, when they come up with an idea, it is consistently a vote loser, so they have stopped trying. They are bankrupt. However, I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has embraced the spirit of "back to basics" by scuttling off back to his roots in New Zealand. I wish that a few more would follow him. Perhaps the wriggler from Monklands, East might like to go back to Scotland where he lives and stay there.

The Labour party may still just about have some social policies, although it is hard to find them. The Lib Dems have none at all. They would do anything—and I mean anything—if they thought that they could get a vote out of it. Just wait for the European election campaign. It is Paddy the jock in Scotland; in Wales, it is Taffy through and through; and in England, it is all things to all men. They hit an all-time low in the Tower Hamlets local election when Paddy became Adolf and the Liberal Democrats projected themselves as the neo-Nazi party. They do not understand "back to basics" because they do not have a clue about real

[Mr. David Evans]

values, real standards, real decency and real politics. All they know about is crawling around in the politics of the sewer in their unscrupulous endeavour to get votes.

"Back to basics" means a return to our grassroots beliefs. The British people know what they are, and we know that they are right. We should not have let them slip away in the first place. We let the hippy has-beens and the trendies have their go and they funked it. Today, values and standards are constantly slipping to an all-time low. It is high time we reintroduced the traditional core values of this nation to shape the Great Britain of tomorrow. The Prime Minister has given us the opportunity. In Welwyn Hatfield, we have made a start, and with the "back to basics" theme, Conservatives nationwide should do the same.

10.50 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): Few hon. Members can command the sort of audience and attention that my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) commanded tonight. Never have I seen so many ministerial colleagues present who are eager to answer my hon. Friend. I am willing to take second place. Of course, this is not the first time that I have had to reply to a frank and powerful speech from my hon. Friend. He will recall his last Adjournment debate on law and order which took place in my first week in the Home Office. On that occasion, I got more credit for the draft speech that I did not make than the one I actually made: my thanks to whoever leaked it. I have prepared five singeing drafts for this weekend's press.

My hon. Friend is right to return to this subject because it affects us all. "Back to basics" is about ensuring that Government policies are based firmly on the common-sense values of the British people, not trendy sociological theories. It is about addressing the real issues of concern and not being diverted to side issues. It is about ensuring sound money, low inflation, good education and an efficient health service, and recognising that protecting the public is the first duty of Government.

My hon. Friend ranged widely in his speech and struck a chord on many issues, but I shall deal mainly with his remarks about law and order. That is my responsibility. None of us is in the business of preaching—that is a job for the clergy. In the Home Office, it is our job to deal with crime in society.

What we are seeking to do in crime and punishment is restore the common-sense principles shared by the vast majority of the British people. The first principle is that crime is wrong. There is no excuse for it and those who seek to explain it away or blame society are deluding themselves and endangering the public. We all know that. Some people are constantly searching for factors that may lead people into crime, but their enthusiasm to find direct causes or links often leads them to fail to denounce the crime itself as plain, downright wrong.

The second principle is to promote respect for the police and the law. There appears to be a pernicious growth industry of denigrating the police and undermining the rule of law. Those trendy programme makers who rarely show the police in a good light are working to their own biased, politically correct agenda. Despite that, the vast majority of the British people still have faith in our police force and judicial system. For all the humbug that we hear about faults with this country, why is it that when any of our citizens commit crimes overseas they immediately complain that the foreign police and legal system treated them more unfairly than the good old British one would?

The third principle is that British people want to see the innocent acquitted and the guilty convicted. Our constituents are sick and tired of lengthy legal games letting the guilty go free on technicalities.

Allowing the guilty to go free and convicting the innocent are both miscarriages of justice in my book. We are determined to have systems in place to reduce still further the chances of an innocent man being convicted, but, equally, we are determined to ensure that there are no unnecessary anachronistic barriers preventing the conviction of the guilty.

The fourth principle is that punishment should follow conviction. Of course we believe in cautioning in appropriate cases. We believe also in fines and discharges. They are all perfectly sensible sentences. We believe strongly in rehabilitation and deterrence, but we are not afraid to say that punishment is also right. Of course it is. All acts must have a consequence, for good or ill, and criminals must always see that, at the end of the road, there is a suitable punishment for their behaviour. To take that away or dilute it or dress it up in psychobabble is inviting criminals to believe that certain acts do not have unpleasant consequences for them. Those principles run right through our strategy to fight crime.

We are tilting the balance in the criminal justice system against the criminal and in favour of protecting the public. That is why we are legislating on the right of silence. If a suspect refuses to answer a relevant question from the police, a court should be able to take that into account.

I agree with my hon. Friend about the need to challenge loutish behaviour. The *Evening Standard* carried a good example at the end of last year. A young woman on the underground asked someone who was smoking illegally to stop doing so. The young woman then received a torrent of abuse and was punched. The other passengers just looked the other way. Yobbish behaviour leads to crime. Louts who have no respect for others often have no respect for the law. I believe strongly that there should be more citizens like that young woman—and fewer who look away.

As my hon. Friend knows, we are giving the courts the powers to lock up persistent juvenile offenders. These offenders—the most recent case was graphically detailed in *The Sun* last week—are a menace to their communities. Those communities are quite properly demanding to be protected. They want to see a tough response to those offenders who persist in breaking the law despite being given the chance to stop offending while under supervision in the community.

Going back to basics will inform all our law and order policies. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has said that he wants conditions in our prisons to be "decent, but austere". Put simply, we want the public to have confidence that, for a criminal, being sent to prison is a proper punishment. We have already announced plans to introduce drug testing in our prisons to put a stop to the drug pushers and junkies who are making a mockery of our prison system. But there is more to do. Prison should mean demanding regimes with hard work and challenging programmes for prisoners. There should be a more stick and carrot approach with privileges given for good behaviour, and taken away for bad.

Perhaps most of all, we need to get back to the basics of a proper relationship between the police and local people to fight crime. It is only by working together, hand in glove with the police, that local communities will crack crime. We are encouraging the idea of parish constables. We have raised the target for special constables to 30,000, and we will continue to give full support to neighbourhood watch schemes, which now cover more than 5 million households in this country.

More must be done to make the partnership between the police and local people really work and the Government will do all that we can to achieve that objective.

My hon. Friend made quite clear in his previous Adjournment debate the sort of action that he wanted to see from the Government. I know that we will never measure up to his demanding standards, but many of the things that he called for in that speech are now under way.

My hon. Friend said that there was too much cautioning of repeat offenders and too much cautioning for serious crimes. As he may know, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will shortly issue new tough guidance on cautioning.

Central to the Government's strategy to deal with law and order issues is the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, which is currently being considered in a Standing Committee. It is a substantial piece of legislation. It takes forward 19 of the 27 announcements that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made on 6 October at the Conservative party conference. It includes, among others, curtailing the right of silence, allowing courts more powers to withhold bail and allowing the police to use DNA. For those colleagues who have only heard through the media about the Police and Magistrates Courts Bill currently being considered in another place, I say, look at the extra clauses that we are adding to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill. They cover drug testing in prisons, computer pornography, cross-border policing, terrorism, secure remands, squatting and others. Those are all measures which will help to ensure that the police and the courts have all the powers they need to protect the public and to punish the guilty.

My hon. Friend referred to truancy and the lack of respect in schools. The Government are also committed to taking firm action against truancy. I know that my hon. Friend will welcome that.

I do not think that we can lecture or sermonise people into being good citizens or not committing crimes. I am happy to leave it to the clergy to sermonise about morality and what is good behaviour, but the criminal law must not give the impression that it rewards or ignores criminal behaviour.

The nonsense of safari holidays for young tearaways sent totally the wrong signals and I am glad that the Department of Health has issued a circular to local authorities on that. I want to encourage much more demanding and character-building outdoor training and we have plenty of mountains in this country to do it on. There is a world of difference between a demanding Blashford-Snell type trek and a Cooks package tour of the night spots of Cairo.

It comes down to common sense and what attitudes we adopt. Attitudes in this country towards crime—and towards criminals—are changing. There is a yearning to return to old-fashioned values, to a position where those who persist in offending behaviour will be afraid of being caught, and of being dealt with severely and effectively. More and more people see combating crime as one of the biggest challenges facing us, and increasingly they recognise that the prevention of crime is the responsibility not just of the Government and the police, but of us all. They also recognise that the Government are in the lead in combating crime in society. The people——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, Madam Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 3 March 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BOURNEMOUTH-SWANAGE MOTOR ROAD AND FERRY BILL
(*By Order*)

Order for Second Reading read.

Read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

SHEFFIELD ASSAY OFFICE BILL (*By Order*)

Order for Second Reading read.

Read a Second time, and committed.

FEDERATION OF STREET TRADERS UNION (LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT 1990) (AMENDMENT) BILL (*By Order*)

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON BILL (*By Order*)

Orders for Second Reading Read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 10 March.

LONDON DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL
[*Lords*] (*By Order*)

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Monday 14 March at 7 o'clock.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL [*Lords*]

Motion made,

That the Committee on the British Waterways Bill [*Lords*] have leave, for the purpose of its consideration of the powers sought by the British Waterways Board in the Bill, to visit and inspect sites on the Grand Union Canal, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or representative.—[*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

2. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cash amount paid in VAT in 1979 by a family on average earnings with two children; and what is his latest estimate.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): A couple with two children on average earnings paid VAT of £12.95 per week in 1979-80, expressed in 1993-94 prices, and an estimated £19.48 per week in 1993-94. Since 1978-79, the real take-home pay of such a family has risen by £83 per week.

Mrs. Mahon: Despite that last sentence, is the Chancellor not adding to the burden of VAT by imposing taxes on car insurance, holidays, domestic fuel and many other things? How does he expect families to meet that increased burden when the Government have created the mess that has led to that extra tax, and how can anyone ever trust the Tories on tax again?

Mr. Clarke: The average family with one wage earner, two children and a mortgage of £33,000 is now about 30 per cent. better off than in 1990, only three years ago. That is why, although I have had to raise tax increases, people can look forward with confidence to rising living standards based on steady growth and low inflation. The tax, seen alongside spending changes that I have made, ought to produce sound public finances.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we fought the 1979 election on a clear promise that we would change from direct taxes to indirect taxes? That is exactly why the burden has been shifted and we make no apology for that because we have increased take-home pay substantially, producing disposable income which is greatly reflected in the collection of VAT.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. We fought elections then and since on the basis that we thought that the burden should be shifted from direct to indirect taxation. We argued the case for incentives and their effect on the economy and it has worked. That is why the average family is now £83 a week better off in real terms than before we started on that process.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Why impose VAT on fuel when the Government should be ending the tax privileges that are central to some of the worst boardroom salary abuses in the country? If the Chancellor really wants to act on the unacceptable face of capitalism, will he condemn Mr. John Cahill's tax-free hand-out, condemn Lord Young's £370,000 salary rise in one year and will he now fully tax executive share options? That would raise £200 million for vital public services, or is there under this Government one tax law for the boardrooms and another for everyone else?

Mr. Clarke: I frequently urge restraint on those who lead British industry at a time when we have to maintain our competitiveness and maintain low inflation. Individuals are cited who are wholly untypical of British management, most of whom have exercised such constraint. I do not believe in pay policies. I do not believe that Governments should direct the pay of individuals in the country and I hope that the hon. Gentleman, in the course of his revisionism, is not going back to pay policies for the Labour party.

Mr. Congdon: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the welcome shift from direct to indirect taxation has significantly helped to improve our economic performance by enabling marginal tax rates to be reduced?

Mr. Clarke: I do, and that is why, at a time of very tough public spending constraints and some increases in taxation, we have preserved our marginal rates at 25 per cent., a top rate of 40 per cent. and a lower band of 20 per cent., despite the other pressures on us. It is important that we do that to keep the incentives going which made the British economy perform so well in the 1980s and which will make it perform well again in the 1990s.

Taxation

3. **Mr. Keen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of the average family on average male earnings with two children and one spouse.

12. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of the average family on average male earnings with two children and one spouse.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The real take-home pay of a family on average earnings has risen by £83 a week, in today's values, since 1978-79.

Mr. Keen: The Financial Secretary has not answered my question. Is that because he wishes to hide the fact that the burden of taxation will have risen from 34.75 per cent. in 1979, to 38.5 per cent. next year? If he did not intend to mislead and the policy to switch from direct to indirect taxes is genuinely thought out, why do his answers fail time and again to include the total tax burden? Does he not think that the British public deserve straight answers?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I gave a very direct answer to his question. He asked what assessment we had made of the effect of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of the average family, whose take-home pay has increased by £83 per week in today's values since 1979 as a result of the Government's economic policies.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Financial Secretary explain how it is fair to the ordinary family and the British taxpayer to increase taxes for everyone except those earning more than £64,000 a year?

Mr. Dorrell: Once again, an Opposition spokesman is wrong. The Institute of Fiscal Studies studied the effects of the two Budgets last year and concluded from its research that they will raise extra revenue in roughly equal proportions all the way up the income scale.

Mr. Horam: Has my hon. Friend seen the estimate by the Confederation of British Industry that the shadow Chancellor's loophole-closing devices would add £3.6 billion to the tax bill for industry over two years? Leaving aside any question of withholding tax on gas and electricity bills, has my hon. Friend estimated what effect that policy would have on prices, jobs or investment?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend asks an important question. Labour Members parade their interest in closing tax loopholes, but the measures that they espouse under that banner would close not loopholes but businesses and would put people out of work.

Mr. Willetts: Does my hon. Friend agree that any assessment of the well-being of families has to include the effects of the fall in mortgage rates and that those reductions were possible only because of the Government's sound fiscal policies?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right. It is not a coincidence that we are enjoying the lowest interest rates for 17 years—it is a result of the Government's success at bringing down and controlling the rate of inflation and we shall continue to deliver that.

Mr. Darling: Talking about loopholes, why do the Government not close down the tax break that allows boardrooms to avoid paying tax by using offshore tax havens? Or were the Chancellor's words on boardroom restraint just bluff as usual, with no action to follow?

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's approach to pay and the taxation of pay is the same all the way up the income scale. We want a pay system that reflects the performance of the organisation that employs the individual. That is the policy which will continue to inform our approach to public and private sector pay.

Motor Vehicles (Security Devices)

4. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce tax incentives to encourage the installation of security devices in motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to introduce such tax incentives.

Sir Anthony Grant: As car crime is the fastest rising crime of all, is it not absurd that, for tax purposes, security systems should be treated on the same basis as stereos, cassettes and suchlike frippery? If my hon. Friend cannot change the tax system, could he perhaps try some other methods to help—for example, through insurance?

Mr. Dorrell: If I may say so, my hon. Friend is on a better point when he suggests that the insurance industry should take account of the presence of proper security measures in cars. I understand that the industry is increasingly doing that. That is a proper incentive for people to do what is their responsibility and to ensure that their property is secure.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Does the Financial Secretary agree that the Budget proposal that puts a value added tax on insurance will put a further burden on motorists, who are already burdened by rising crime?

Mr. Dorrell: It is not a value added tax on insurance but an insurance premium tax which reflects the tax regimes that prevail widely elsewhere in the world. Given the Government's need to raise revenue in the Budget in November, it seems to be a very fair way of carrying out that objective.

Growth

5. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Treasury's current estimate of the rate of growth for this year and next year.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): At the time of the Budget, United Kingdom gross domestic product was forecast to grow by 2.5 per cent. both in 1994 and in the year to the first half of 1995.

Mr. Trimble: That is an extremely low rate of growth. To cope with the Government's problems with public expenditure in the medium term, they will have to take measures to increase the rate of growth. Can the Minister give an assurance that the Government will consider taking such measures and not allow themselves to be influenced by spurious foreign exchange considerations or panicked by the current problems in the bond market?

Mr. Portillo: The principles underlying the Government's monetary policy have been set out time and again and are extremely clear. People believe that that monetary policy enjoys great transparency. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that our rate of growth is very low. After all, the United Kingdom will have the fastest rate of growth of any major European Community country in both 1994 and 1995. The rate of growth that we want to see is one that is sustainable.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that flexible labour markets and improved competitiveness in Britain have made ours the fastest-growing economy in Europe and that what we need is more Conservative policies and more deregulation so that Britain can continue that programme?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right. Obviously, we have reaped the benefits of the reforms that we undertook in the 1980s. The reforms through trade unions and the scrapping of the wages councils have led to a downturn in unemployment in the United Kingdom much sooner in the recovery cycle than we expected, and sooner than has been experienced in other countries. That is a tribute to the policies that we have followed over the past decade.

Mr. Radice: What is the Chief Secretary's estimate of the current output gap?

Mr. Portillo: Our view at the moment is that there are no inflationary pressures that would justify any movement. There is an output gap at present, but I do not wish to quantify it. There is spare capacity in the United Kingdom, which is one of the reasons for thinking that the inflationary pressures are moderate.

Mr. Forman: Is not the important thing about output for economic growth in this country that it is likely to be sustainable, non-inflationary and at a level that we can carry through over the years? In that context, is it not important that there are signs that industrial stock building is taking place again and that that is likely to lead to a further growth in investment, which puts the recovery on a very sound basis?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes an important point. His first underlying point is vital. What we need to see in the United Kingdom is growth from year to year. We wish to see growth at a sustainable level; we do not wish to see inflationary pressures building again. We can be well satisfied with the present conditions. The Government make the inflationary and monetary prospects extremely clear month by month.

Redistribution of Wealth

6. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to redistribute wealth within the United Kingdom.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): The Government's policy is to promote the creation of wealth so that all members of society may be better off.

Mr. Wardell: Does the Minister accept the figures in the Inland Revenue statistics for 1993 which show that 10 per cent. of the population own half the marketable wealth in this country? If so, why have the Government targeted the poorest members of our society to be the scapegoats for the Government's economic mistakes over the past decade?

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman, like the Labour party generally, has always been obsessed with relativities rather than realities. Most people are more concerned about their real wealth and earnings than about relativities, and both of those have gone up under the Government. In particular, the wealth of the bottom 75 per cent.—that is most people in this country—has grown by 70 per cent. in real terms since the Government came to office.

Mr. N[illegible]holls: Will my hon. Friend congratulate the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on his engaging honesty in bringing to the Floor of the House once more the language of the redistribution of wealth, bearing in mind that that comes from a party which had tax rates of 98 per cent? Does that not show that all the snappy haircuts and good suits on the Labour Benches cannot conceal ancient prejudices?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party will always put the redistribution of wealth before the generation of wealth.

Mr. Beith: Instead of merely complaining about boardroom salaries, why does the Chancellor not make a contribution to solving the problem by making the tax system more progressive? Will he confirm that from 1 April, people earning £7,000 a year will face a marginal tax and national insurance rate of 35 per cent. while those earning £500,000 or £1 million a year will pay just 40 per cent. in tax?

Mr. Nelson: It is important that the tax regime should provide incentive as well as revenue. The richest 10 per cent. paid some 35 per cent. of income tax when the Government first took office; they now pay 45 per cent.

Mr. Lidington: Will my hon. Friend stick to economic policies that encourage not the redistribution of wealth, but its creation, because without wealth creation we shall have neither the high personal living standards nor the good public services that we all want?

Mr. Nelson: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Clwyd: What would the Minister say to the people in my constituency who do not have the opportunity to create wealth, and where 61 per cent. of households have incomes of £4,000 a year or less? Is that not real poverty in Britain today?

Mr. Nelson: Over the period since the Government came to power, there has been a general increase in the earnings at all points on the distribution scale. A married couple with two children on average earnings are now some 40 per cent.—£83 per week—better off than in 1979. That is a considerable achievement. What matters to most people is their take-home pay and their earnings.

Mr. Ottaway: Does my hon. Friend agree that this question demonstrates that the Labour party is interested only in penalising anyone who is prepared to stick their neck out and do something useful for the British economy?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party has made no positive contributions towards wealth creation in this country; it is simply the politics of envy that we hear time and again.

Macro-economic Policy

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now revise his macro-economic policy targets set in the 1993 Budget.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Sustainable economic growth, low inflation and sound public finances remain the key macro-economic policy objectives of this Government.

Mr. Hain: Has the Chancellor of the Exchequer altered his macro-economic policy targets on pay? Contrary to what he told *Today* this morning, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has the power to intervene on fat cat freebies and to close loopholes in relation to executive share option schemes. He has the power—or, at the least, the Government do—to instruct the regulators of the privatised utilities to stop abuses by executives such as £700,000 in tax-free giveaways for water chiefs. Why does the Chancellor only have a pay policy for the low paid and not for the privileged elite who are getting money as though there were no tomorrow?

Mr. Clarke: Every Conservative Chancellor closes tax loopholes and there was a good crop in the November Budget. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary said that one should look at where we get income tax and national insurance contributions nowadays. The top 10 per cent. contribute 45 per cent. of the total, whereas they contributed only 35 per cent. 10 years ago. We spread the tax burden fairly, and we do not ever want to go back to the punitive tax rates that so destroyed the economy in the 1970s under Labour.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend offer further explanation of his apparent linking between the level of executive pay and inflation? Does he agree that if any private company pays too much to any of its employees, that will result in its products being priced out of the market, and that that is a matter for the market, not for preaching politicians?

Mr. Clarke: As I am sure my hon. Friend will agree, at present we have our best record on inflation for 25 years. Manufacturing productivity is at an all-time high. It is extremely important that we keep our competitiveness. Therefore, I am extremely glad to see that the level of pay settlements remains at such an historically low level. With respect to my hon. Friend, I have to say that the climate of opinion has contributed to all those good targets and one or two leading individuals could contribute to the favourable climate of opinion that we have created.

Mr. Andrew Smith: On the macro-economic damage inflicted by the huge sweeteners that the Government are giving for rail privatisation, wil the Chancellor admit that the Government instructed British Rail to change its accounts to turn a £968 million capital allowance tax liability into a £683 million tax credit to be passed to privatised companies? Will he now act to stop that monstrous fraud on the taxpayer?

Mr. Clarke: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's indignation will be satisfied when he tables a question for written answer by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on that important matter.

Mr. Smith: I have done so.

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to hear it. The fact is that privatisation has transformed the performance of most of our public utilities and companies. It has turned British Airways, British Telecom and British Steel into hugely successful international companies. Sad to say, we have been left behind a little on the privatisation of railways; the Japanese, French and others have moved ahead of us. I am sure that privatisation will produce the same transformation in the performance of British Rail as it has in so many others of our previously nationalised industries.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. and learned Friend take heart from the fact that a substantial depreciation in the rate of sterling in the past 18 months has not thrown economic policy off track? Will he take comfort from the fact that Professor Tim Congdon, who was pessimistic while we were in the exchange rate mechanism, is now optimistic about future growth of our economy?

Mr. Clarke: One of the remarkable achievements of the past 18 months has been that, following a marked devaluation of the currency, we have kept inflation down. It has not led to any adverse consequences for our competitiveness in any other way. We now have a reasonably stable exchange rate at the new valuation. That is one of the favourable factors that are helping to produce the prospects for good, steady, sustainable growth in Britain.

Taxation

8. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of the poorest 10 per cent. of wage earners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The real income of a family with two children at the lowest decile of male earnings has risen by almost 24 per cent. since 1978-79.

Ms Eagle: Will the Chancellor confirm that after his massive tax hikes of the next two years, the bottom 10 per cent. of people will pay 25 per cent. of their gross income in taxation? After the tax cuts of the 1980s, one third of which went to the top 1 per cent. of super-rich, with the bottom 10 per cent. receiving little or nothing, how can the Chancellor justify making the poorer taxpayers carry the can for his Government's economic failures?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, most of the bottom 10 per cent. in terms of income do not pay income tax at all. Their incomes are largely affected by changes in benefits, in which the Government have been extremely generous in recent years. For example, we have given more than £1 billion of extra help since 1988 for poorer families with children. For that reason, figures comparing the actual overall effect on lower deciles of the population are misleading if they leave out the substantial increases in benefit that the Government continue to provide.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the best way of helping people on low wages to get real wage improvements in future years is by Britain having a successful economy in which high added value is what we seek for our industries and our service sector?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely. That is why, during the 1980s, the living standards of low wage earners went up by a quarter after we came to power. During the period when Labour had been in power, real income for the same group of people had risen by only 4 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Chancellor is effectively confirming to the House that the Conservative party is the party not of low taxation but of regressive taxation. Returning to the original question, which my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) asked, what is the moral justification for taxing citizens of ordinary means, particularly those with family obligations, rather than clawing money back from the beneficiaries of the 1988 top rate tax reductions?

Mr. Clarke: The justification is that it increases the revenue received and retains the skills of those people in this country. By giving people the necessary incentives, we get the economic performance that we got in the 1980s compared with the economic performance that we got in the 1970s when the Labour party had put the top rate up to 83 per cent.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is it not the case that the average direct tax burden in this country during the 1970s Labour Government was higher on the scale than at the highest point of the direct tax burden during the whole of this Government up until now, and prospectively under the new tax arrangements?

Mr. Clarke: It is also the case that the percentage of total gross domestic product taken by income tax and national insurance has dropped from 18.5 to 16.5 per cent. under the Conservative Government. We are a party of low taxation and, most spectacularly, we have reduced the marginal rates of taxation to 40 per cent. at the top and to 25 per cent. for the standard rate and introduced a new lower band of 20 per cent. for the very lowest wage earners. We have no intention of giving way to pressure from the Opposition to put those rates up again.

Personal Tax Allowances

9. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received concerning his plans to freeze personal income tax allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that freezing personal income tax would place a heavy burden on people who are on the borderlines of poverty? Does he know, as a Leicestershire Member, that the average women's wage in the city of Leicester is the lowest in the country and that among the people who will be hit most by the proposals are those who can put up with them least?

Mr. Dorrell: We shall not accept lectures from the Opposition on the importance of indexing personal allowances. Between 1974 and 1979, the Labour Government cut the value of the single personal allowance by about a quarter. We have seen it increase by roughly an equivalent amount since then. The hon. and learned Gentleman should regard this measure in the context of all the other measures in last year's Budget. As I said in answer to an earlier question, those measures raise extra revenue in roughly equal proportions across the income scale.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Will my hon. Friend tell the House how many fewer people are paying income tax now than would have been paying it, had the 1978-79 regime continued? Of those who pay income tax, how many pay it only at the 20 per cent. rate which we introduced?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is on to an important point. More than 1 million people who would have paid income tax had we simply indexed the allowances that we inherited from the Labour party are not paying income tax this year or next because we have over-indexed the allowances since 1979.

Ms Harman: Will the Minister confirm that, from this April, 400,000 people on low incomes who do not currently pay income tax will start to pay it for the first time? Is it not a scandal that, of those people, 160,000 are pensioners who will start to pay income tax on their low occupational pensions? Does that not show that the 1993 Budget not only broke election promises but hit hardest at those who could least afford it?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Lady, not for the first time, is misunderstanding an answer that she has been given by a Treasury Minister. It is perfectly true that we expect there to be more income tax payers next year, for a simple reason: we expect incomes to rise next year so that more people are brought into the income tax bracket.

Interest Rates

10. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated saving to British industry of the ½ per cent. fall in interest rates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Every ½ per cent. reduction in interest rates, when fully passed on, is estimated to lower United Kingdom companies' interest bills by well over £½ billion a year.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that extremely helpful good news. Does he agree that a low-inflation, low-tax and low-interest rate economy, such as that of the United Kingdom, is better able to attract inward investment, particularly compared to our EC competitors, which, for example, maintain the social contract?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely. At the moment, we get about a third of all inward investment in the European Union. We do so because everyone agrees that Britain is the most attractive country in which to invest because of our low rates of taxation, our low rates of corporate taxation, our deregulated economy and our much more flexible labour market.

Mr. Sheldon: Will the Chancellor send a clear message to those voices in the City asking him to increase interest rates? Does he accept that the present interest rates should come down if we are to sustain any improvement in manufacturing industry?

Mr. Clarke: I shall continue to set interest rates according to British conditions, taking a view about the medium-term prospects for inflation, looking at the monetary aggregates that we use, the exchange rate and asset values. That has guided all my decisions on monetary policy so far, and will certainly continue to do so.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that although industry always welcomes a reduction in income rates, it welcomes consistency more, so that it can plan ahead, knowing that rates will not rise again? That will give industry the necessary confidence to invest in the future.

Mr. Clarke: Industry wants low inflation and a stable environment so that it can do what it has to do to produce the sound growth that we all want. That is why I state so clearly our objectives for monetary policy. I am glad that British industry has benefited from the steady reductions in interest rates since 1990. Altogether, if they are passed on, they are worth about £13 billion to British industry. That has obviously contributed quite a lot to our recovery from the recession, which is steadily becoming stronger.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the Chancellor aware that the House has been reassured this afternoon by what both he and the Chief Secretary have said about having regard to British circumstances in determining British interest rates? Could he be pushed just a little further on that to see the interrelationship between interest rates and the value of sterling, and the implications of both for British industry? Is he aware that the disinflationary pressures in the British economy make it possible for him both to move downwards on inflation rates and interest rates and to maintain a competitive rate for sterling, the importance of which he referred to a few moments ago?

Mr. Clarke: I shall add that to all the advice that I get when making these monetary decisions, which I usually do at my monthly meeting with the Governor of the Bank of England. We have been consistently reducing interest rates since 1990. We have been able to do so because we have been so successful in getting inflation down. That is one reason why the outlook for investment is now so good. We have been able to cushion the blow to those who rely on interest from their savings by introducing the new national savings bond with a fixed rate of 7 per cent. for pensioners who want to take it.

Inward Investment

11. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect on the balance of payments now and in the future of inward investment into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: Inward investment encourages competition and innovation, boosts productive capacity and is good for the balance of payments.

Mr. Arnold: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, of all the Japanese investment into the 12 countries of the European Community, more than 40 per cent. has come to the United Kingdom and that, likewise, more than 40 per cent. of United States investment into Europe has come to the United Kingdom? Does that not contrast with the dark days of the last Labour Government when multinationals were leaving Britain in droves?

Mr. Portillo: It is indeed 40 per cent. in both cases. However, my hon. Friend need not only look back; he can look forward to what Labour would do in office. The Opposition are supporters of the European socialist manifesto which proposes that tax rates in Britain should be levelled up to European Community levels. Our rate of corporation tax is 33 per cent., whereas in Belgium it is 40 per cent., in Italy 52 per cent. and in Germany 60 per cent. The implication is that Labour would wish to raise corporation tax to the levels of the Community.

Mr. Cryer: If that inward investment has been so beneficial to our balance of payments, why are we running at a deficit of about £12 billion a year? Is it not true that the economic policies of this wretched Government have created 2.5 million job losses in manufacturing industry, so that we cannot actually supply any demand for our exports from our own manufacturing industry because of the wasteland that the Government have created—worse than any wastelands created by Hitler during the 1939 to 1945 war?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman was talking absolute rubbish, even before he took off at the end of his sentence into hyperbole. I should remind him that the United Kingdom invests more abroad than is invested in this country. We, of course, have all the benefit of that flow. This country believes in free trade, in investing heavily abroad and in allowing people to invest in this country. Free trade is good for this country. It is a pity that the Labour party has not yet recognised that.

Mr. Riddick: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see the latest issue of "In Yorkshire and Humberside", which reveals that, in the 12 months to March 1993, 42 foreign companies invested in that region, creating 6,500 new jobs? Do not foreign companies come to Britain to invest because we do not have the social chapter, the job-destroying minimum wage and an interfering Government imposing a corporatist-style, bogus, so-called business plan on industry?

Mr. Portillo: Yes; and if I may broaden that out to the national scene, total inward investment in this country over the past five years has been about £91 billion, and about 275,000 jobs have been created—for all the reasons that my hon. Friend gives, and particularly because we still retain low marginal rates of taxation, which the Labour party wishes us to do away with.

Growth

13. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice he has received on the levels of investment in education, research and development and transport required to sustain economic growth in the longer term.

Mr. Portillo: A great deal of advice.

Mr. Jones: As we find ourselves near the bottom of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development league for investment in infrastructure and education, what evidence can the Minister give that the Government are prepared to invest in areas that will secure Britain's economic future, rather than concentrate on pre-election tax bribes?

Mr. Portillo: Over the next three years, we will spend, on average, nearly £2 billion on trunk roads and motorways. Over the same period, our total railway investment will be around £3 billion. The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to say that we are at the bottom of the OECD league. Let me remind him that, as a share of our gross domestic product, the United Kingdom spends more on education than either Germany or Japan.

Mr. Fabricant: Is it not the case that, by having the lowest corporation tax in Europe, firms have the necessary flow of funds to enable them to invest? Is it not also the case that, by not having a punitive taxation system, we do not suffer the brain drain that we had in the 1970s?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that what matters is not only public sector investment but private sector investment. That is one of the reasons why the Government are concentrating so hard on the private finance initiative, which enables private finance and private expertise to be brought into areas that previously were the preserve of the public sector.

Balance of Trade

14. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the figures for the balance of trade for the last 12 months for United Kingdom and for Germany.

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom had a visible trade deficit of £13 billion in the 12 months to November 1993, while Germany had a surplus of £20 billion. But looking at the current account overall, the United Kingdom had a deficit of £10 billion in the 12 months to September, while Germany had not a surplus but a deficit of £17 billion.

Mr. Spellar: Does not the first part of the answer—the real answer about manufactured trade—show that, in spite of all the huffing and puffing from Conservative Members, in the real test of who can sell what in the world market, Germany, with its social market economy and many elements of the social chapter, is competitive and we are slipping behind in the world trade race?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman was obviously stunned by the answer. Let me remind him that, taking the current account overall, Germany has a bigger deficit than the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman did not anticipate that answer and obviously did not like it when he got it.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that not only are current manufactured exports from the United Kingdom at a record level but our proportion of world trade is rising, and has done so for the past four years? Will he also confirm that European statistics show that, last year, while the German economy fell in industrial production terms by 7 per cent., ours was the only economy in Europe to grow by 2.5 per cent?

Mr. Portillo: We look forward to a rise of about 5.5 per cent. in exports this year. In contrast, we reckon that consumption will rise by about 2 per cent. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out that, after a long period following the 1960s in which the United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactures was falling, the position has now stabilised. I am hopeful that the figure will rise.

Value Added Tax

15. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the proposed VAT increases from senior citizens' organisations.

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations.

Mr. Connarty: Has the Chancellor of the Exchequer received the kind of representations that most of us have received, which express the anger of pensioners who will have to pay 8p more in the pound for their fuel come April, and 17.5 per cent. more next year? Is any sense of pensioners' despair getting through to the Minister—despair at the arrangements that will enable those with money in the bank to pay their VAT in advance, thereby avoiding the burden that will fall on most pensioners?

Sir John Cope: Forestalling arrangements are a familiar part of changes in indirect taxation, and that applies in this case. However, 80 per cent. of the net yield of VAT on fuel will come from households with incomes of more than £15,000 a year, as a result of the massive package of benefit measures that we have also introduced.

PRIME MINISTER

Kashmir

Q1. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister how many independent observers have been allowed by the Indian authorities to visit the Indian occupied area of Kashmir since his visit last year.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): A number of independent observers have visited Kashmir since January 1993. They include parliamentarians, jurists, diplomats, journalists and human rights groups. The Indian Government have also recently agreed to a visit by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply. Is the Prime Minister aware, however, that the Indian Government are reluctant to allow independent observers to visit the occupied area? Indeed, they refused to allow an all-party group from the House to go there.

Is the Prime Minister aware that the forthcoming visit of the Indian Prime Minister gives him an opportunity to make known to that gentleman the deep revulsion felt by many hon. Members about the on-going attacks and brutality perpetrated by the Indian security forces against men, women and children in occupied Kashmir? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will make that known?

The Prime Minister: I look forward to Prime Minister Rao's visit to this country. We have excellent relations with the Indian Government, and I look forward to discussing a range of matters with him. As for access for independent national groups, we have encouraged the

Indian Government to allow independent access to India. There have been steps towards greater openness in recent months, and I thoroughly welcome that.

Mr. Jessel: Is this not just one more attempt by Opposition Members to wreck Britain's excellent relationship with a most friendly Commonwealth country? Will my right hon. Friend not only welcome India's own decision to set up a human rights commission but remind all the independent observers that terrorists are murderers, and that the most important human right is the right to stay alive?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend says, we have an excellent relationship with the Indian Government, both politically and in terms of a greatly increased flow of two-way trade with India. As for my hon. Friend's second point, I think that we shall soon have a report from the Indian human rights commission, and I look forward to that. I understand that it will deal with a wide range of issues that have been drawn to the commission's attention.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. O'Hara: Does the Prime Minister share the President of the Board of Trade's low opinion of the legal advice offered by the Attorney-General?

The Prime Minister: That is not the position of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the news that nearly 2 million North Western electricity board—NORWEB—customers are to benefit from a 6 per cent. cut in the price of their electricity from 1 April? Coming on top of a cut of nearly 2 per cent. last summer, does that not prove that privatisation works?

The Prime Minister: I believe that that is certainly the case. There have been significant reductions in fuel prices in recent years, and I welcome that.

Mr. John Smith: Madam Speaker— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. What a total waste of valuable time in Prime Minister's questions.

Mr. John Smith: Concerning the excessive pay awards of top executives, does the Prime Minister agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's comments today, or does he maintain his own response of a few weeks ago, that it is not a matter for him?

The Prime Minister: I set out in the House, from memory, to the former right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and, before that, to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), my view that excessive pay awards are not justified. I equally maintain the point that that is a matter between employer and employee or company and management rather than a matter for the Government, but my personal view remains as first set out in the House to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in 1991.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister has clearly said contradictory things, because he told us that it was not a matter for him. Whatever he says, does he not notice that those top executives do not pay a blind bit of notice? They carry on regardless, relentlessly increasing their pay and their perks. At the same time, pay restraint is imposed on millions of people with modest incomes. Is that not inconsistent, unfair and hypocritical?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and I have said precisely the same thing on that issue and, as I indicated to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and he might have the grace to acknowledge, I first said it in 1991.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister yet appreciate the anger felt throughout the country at massive pay increases for top people occurring at the same time as massive tax increases for the rest of the country? Why are the Government so soft and indulgent on the very rich but hard and unfair on everyone else?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has returned to the same point three times after having two answers, I will now quote to him what I said to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook in 1991:

> "I made it perfectly clear when I was Chief Secretary that I do not believe that excessive salary increases are right."—[*Official Report*, 1991; Vol. 193, c. 857.]

That still remains my view. *[Interruption.]* For the hon. Gentleman who shouts, "What are you going to do about it?" may I say that this happens to be a free capitalist country, in which companies determine their wages. I take it from this that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would himself interfere with companies in the payment of employees and the payment of management by the companies themselves. If that is so, it blows out of the water any of the Labour party's modernising ideas of understanding free enterprise.

Mr. Churchill: Is my right hon. Friend aware that last week's sacking of 7,000 British soldiers from the Army is deeply regrettable, and indeed mistaken, bearing in mind that the British commander of the UN force in Bosnia has now repeated three times his request for more troops? Can my right hon. Friend now give a positive response to that request by a British general in the field?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we set out the position in "Options for Change" some time ago and the redundancies that were announced—

Mr. Churchill *indicated dissent.*

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend may shake his head, but it happens to be a matter of fact and record. We set out the decisions on "Options for Change", and this measure implemented that decision, taken some time ago.

As for the request for troops in Bosnia, my hon. Friend will know that we have a significant contingent already in Bosnia, who have done magnificent work. If a request is made to the United Kingdom, we would of course consider providing more forces proportionately as part of a wider international effort.

Mr. Ashdown: May we take it from that answer that our Prime Minister and our Government really are prepared to let go to waste the peace that has been obtained by General Rose in Sarajevo during the past two weeks, rather than this country backing a request, made by a British general and supported by his own chiefs of staff, for more troops to ensure that that peace succeeds?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman yet again mistakes the position. It was the British Government who moved troops in to Sarajevo to ensure that the peace negotiated by General Rose and the corralling of weapons brought about by General Rose was able to be properly monitored. For once, the right hon. Gentleman might have the grace to acknowledge what we have done rather than carp and criticise inaccurately.

Mr. French: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the British economy is to remain competitive in the future, it is essential that our children are trained now in the skills that they will require in the 21st century? Will he therefore join me in welcoming the announcement of the 12 technology schools, one of which is in my constituency and one of which I attended?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right in his diagnosis. We certainly face greater competition in the years ahead and we will certainly need greater skills. One of the ways of obtaining them is the greater diversity in education brought about by the new technology colleges. I hope that many other schools and businesses will follow the lead set by those colleges.

Q3. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Wright: In the light of the Prime Minister's emphasis on the importance of personal responsibility, does he welcome the clear statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he will resign if his conduct is criticised by Lord Justice Scott's report? Will the Prime Minister make an equally clear statement and will he expect the same of other Ministers?

The Prime Minister: I have said repeatedly that I propose to make no comment on Lord Justice Scott's report. I propose to make no comment of any sort on Lord Justice Scott's report until he has reported. I set up that report and I gave it very wide terms of reference. I have assured Lord Justice Scott— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Ms Armstrong.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker. I have assured Lord Justice Scott that he will have the power and authority that he needs to complete his report satisfactorily, and I believe it follows from that that I should make no comment until I have that report.

Q4. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend welcome recent surveys which show that council tax bills this year will rise less than the rate of inflation? Does he agree that the revenue support grant settlement was correct in estimating needs for local councils, and is not that in stark contrast to the waste, inefficiency and nepotism of many Labour-controlled councils, especially that in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the news that council tax bills are on average likely to rise less than the rate of inflation is very welcome indeed and I believe that it shows that the local government settlement was very finely judged. That is, of course, very different from what was said by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) who predicted at the time that the council tax would rise by four times the level of inflation. Clearly, he was scaremongering or wrong, or both.

Mr. Galloway: Does the Prime Minister have a message for Nabil Shaath, the chief Palestinian negotiator, who is in Parliament this afternoon? In view of the fact that, since last Friday's massacre in Hebron, the Israeli army has shot down more people than were shot by the murderer in the mosque, will the Prime Minister support a protection force made up from the United Nations or at least the co-sponsors of the peace process to protect the Palestinians under illegal Israeli occupation?

The Prime Minister: I think that violence from any source in that powder keg of the middle east is to be regretted, whether it comes from the dreadful massacre at Hebron or any other source. There are some United Nations observers there and I believe that they are doing an extremely good job. I had the opportunity of discussing that with the Secretary-General just the other day. What would be most helpful would be if, as soon as it seemed politically practicable, the two sides were to sit down again and continue with the negotiations that have made more progress in the past 18 months than for many years past. I believe that everyone wishes to see a comprehensive peace settlement that will enable the people who live there to live a decent, civilised and safe life.

Q5. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Hannam: During his visit to the United States, and remembering his excellent record as a former Minister with responsibility for the disabled, did my right hon. Friend observe the remarkable increase in the number of disabled people in America who are now attaining full, normal employment as a result of President Bush's anti-discrimination legislation? Will my right hon. Friend support our efforts in the House further to remove the barriers facing disabled people?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's desire to end discrimination against disabled people. I have asked my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People to identify further practicable and affordable ways to combat discrimination. There is much that may be done and I have asked my right hon. Friend to examine that matter.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the forthcoming business of the House?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam Speaker. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 7 MARCH—Motion on the Building Societies (EFTA States) Order.

Motion on the Appropriation (Northern Ireland) Order.

TUESDAY 8 MARCH—Remaining stages of the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Bill.

Motion on the Pastoral (Amendment) Measure.

WEDNESDAY 9 MARCH—Motion on the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act (Continuance) Order.

Motions to amend Standing Orders to establish a Select Committee related to Northern Ireland affairs.

THURSDAY 10 MARCH—Opposition Day (7th Allotted Day). There will be a debate described as "Strengthening of the Sex Discrimination Act", on an Opposition motion.

FRIDAY 11 MARCH—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 14 MARCH—Estimates Day (2nd Allotted Day) (1st Part) Until seven o'clock, there will be a debate on housing, in so far as it relates to the Department of the Environment's grants in aid to the Housing Corporation.

At Ten o'clock, the House will be asked to agree all outstanding excess votes, supplementary estimates and defence votes A.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement and for the Opposition day. May I ask him to confirm that it is a requirement on all hon. Members to complete the declaration of Members' interests in the form agreed by the House? Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that all hon. Members are required to comply with the decision of the House and to complete the form?

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is going to ask for a debate on the matter, but may I remind him that it is not so far a business question? I am looking for business questions to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Brown: You anticipate my next move, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will remember that, in my statement just a week ago, I asked for no long preambles or statements before coming to a question.

Mr. Brown: It is indelibly printed on my mind, Madam Speaker.

May I therefore ask the Leader of the House to arrange for an early statement from the Attorney-General on the consistency of the legal advice that he gives to Ministers? Many hon. Members would like to question the Attorney-General on this point—including, I suspect, his ministerial colleagues.

May I also ask the Leader of the House to arrange for statements in the House on the latest policy changes relating to Home Office legislation and to Department for Education legislation? It is all very interesting to read about these policy changes in the newspapers, but we would quite like to cross-examine Ministers about these matters here in the House.

Mr. Newton: I observe mildly that that contains an above-average number of what I can only describe as rather mischievous questions. I am grateful, at least, for the hon. Gentleman's kind words about the Opposition day.

As regards the Register of Members' Interests, Madam Speaker, I can do no better—indeed, I would not dare to try—than repeat the points that you yourself made in responding to a point of order a day or two ago.

As regards the Attorney-General, my right hon. and learned Friend has made it quite clear that he offered consistent advice, and I made some comments to that effect when answering on behalf of the Prime Minister on Tuesday. My right hon. and learned Friend will give evidence to the Scott inquiry in due course, and I think that the hon. Gentleman would be well advised to wait for that rather than making such requests. As for requests for statements about legislation being considered in another place, the hon. Gentleman would be the first to complain if statements were made in another place about legislation being considered here.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): May I raise with my right hon. Friend a matter of some urgency, and perhaps even of constitutional importance? As we, as a British Parliament—I emphasise the word "Parliament", rather than "Government"—are reneging on treaty responsibilities concerning our representation in the Western European Union Assembly, the Council of Europe and the North Atlantic Assembly, does my right hon. Friend not think that we should find time for a debate on the subject to consider whether we should temporarily withdraw from those institutions, or even consider staffing our representation with unelected peers from all parties, so that we can keep some continuity going?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's suggestions, but more importantly I note the continued concern that he expresses. He knows perfectly well that the absence of pairing is the cause of the problems, and that can be resolved only by the people sitting and staring on the Opposition Front Bench at this moment.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As a former Minister responsible for people with disabilities, will the Leader of the House acknowledge the importance of the private Member's Bill to be discussed on Friday 11 March, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, with which the name of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) is associated? What view do the Government take of the Bill? If it is given a Second Reading, will it be possible for further stages to be taken in Government time?

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the importance of the issue. My right hon. Friend will of course make the Government's position clear in the course of the debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members interested in such matters will acknowledge that a further significant step forward for disabled people was taken on Monday, with the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment of a greatly improved access to work scheme.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on overseas students funded out of the overseas aid budget, with a view to examining statements made by Labour Members both currently and in days gone by? Although such people come to our country to obtain education for themselves, their presence is also a means of extending influence to the countries from which they come. Is that legitimate or not?

Mr. Newton: I do not feel that I can promise an early debate, but one of our aims is certainly to ensure that precisely that influence is gained, by whatever means can properly used.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Leader of the House use his ministerial muscle next week to get the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to help hon. Members on the Standing Committee on the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, in Committee Room 14, with a statement explaining the Government's assumptions that challenge the local authorities' estimate of a cost of £720 million, with no new money?

Mr. Newton: Of course, we have had Treasury questions today. I believe that the hon. Gentleman raised the same issue with me some time ago, and I drew it to the attention of my ministerial colleagues. However, I am sure that the Scottish Office Ministers dealing with the Bill will have given the Committee full and proper information.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on the facilities provided in the House? Is he aware that, when hon. Members sponsor functions here on Saturdays, tours are not allowed on Saturday nights—although that is being reconsidered—and that, if the function is at Saturday lunchtime, people are not allowed to look at the Chamber? Can anyone explain why, as the staff have to be here anyway, those doors cannot be opened? Can we have a debate, and can my right hon. Friend say who makes those decisions?

Mr. Newton: Those decisions are, of course, for the House authorities, although there are Committees that might make representations on the subject. My hon. Friend had already put that point to me informally. I had noted it, and I shall do my best to ensure that it is carefully considered.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): The House has already debated the Tomlinson report, and on the basis of that report the Secretary of State for Health has embarked upon a wholesale programme of hospital closures and bed reductions. On Monday this week Professor Jarman gave evidence to an inquiry that I was chairing, suggesting that the report was based on a false premise. In view of the fact that that information was not to hand when the previous debate was held, will the Lord President of the Council find time for a debate next week, so that we can discuss Professor Jarman's findings and re-examine the Tomlinson report?

Mr. Newton: My understanding is not only that Professor Jarman's analysis is not new, but that Sir Bernard Tomlinson received evidence directly from Professor Jarman.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): As Britain slips and slides towards further involvement in Bosnia, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there will be an early debate on that subject so that the Government may hear the widespread view among those on the Conservative Benches that we do not want to become involved in a British Vietnam, and that there is no national interest involved in that tragic country?

Mr. Newton: I have three comments. First, I have often made it clear that I shall seek to arrange both statements and debates when that seems appropriate. Secondly, my hon. Friend will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said only a few minutes ago. Thirdly, the Ministry of Defence is top for questions next Tuesday, when my hon. Friend may be able to raise the matter.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Will the Leader of the House elaborate on Wednesday's business concerning motions to amend Standing Orders to establish a Select Committee for the north of Ireland? Will he clarify what motions will be tabled, so that there will be no doubt that the Government will not interfere in the Committee of Selection's business?

Given that the Select Committee has been imposed against the wishes of a substantial number of hon. Members, and that the proposed membership is unfair to one section of us represented in the House, will he further assure the House that ample time will be made available for debate during the presentation of the motions?

Mr. Newton: I must gently point out that the hon. Gentleman can hardly expect me to confirm, as I would, that membership is a matter for the Committee of Selection, and then engage in debate about who should or should not be included in the membership.

There will be three motions. The first will make appropriate adjustments to the terms of reference of Select Committees generally; the second will set up the Northern Ireland Select Committee and give it its terms of reference; and the third will change the name of the present Northern Ireland Committee under Standing Order No. 99 to make it the Northern Ireland Grand Committee. The total number of Members will be set out, but not the detail.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. Friend consider providing time for a debate on the report of the Hansard commission? He will know that hon. Members have a growing interest in the way in which the House carries out its business, and that such a debate would be a reasonable way to start the ball rolling.

Mr. Newton: I have carefully considered my hon. Friend's recent Adjournment debate, which was answered by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Services and Science. I have also studied the report. It contains much that is worth considering, but I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): May we have a debate on this year's standard spending assessment settlement, because an awful lot of its detail has become known since it was announced? For instance, Westminster city council has received more than £4.2 million to deal with homelessness, and is now making a profit off the backs of the people who are sleeping on its pavements. In that debate, we could perhaps hear a justification for that, and gain an understanding of how it happened.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, despite his attempt to come up with a reason for a further debate, knows that the House has had opportunities to debate the revenue support grant orders recently.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will my right hon. Friend make time available for a debate on the common agricultural policy, particularly since it has recently been discovered that a paper has been suppressed by the Commission in Brussels? That clearly shows that the system is almost unworkable. The CAP costs our citizens at least £1,000 a year extra on their food bills. I therefore urge him to make time available to discuss that document, and the role of the Commission in the matter.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that my hon. Friend can be confident of his suggestion about suppression. As I understand it, work is being done on such a paper. It is certainly true that the Government will continue to support sensible efforts at CAP reform.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It has been two months since it was exposed that a Conservative Back Bencher, the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), made £50,000 on buying the council house next door to his house in Westminster. Cannot we have a debate on the whole question of the right to buy, especially as that hon. Gentleman still refuses to pay back to the ratepayers of Westminster the £50,000 that he ripped off them?

Mr. Newton *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The last few words of the hon. Gentleman's question were quite unacceptable and I hope that he will withdraw them. I understand his sentiments, but I cannot accept those words, and I am asking him him to withdraw them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Order. Just a moment. I wish Members would not interfere when I am dealing with the situation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is my belief that the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton ripped off the ratepayers of Westminster to the tune of £50,000. I am afraid that I have absolutely no intention of withdrawing what I know to be the truth.

Madam Speaker: I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to use that phrase in the question as he has done. He can withdraw it, and he can rephrase the question, which would be totally acceptable. I ask him to reconsider and rephrase it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have been asking questions about this for eight weeks on behalf of ratepayers in Westminster, so that the money can be returned. I am afraid that I am not in a position to withdraw any statement that I have made to Parliament on these matters.

Madam Speaker: I am not asking the hon. Gentleman to withdraw statements that he has made previously or the statement that he has made today. I am asking him to withdraw the words "ripped off". That is all that I am asking him to do—to withdraw those words and to rephrase his question. His statement can stand; I have no objection to that. I am simply asking him to withdraw the last two or three words he used. He has certainly made statements over a number of weeks, all of which are acceptable in the House. Those last few words are not acceptable, and I ask him to reconsider.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Madam Speaker, I hold you, as you know, in the greatest of respect. I have to say to you that, repeatedly over the 14 years that I have been a Member of this House, I have heard reference to "ripping off". On that basis, in so far as a precedent has been set by those before me, I am afraid that I am not in a position to withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman has not heard that phrase in respect of one hon. Member. It may have been used in a corporate context, but not in that way. I am asking him please to reconsider. I have the utmost respect for him and the way in which he pursues matters here. All that I am expecting him to do is to rephrase those few words. His statement still stands.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *indicated dissent.*

Madam Speaker: I am afraid, if he does not, I must ask him to leave the House for the remainder of this day's sitting. I hope that he will rephrase it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Then I shall leave the House, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member, having used a grossly disorderly expression, was ordered by MADAM SPEAKER *to withdraw the same, but he declined to comply with that direction; whereupon* MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct), ordered him to withdraw immediately from the House for the remainder of this day's Sitting, and he withdrew accordingly.*

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend if he would allocate time for a debate on Community enlargement? Is he aware that the enlargement talks in Brussels, far from being the success that has been portrayed, are being held to ransom by the Spanish Government, who are trying to take away the blocking minority in the Council of Ministers, and who are trying to invade Norwegian waters with their fishing vessels? Should we not have a debate on that matter to expose that double dealing?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that there has been a lot of progress in those negotiations, especially with Sweden, Finland and Austria, and negotiations are continuing with Norway. I do not want to comment in the way in which he invites me to do so while those negotiations are continuing. Of course, we wish to give details to the House as soon as those negotiations are concluded.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In the light of that response from the Leader of the House, is it his understanding that negotiations with Norway have been put on ice for a further week? Does he not accept that there is a desperate need for Members to be advised on the terms of the negotiations in the context of the applicant members? None of us has been advised of what was laid on the table by the various Ministers during those negotiations and matters seem to fall between two Committees—the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Scrutiny Committee.

Could he therefore ensure that a mechanism is established whereby those hon. Members who are interested in the generalities and the specifics of the common fisheries policy are at least able to ask Ministers what is being said during those negotiations?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that fisheries issues are one of the difficult areas of discussion, especially in relation to Norway, and I will consider the hon. Lady's point.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on early-day motion 618, which graphically exposes the Liberal Democrats' position on Europe and their willingness to abandon our national veto, which could result in the loss of Britain's European rebate and the end of zero-rated VAT items?

[*That this House notes the hypocrisy of the Liberal Democratic Party over its policy on Europe; recalls the statement of Liberal Democrats' spokesman on Europe, the honourable Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, that 'the Nation state in terms of the old concept of sovereignty has seen its day' (Official Report, 26th June 1991, column 1365); contrasts these remarks with his party's new policy of 'decentralised federalism'; believes that this new policy is contradicted by a long list of centralising proposals supported by the Liberal Democrats which include signing up to the Social Chapter, signing up now for a timetable for a single currency, a common defence and security policy, a common immigration policy, a common rural policy and, most significantly, accepting majority voting in the Council of Ministers, meaning the end of the national veto; believes that they have sought to disguise centralising policies, designed to create a United States of Europe, in decentralising rhetoric; and believes this to be a blatant attempt to mislead the electorate in the hope of gaining political advantage in the forthcoming European elections.*]

Mr. Newton: Again, that is a debate that I would like to arrange, and I am sure that notice has been taken well beyond this House of the extent to which the Liberal Democrats would give up what most of us would regard as important British interests.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House make a statement next week on commercial lobbying organisations? One has recently been established with the support of a number of ex-Ministers, which claims that it can give access to the Government—access which is denied to ordinary people. Or is the Leader of the House not concerned about the operation of decent standards and the control of commercial lobbying organisations, which seem to be completely out of control—like the 12 Conservative Members who denied the House by not providing information about their Lloyd's interests?

Mr. Newton: I shall not comment, Madam Speaker—beyond what I already said when referring to your comments—on the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's questions, beyond noting that Members on both sides of the House had not provided an entry at the time that the report was published.

Mr. Cryer I was talking about Lloyd's.

Mr. Newton: Yes, but the hon. Gentleman is very selective in the matters that he raises, is he not?

On the first part of his question, his comments on whether I was concerned about standards bordered on the offensive, so I shall ignore them. He will know that the Select Committee on Members' Interests is looking further into the matter.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Has my right hon. Friend received any request from the Opposition for a debate on unemployment on one of their Supply days? It is more than a year since they last did so. If not, have they explained to him why not? Is it perhaps because of the fall of 200,000 in unemployment and the fact that they are only interested in debating bad news, not good news?

Mr. Newton: I cannot better my hon. Friend's explanation. The only obvious reason for not having a debate on unemployment is that the Opposition do not want to draw attention to the fact that it is coming down.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): When will the Government allow us to debate their decision to end the iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme? Does he know about the anger felt in the steel communities? Does he not realise that steel workers believe that he has played a very sneaky trick?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has referred to that question several times. Equally, I have referred several times to the evaluation report that was put in the Library of the House last October, which underlines the reasons why the Government decided to make that change.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the special report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which is recorded in the Vote today? The report is concerned about the impediment to the work of the Committee caused by the Opposition preventing the investigation that it wants to undertake in South Africa. In view of that, and the principle which must be enshrined in this House that the work of Select Committees should not be fettered in that way, will my right hon. Friend consider a debate on the subject?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question is almost identical to another asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir. D. Smith), who was concerned about attendance at the Western European Union and other international organisations. I am aware of the resolution passed by the Trade and Industry Select Committee, and I hope that it will be considered by those concerned on the Labour Front Bench.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the announcement of the business for next week, especially that for Wednesday. However, will it be possible at some time during that week or the week after for the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People or another Minister to make a statement that might allow us to examine the fate and lot of adults affected by thalidomide, who have suffered for years without proper compensation?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will be aware that representatives of the Thalidomide Action Group are meeting my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health on 9 March. I do not think that I want to comment before that meeting has taken place.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The Leader of the House will be aware that the Treasury Select Committee is carrying out an important study of the civil service. Is he aware that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has refused permission for the Committee to carry out a survey of junior and middle-ranking civil servants, quoting in evidence some civil service management code?

Does he agree that that civil service management code has no statutory authority, it has never been discussed in the House, and it represents an arbitrary use of power by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? Does the Leader of the House agree that this could be a case for judicial review? Does he propose to defend the rights of the House against—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Garrett: May we have a statement next week—

Madam Speaker: Yes, I was just wondering when we would get a request for something, rather than an argument.

Mr. Garrett: Here it comes.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Garrett: Will the Leader of the House make a statement on this important constitutional issue, representing as it does the use of power by a Minister against a Select Committee? Will he make such a statement next week?

Mr. Newton: I certainly have no intention of making a statement of the kind sought next week, but I will bring the request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the Leader of the House arrange perhaps next week for a short debate on the timetable on the Finance Bill, as it is preventing sensible debate on the Bill, much to the dismay of outside organisations which take a close interest in it? On some occasions, we find that we have too much to debate in the time allotted, and on other occasions we find that there is too much time. *[Interruption.]* Will the Leader of the House arrange for that to be dealt with?

Mr. Newton: The House had considerable opportunity to discuss the timetable motion as a whole. The detailed arrangements would be for the Business Committee. I think that I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. Mackay), who is on the Committee, say that Labour Members did not even bother to come to the Business Committee. It seems to be an issue that perhaps the Opposition could resolve, rather than the Government.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the financial affairs of the Church Commissioners, who hold public national assets? The recent history of their activities has caused wide public concern.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise a debate on the Church Commissioners. I see that there is a motion on the Pastoral Amendment Measure next week, but without some careful research I cannot be sure whether it would be in order.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): When can we have a debate on the sentiments of the amendment to early-day motion 674 and the magnificent editorial in *The Independent* today which argues that the main cause of increasing crime is the profits being made by people who are selling drugs, and the only practical way to decrease the use of illegal drugs and crime is to decriminalise soft drugs —cannabis and amphetamines—and treat the addicts of hard drugs as patients, not as criminals?

[*That this House recognises the urgent need to reduce the consumption of illegal drugs of all kinds; notes with concern the clear conflict between the proposals of the Secretary of State for the Home Department and of the Scottish Office on the use of fines for drug offences; notes that the Home Secretary has proposed raising the maximum fine to £2,500 for all offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; but notes that the Scottish Office, in the consultation document, Improving the Delivery of Justice in Scotland, proposes the use of £25 fiscal fines, which do not constitute a criminal conviction, for the same offences where appropriate; believes that the Home Secretary has displayed a complete disregard for the impracticality and ineffectiveness of imposing such severe penalties, particularly on the personal use of cannabis, which has been indicated by his own research; welcomes the criticism of Home Office policy by the police on these same grounds; and believes that this policy should be abandoned in favour of a more graded response towards punishing drug use and sale, so as to concentrate the limited resources in the criminal justice system efficiently and effectively on the most acute problems, and, particularly, those associated with the use, manufacture, importation and sale of the most harmful narcotics.*]

Mr. Newton: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I do not think that many people do.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Can my right hon. Friend find time next week for an urgent debate on the growing economic crisis in Chad, where the level of national debt is running out of control and has almost reached the level of that in Labour-controlled Camden council?

Mr. Newton: That is another interesting subject for debate. It shows just how much mismanagement of resources occurs in Labour councils.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Chad?

Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to see the appalling pictures on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* today of the slaughter of up to 30,000 seals on the ice floes of the Caspian sea? Can we have a debate on animal welfare in Government time, because it appears that the Russians have been slaughtering protected species such as blue whales as well? Given the interest in this matter on both sides of the House, we should be given an opportunity to debate these issues.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that many people will have looked at those accounts with some concern. I understand that seal culling in Russia is not on a scale which threatens the species. However, the Russian authorities are well aware of British opposition to sealing, and I note the hon. Gentleman's request for a debate.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): In considering the application for a debate from the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), will my right hon. Friend perhaps ensure that it is pointed out that, if the recommendation of the Procedure Committee on the programming of legislation upstairs was considered, the problem that the hon. Gentleman had would be overcome immediately?

Mr. Newton: I am sorry to see that the hon. Gentleman has fled before the point could come directly to his attention, but I am sure that he will read my right hon. Friend's words with the weight which they deserve.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I do not want to cause any trouble, but could we have a statement next week on the Prime Minister's intentions in view of the new leadership bid which is being made by the President of the Board of Trade? The House will remember what happened in 1990. Should it not be kept informed of when the right hon. Gentleman intends to make that leadership bid?

Mr. Newton: With an eye on an interesting quote, may I just make sure that *Hansard* will record that the hon. Gentleman said "I don't want to cause any trouble"?

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 736?

[*That this House calls for a full investigation of environmental problems in the Staveley and surrounding areas in Derbyshire which would include within its remit close examination of asthma levels, eye defects in calves, river pollution, airborne emissions, recent experience of high dioxin levels, safety precautions and emergency plans, inadequate sewage disposal provisions and the further potential of pollution from schemes such as those from motorway road widening; and further calls for such on investigation to draw together expertise from the Health Service, the Pollution Inspectorate, the Department of Agriculture, the National Rivers Authority, the local authorities and a wide range of other relevant statuutory and voluntary agencies.*]

Can we have a debate upon this matter next week? It would be a fruitful debate, because it would lead to future discussions on environmental protection legislation, and the real problem which exists in that area.

Mr. Newton: I acknowledge the importance of any such problem, but I am advised that elevated dioxin levels found in the soil in the Staveley area have been investigated fully, and they do not give cause for concern on public health grounds.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): Will the Leader of the House ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to come to the House to make a statement on a report published last week by his office called "The Rising Tide"? The report concerns women in science, engineering and technology and has several excellent recommendations, including encouraging firms to have family-friendly policies, and also tax allowances for child care. I am sure that every hon. Member would be interested to know what the Government are going to do about it.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend clearly is in much demand, and he will be answering questions on Monday next. There is also an Opposition debate called "Strengthening the Sex Discrimination Act" on Thursday. Without seeing the Opposition's motion, it is difficult to know what ground can be covered, but it does not sound as if the debate will be a million miles from the sort of ground which the hon. Lady is seeking to touch on.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate at an early date to discuss the duplicity of the Allied Irish Bank, which has led to the closure of the Belmarda company in Oatlands in my constituency, with the loss this week of 240 jobs?

The bank originally told the company that it could extend its borrowing limit to £300,000, but restricted that to £150,000 without notice. The bank served notice on the company on Monday that it wanted to call in that debt, which led to the immediate liquidation of the company. It is a disgraceful state of affairs. The company has assets of some £10 million, and a £1 million order book. It is willing to continue trading, but is unable to do so. Will the Leader of the House take into account the fact that 240 jobs are at stake?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will understand that, without notice, it is simply not possible for me to comment on the case. I will certainly bring his concerns to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I first wish you a happy St Winwaloe's day? The matter that I wish to raise with you is connected with that subject, and with your ruling that starred questions get a greater priority now than they did in the past.

I had a question selected for answer next Monday, but it has been transferred—quite irrationally—to the Secretary of State for Wales. The question was addressed to the Secretary of State for National Heritage, and concerned Cornwall. The Government may be now saying that Cornwall is a part of Wales, and I can understand that decision.

I have had many conversations with the Department of National Heritage since then, and have pointed out that the matter concerns national heritage. The question related to the heritage and the language of Cornwall, which is the responsibility of that Department, and not the Welsh Office. I have had conversations with the Table Office as well, and there seems to be no way to re-star a question which has been removed, which is of great disadvantage to those hon. Members fortunate enough to have questions selected.

Madam Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has pursued or will pursue the matter with the relevant Minister. It is within the Minister's discretion to decide whether a question is within his responsibility. I have no authority to intervene in that. It is up to the Minister to determine whether the question relates to him or to some other Department.

Mr. Flynn: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I have raised the matter on a daily basis with the Department involved since Monday. The only conclusion is that the Government have decided that Cornwall is a part of Wales, which is a matter of some celebration on St. Winwaloe's day.

Madam Speaker: I quite understand that the hon. Gentleman was just seeking to make a point about extending the Principality.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance on what I hope is a genuine point of order—*[Interruption.]* The point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) was also a genuine point of order. Is it in order for demonstrations such as that which took place during Prime Minister's Question Time today to take place? I for one was shocked at the demonstration. If that sort of behaviour had taken place in the Strangers Gallery, it would have resulted in the removal of people from that Gallery.

Madam Speaker: In this place, we proceed by debate and argument and not by flag-waving. I prefer us to use the old-fashioned methods of debate and argument in the Chamber.

Mr. Hanson *rose—*

Madam Speaker: I will take no further point of order.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Often, when there are outrageous scenes on one side, it is difficult for you as Speaker always to intervene when there is a large number of hooligans on the Conservative Benches at once. I am sure you would agree that that is often corrected in the Chamber by people on this side taking retaliatory action. If that sort of action continues, we shall have no compunction about bringing in a large number of copies of the current issue of *Scallywag*.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that that is not at all necessary. I dealt with the matter today, and I do not wish to see any other form of demonstration from either side of the House. As I say, argument and debate are what we are about here.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance on the implementation of Standing Order No. 42, particularly as it relates to the disgraceful attack by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) during business questions.

Madam Speaker: Order. That matter has been dealt with. One of the things that we do here is deal with matters immediately. The matter is now over and done with.

Welsh Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

4.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): I should like to clarify for the House following those points of order that I have no territorial demand for Wales today, just a good story to tell about how well Wales is doing. I want a more prosperous Wales. In the past 15 years great strides have been taken. Incomes have risen. Many new jobs have been created. Whole new industries have been established. Wales has gained a worldwide reputation for good work, few strikes, success in manufacturing and skill at services.

Long-term unemployment in Wales has fallen by 40 per cent. since 1986. Unemployment has fallen by 6,500 since 1993. That is more than 500 additional jobs a month every month. Wages have been rising faster than the United Kingdom average since 1990 because productivity is good and rising. I hope that, during the debate, Opposition Members will make some reference to the good news as well as to the other things that they wish to fasten on in their speeches.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman has taken a close interest in a success story in my constituency—the factory making an executive jet. I invite him to visit that factory because I am seriously concerned about the long-term future of the production of the Raytheon-Hawker executive jet in my constituency. A constant threat that appears to hang over the work force is that production facilities may be withdrawn from my constituency and located in America. Will the Minister and his colleagues in the Government take a keen interest in the matter and do all that they can to keep production facilities in Broughton in my constituency?

Mr. Redwood: I willingly give that assurance, as my interests are the same as the hon. Gentleman's. As he knows, I have been in touch with the management and asked the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency to do everything in their power to assist the company, as I wish to see it continue to provide good jobs in his constituency.

None of us can rest content with one in 10 of the Welsh work force out of work and incomes still below the UK average, so the important task before us is to build on the enormous progress made in the past 15 years in attracting still more business and growing more enterprises at home.

My strategy rests on four firm foundations. The first is the strength that Wales draws from general United Kingdom economic policy. Low inflation, flexible labour markets, low interest rates, deregulation and low corporate taxes are all crucial to business success. The second is our policy of educating and training the work force of the future. Rising educational standards and more qualified people are helping recovery. As we debated last week in the Welsh Grand Committee, more must be, and will be, achieved.

The third foundation is ensuring a good supply of development land and facilities for industry and commerce. Our programme of land reclamation has cleared another 700 acres for use this year and much more is planned. The fourth is improving our access to markets through our transport and communications policies. Many companies are attracted by the excellence of Manchester airport, linked by the A55 and M56 to north Wales, and by Heathrow airport, linked by the M4 to south Wales. I also wish to see more progress with Cardiff airport and services there.

Companies are also impressed by the sophistication of our telecommunications and the convenience of the world's main business language. Five export missions in the past year have won jobs and contracts for Wales: three were led by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and two were led by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, all with great distinction. The business that they won is good business for Wales. I hope that Opposition Members will get behind business men who are trying to win business abroad and will not knock them and make their task more difficult.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): We certainly applaud any orders won overseas. On the example set by business men, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked the leaders of private industry, including those of the privatised monopolies, to moderate their emoluments, whereas the Prime Minister has said that it is nothing to do with him. On whose side is the Secretary of State?

Mr. Redwood: My two right hon. Friends do not disagree. It is for shareholders to decide, to discipline and to ensure that boards of directors do the right thing over pay. We all want people to be well paid and to earn it. Nobody minds good pay if it is performance linked, which is exactly what both my right hon. Friends have been saying in their own ways.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Can the Secretary of State cite a single example of a privatised utility where the discipline to which he referred has been exercised by the shareholders?

Mr. Redwood: Discipline is exercised on behalf of shareholders in all companies. They decide which directors to put on the boards and are responsible for ensuring that there are proper remuneration committees or other systems to control those matters. I believe in shareholder democracy. If the hon. and learned Gentleman does not like what is going on in some of those companies, he should become a shareholder and go to those meetings and make his point in the right democratic context.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): The Secretary of State mentioned remuneration committees for the privatised utilities. Does he know of any NHS trust in Wales that has a proper remuneration committee looking at the management and executive costs of its employees?

Mr. Redwood: I said, committee or other arrangement. I have asked them all to ensure that they have proper arrangements for guaranteeing value and supervising the contracts. I would be happy to take up any case if the hon. Gentleman thinks that any of them are falling down in that respect.

I hope that during the debate we shall learn something —anything—about Labour's policy for Wales. In the past year, we have had a Trappist silence from Opposition Members about what they would want to do. The Labour Front Bench has been an idea-free zone. Let us see, one more time, whether we can get some answers to the questions that we and the people of Wales have been asking about Labour's policy.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): One thing that Labour would do is offer part-time workers the same protection as full-time workers. Does the Secretary of State welcome the judgment in the House of Lords just two hours ago in the case between the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Department of Employment? The ruling was that the Department of Employment was acting illegally and that part-time workers must be given the same protection as full-time workers. I am glad that the Minister is now briefing the Secretary of State and I hope that the Secretary of State will welcome that important ruling this afternoon.

Mr. Redwood: Of course I needed briefing as I have not had a chance to study the judgment. However, my hon. Friend tells me that the practices referred to in the judgment were introduced by a Labour Administration, so perhaps the hon. Lady should get her facts straight before trying to make clever points in the Chamber.

Would Labour put any limit on the taxing powers of its proposed Welsh assembly? We do not know. Would Labour increase spending on education on training? We do not know. Would Labour increase spending on the disabled and care in the community above the large increases I have announced? We do not know.

Will Labour ever stand up and praise the many fine achievements of Welsh business men, sportsmen and salesmen? We do not know. Will Labour say sorry for undermining our businesses in places such as Malaysia when it should be supporting them? Again, we do not know. Would Labour rule out higher taxes? Of course it would not, because that is what it really believes in. We can and will have to work out for it what the Labour party stands for.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I shall be more than happy to address those questions at the next general election. Perhaps I can turn the Secretary of State's mind back to the last general election and refer specifically to a manifesto commitment that his predecessor gave. The Conservatives' Welsh election manifesto said that the Secretary of State would establish a Welsh economic council, which would

> "ensure . . . a more united effort on the part of the Principality's major employers' and employees organisations."

When does the Secretary of State intend to implement that manifesto commitment?

Mr. Redwood: I shall be implementing it shortly and I shall let the hon. Gentleman know when the arrangements are completed for the first meeting and the people invited to join it, as I wish to make progress in the way that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

The Labour party is out of touch; it is permanently out to lunch. Given the choice, it would spend more on extra layers of Government and bureaucracy, not less. Given the chance, it would tax more, not less. The Opposition are discredited by the few things that they say. At the time of the local government settlement, they told me that it meant a minimum of 15 per cent. council tax rises.

Mr. Donald Anderson *rose—*

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend) *rose—*

Mr. Redwood: I shall finish the point before I give way. Today we learn that the average so far is not 15 per cent., not 10 per cent. and not even 5 per cent. At the time of our last debate, they threatened that Labour local government would cut teachers, when my priority—as Labour's should be—is better education. Why do they not look at spending on public relations, corporate affairs and the army of advisers that they retain in county halls?

Mr. Anderson: Might not the Secretary of State reflect on one reason for caution in giving costed increases possibly three years from the next election? When my party gave an honest shadow Budget shortly before the last election, it was pilloried by the Conservative leading press. We may well have lost the election as a result of that shadow Budget, whereas the Conservatives, despite their election promises, have put up taxes substantially more than we suggested in our shadow Budget.

Mr. Redwood: I think that the hon. Gentleman is saying that the Labour party wishes to mislead the electorate, because it does not want to come clean about its plans. The truth is that the hon. Gentleman and the shadow Cabinet cannot get permission to announce the policies that he wants to announce. His hands are tied and he is gagged as well.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Has the Secretary of State calculated how much more in taxes Welsh people will pay in the coming two years? Will he tell us the amount of the publicity budget of the Welsh Office?

Mr. Redwood: There has been extensive discussion about the impact of tax changes in the previous Budget. That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I can tell Labour Members that, when they left power, income tax was 33p in the pound. Today it is 25p in the pound. I know what people in Wales would rather be paying.

It is no wonder, with them all out to lunch, that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) have decided to steal away for good. They sense another defeat and do not want to be around for the recriminations. It is no wonder that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), that great paragon of socialist virtues, that scourge of any Conservative who falls short of high standards, cannot face it today and has gone out to lunch—or has gone out to something in Belgravia. He can see that it is time to go upmarket if one is to get on in the modern Labour party. It is time for designer suits and public school accents. It is time to trade in the working class life for something more middle class. I am with my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) with his "back to Janice" campaign. For the avoidance of doubt, let me say that he goes back to Janice and I go back to my own home.

The Government attach great importance to improving public transport.

Mr. Ainger: Nobody is laughing.

Mr. Redwood: I know that Opposition Members are not laughing, because that is close to the bone. They do not like it, but it is true. They got caught, and they know it.

The railway network is an underused asset. There is a need to attract customers. Better marketing and better services, comfort, reliability and frequency are all necessary. I use the trains as often as possible. I hope that more will do so. Our competition policy for the railways is designed to put passengers first and to woo more people on to the trains. The tracks will remain in public hands, as now, and franchising offers opportunities, not threats.

Mrs. Clwyd: I hope that the Secretary of State will take the debate a little more seriously than he has so far. Will he give some assurances on the future of the valleys lines, particularly under the unitary authorities? For example, as he knows, were it not for the intervention of Mid Glamorgan county council, some of those lines would not exist.

Mr. Redwood: Of course I want them to have a good future, but I can tell the hon. Lady that the best way for them to have that is to woo enough people on to the trains to use those excellent services. The Government are fully behind those lines. I am trying to outline to the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends the policy that we are putting into effect, which I think will make a difference. It will make the trains more attractive and give us more passengers on them.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Perhaps my right hon. Friend will remind the hon. Lady that, since 1979, under the Conservative Government, more stations are open in the valleys.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his important point. Our franchising idea offers opportunities, not threats. It means that if a private company comes forward and can do a better job, it will be able to do so. If no one comes forward, BR will continue as now. The services will be better and customers should be attracted in greater numbers.

A better complete service could be provided. For example, safe, convenient and secure car parking could attract more customers to stations—most people travel to the station by car in the first instance. There is scope for other facilities at stations, such as car servicing and better retail facilities for customers to make it a more attractive proposition.

I intend today to announce my plans for strategic roads in Wales to show how they will link all the main parts of Wales to the markets of the future. As I have travelled the length and breadth of Wales over the past nine months, I have made a point of visiting the sites of many road schemes to see for myself. I have decided that Wales needs three strong strategic east-west links. These are, or will be, the M4 in the south, the A465 heads of the valleys road and the A55 in the north. They will be dual carriageway standard, designed to carry large volumes of traffic safely at a good speed.

Following representations, I am bringing forward work on the A465. I hope that Opposition Members who wanted that will welcome the proposal. The Glynneath-Aberdulais contract is now under way, and I have asked officials to accelerate the dualling of the 25 miles between Abergavenny and Hirwaun. I shall be consulting the public on route options this year. Progress now depends on the speed of design work, consultation and statutory procedures. I see the A465 bringing prosperity to the northern valleys as surely as the M4 is doing in the south and the A55 in north Wales. The A55 on the mainland will be completed this year, and I attach importance to extending it across Anglesey as quickly as possible.

There is a need to improve capacity on the M4 in south-east Wales. The second Severn crossing is to open in 1996. I have added a scheme to the programme to increase capacity by widening the section between Magor and Newport at about the same time. Congestion at Newport will be alleviated when the Brynglas tunnels/Malpas relief road opens next winter. In the longer term, additional capacity will be needed between the second Severn crossing and the west of Cardiff. I am considering responses to the consultation on the route options for the M4 relief motorway, and a planned widening of the M4 to three lanes around Cardiff is already in my programme.

I expect those roads to cater for the foreseeable growth in heavy lorry traffic and long-distance east-west car traffic for at least the next decade. There is no general need for increases in capacity on other routes. The A40 in mid-Wales and the A5 on the mainland of north Wales traverse beautiful scenery and go through pretty towns and villages. I do not see those roads as the primary routes for heavy long-distance traffic.

I have been persuaded by the environmental arguments in several cases. For that reason, I am deleting the A40 Crickhowell bypass and the A5 Bonwm bends schemes. I am deferring the Corwen and Bethesda bypasses and the A40 Pontargothi diversion. I shall be considering the Abergavenny western bypass in the light of the inspector's report and my policy on strategic routes.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Talking of the A40, will the Secretary of State bear in mind the importance of relieving congestion in the Fishguard area, to provide better access to the port, the route 6 bypass and the southern bypass?

Mr. Redwood: I shall deal with the A40 links to the M4 from the extreme west a little later. I think that that is a different issue from the route of the A40 across mid-Wales. I wish to send a clear signal that the mainland A5 and the mid-Wales A40 are not destined to become major highways and that improvements to them will be made only where the safety case is compelling or there are special local needs.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I thank my right hon. Friend for his announcement about the Crickhowell bypass. I am sure that it reflects the substantial representations that he received from those in the locality and, more widely, from people in Wales who know and value the area well.

My right hon. Friend will know, however, that there are still considerable traffic problems in many of the towns and villages of mid-Wales. Will he give more impetus to some of the traffic-calming measures that I know that his Department has been considering to deal with many of the problems that arise in some of our more beautiful villages?

Mr. Redwood: Of course I shall consider that point. I shall also consider individual needs for bypasses, road improvements or alignment improvements when they are required for local traffic reasons. The signal that I wish to send at this stage, however, is that those are not the key strategic routes and they will not be taking the main heavy traffic flows across Wales.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): The Carmarthen eastern bypass has been on the programme for the past 10, 15 or even 20 years. Will the Secretary of State assure me that it will be completed and that the starting date will be April 1996?

I note from the map that the right hon. Gentleman kindly sent us today that there is a large void north of

[Mr. Alan W. Williams]

Cardiff, in the area of the routes to the Teifi valley and Ceredigion. This is not considered a strategic route. The Carmarthen eastern bypass, however, is seen locally as the first stage of improvement to links to the north.

Mr. Redwood: I shall come to that point, as there are important road schemes in the area. I shall be making a change of alignment in the Camarthen eastern bypass to avoid building a route through a sensitive environmental area, but I intend to continue with the scheme.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State has given us all copies of a letter and a map, but has not included an explanation. I understand that the press and the rest of the media received such an explanation. I accept that the right hon. Gentleman is much better at colouring books than I am, but I cannot quite understand the map. Could he possibly provide us with an explanatory leaflet like that given to the media?

Mr. Redwood: I thought that it would be for the convenience of hon. Members if they saw what I was publishing today, which is the map—the broad strategic outlines. I am now trying to give a few more details to show where my thinking has reached. The remaining details of all the different parts of the programme will be published in a month or two's time when they are all completed. However, I wanted the House to have an early opportunity to debate the matter. I gave Opposition Members an early opportunity by sending the map in advance so that they would know that I was going to do so.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is purely a matter of information. I wonder, through you, whether the courtesy could be extended to us that was extended to the media. The media received an explanatory form with the map, giving details of what was taking place. There are simply coloured lines on our map.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): That is not a point of order for the Chair, but no doubt the point has been taken by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Redwood: I do not think that I have done anything wrong, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have given Opposition Members the map. I am now trying to tell them what the map means, in the proper place and at the proper time. After that I shall go out and brief the press, and that, I think, Opposition Members would also expect me to do. I am sure, however, that the press will be listening carefully to the statement that I am making, because that is the way in which they will learn, as will Opposition Members if they are interested in roads affecting their constituencies. If they listen carefully, they will realise that I have taken on board many of the representations from Opposition Members as well as from Conservative Members.

I am also deferring the A494 Llanbedr bypass. I am not convinced of the present need for a new road through that area of outstanding natural beauty and I wish every effort to be made to improve safety without constructing that full bypass. I have already deleted the Hardwick Hill, Chepstow and Lower Town, Fishguard schemes, which aroused considerable local opposition and are not needed as major strategic routes.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I think that the right hon. Gentleman may have listened to the wrong people with regard to the objections to the A494. The people who are most concerned are those who live in Llanbedr village, who, I know, desperately need that route. Traffic-calming measures have been tried, to no avail. Everything has been tried at that point. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to reconsider that.

As to the A55, which is now a strategic route, there is a great danger of all the development occurring along the strip of the A55, avoiding areas such as Denbigh and Ruthin in the vale of Clwyd in the north of my constituency. Is it possible for us to have a strategic route off the A55 into that area?

Mr. Redwood: Of course I want roads to link other areas to the main strategic highways and later I shall mention the ones that are in the trunk roads programme. Others are in the local authority road programme. I hope that we reach an agreement with the local authority about which roads are needed—those that do least environmental damage for most economic benefit, because that is the balance that we have to strike.

Mr. Barry Jones: Was the right hon. Gentleman going to refer to the £25 million scheme, the Aston hill road-widening development, about which I know that he has had recent representations? Does he propose to delay it or drop it?

Mr. Redwood: I have not reached a conclusion about that and I am open to more representations.

Work will continue on projects offering improved road safety or relief of towns and villages, where that can be done without severe environmental damage. I want improvements on roads in those areas and I am seeking more jobs and investment through better access to the major strategic highways. In south Wales, the A470 from Merthyr to the M4, the A4042 from Cwmbran to the M4 and the A449/A40, linking the M4 to the M50, are crucial. Thus, work is soon to start on the A470 improvement west of Merthyr, between Pentrebach and Cefn Coed. Construction has just started on the A4042 Llantarnam bypass, which will complete a fast dual carriageway link to the M4. I want good access to valleys communities from the A465 in the north and the M4 in the south—essential for new jobs.

In west Wales, my requirements are the A477 Pembroke dock to St. Clears and the A40 Fishguard to St. Clears to link Pembrokeshire to the M4. I attach importance to the A477 Sageston and Redberth bypass and I expect to publish a preferred route shortly. The A40 Whitland bypass is planned to start in 1994-95. South Gwynedd has also asked for better links to the A55. I intend to bring forward schemes on the A470, beginning with the route between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Betws-y-Coed, and the Llanrwst bypass, with further improvements to the A487 from Porthmadog to Caernarfon.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Although I am very grateful that the A470 is to be dealt with at last, I wish to highlight an issue of which the Secretary of State may already be aware. The very fact that the A55 is being extended to provide such a good road network means that it is vital that work on the A470 is undertaken. When is it likely that that work will be put in hand?

Mr. Redwood: I shall publish that detail in the full document but I have today given a statement of intent that the link from south Gwynedd is important. We now have to programme all those matters finally to ensure that they fit in with the people, the public inquiry and the money available.

Mr. Ainger: Will the Secretary of State please enlighten me? From reading the 1993 "Roads in Wales" supplement, I understood that the Sageston-Redberth bypass was due to start as the line had been agreed. The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the area between west Wales and St.Clears but announced nothing new; he merely restated what was already in the 1993 supplement. Am I correct in that assumption?

Mr. Redwood: I was trying to set out my priorities and my strategy. I said that the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred were an important part of that strategy and I hope that, where they are important, we can proceed where it is technically feasible. I have been just as clear about the roads that will be slipping or are being cancelled where there is too much opposition to them, where the economic benefits do not fully justify the environmental damage that they could cause. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) wish to intervene?

Mr. Alex Carlile: Not yet.

Mr. Donald Anderson: The Secretary of State has lost his place.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to think that I have lost my place. I was merely being characteristically generous in giving way.

In north-east Wales, my priorities are to ensure enough road capacity to maintain the high quality link to the motorway network. Improvements will be made to the A550 and A494 and I shall take into account representations. In mid-Wales, I shall be examining a revised A470 Builth Wells bypass and I shall maintain the A458 scheme from Welshpool which will improve access to the M54. I shall be setting out the full details of my forward programme, with the dates, when a revised version of "Roads in Wales" is published in the spring.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for offering to give way earlier; I wanted to hear what he was going to say about mid-Wales. He said nothing about Newtown. The Welshpool bypass and the Llanidloes bypass have been beneficial, despite some road safety concerns. It would be logical to have a bypass to relieve heavy traffic through Newtown. Has the right hon. Gentleman any announcement to make?

Mr. Redwood: I shall consider that point; I have no announcement to make about it today.

I shall be publishing the new version of "Roads in Wales" in the spring. The result of the changes that I am making is a programme much more sharply focused on economic needs and much less focused on developments in beautiful areas where the environmental damage could be bad.

My plans presume a continuing strong commitment to the trunk road programme. The plans can be paid for from the money available and, of course, each year I shall keep expenditure needs for the roads programme under review, ensuring that the money is available to carry out the priorities in the strategic network. The decisions will, of course, be announced at the time of the annual public expenditure survey.

There are important links that are not trunk roads. I expect to continue to offer transport grant support for major local authority improvements, such as the third Dee crossing, which bypasses local communities and improves access to the Deeside industrial park. I attach special importance to the development of Cardiff-Wales airport and look forward to receiving suitable proposals for improving road links to it.

My roads programme will also benefit tourism, which is one of Wales's major industries. Projections show that there will be a significant increase in the number of domestic and overseas visitors to Wales in the years ahead. The majority of them use road transport, whether public or private.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State has mentioned local authority roads. Is he going to mention the Porth bypass or the lower Rhondda trunk bypass? When will they go in the programme? I accept that the bypasses in some of the areas are needed, but in those major areas of population the whole development of the valleys has been strangled because of lack of investment in roads.

Mr. Redwood: I have made clear my intentions for trunk roads directly under my control. I look forward to seeing the plans from local authorities at the correct time to see whether I can assist with the spending permissions and the money that they need to get on with the job.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State referred to tourism. Incidentally, I welcome his announcement about the A487 which is very important to Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. He will be aware of the importance of section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 and the grants that are available under it. Can he give me an assurance that section 4 grants will remain available in Wales, in view of what has happened already in England and the changes that are taking place in Scotland?

Mr. Redwood: We have no plans to change policy in that respect.

My aim for 1994-95 is to provide better quality public services in Wales, building on the big advances made in recent years. In health, I intend to spend more on patients, doctors and nurses and less on administration. I have made it the overriding priority to hit the patients charter targets. No one should wait longer than one month for urgent treatment. No one should wait more than two years for non-urgent treatment. No one should have to wait more than 18 months if they need a new hip or knee or a cataract removed. We are close to hitting those targets for the first time and I gave another £1 million to get the lists down last week. Every patient should be given a unique appointment time that means something. I look forward to announcing to the House as soon as possible that we have met all those targets and can go on from there.

I have placed controls on all additional recruitment of administrative and managerial staff, as I want more of the extra money that I am making available to go to medical teams. I have amalgamated the posts of head of the health policy unit and director of the NHS by appointing an experienced official from within to a single post. That will unite health policy and management responsibilities and

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avoid the cost of bringing in someone new from outside. I have asked each health authority to reduce its staff to reflect the change in duties with the coming of trusts, where more of the management will reside at the hospital and less, therefore, should reside in the centre.

I shall be issuing a consultation document on ways to reduce the number of health authorities from 17 to between three and eight. It should be relatively easy to merge each family health services authority and district health authority, and to amalgamate some geographically. If we press ahead I want genuine mergers—where staff from both will be treated equally—and not take-overs.

I have asked the health care professions to lay emphasis on clinical effectiveness, and to review procedures to ensure that they are working well. I am examining the Welsh Health Common Services Authority to find savings there and to adjust its role to the new world of trusts.

As more people and money are freed for medical care, so I expect to raise standards further. We should ask why patients in hospital are woken very early in the morning when more sleep might help them and why they have to wait so long for breakfast once woken up. We should ask whether the treatment could suit the patient rather more, because getting better depends on feeling well looked after. I want the system to be patient-driven and so, I am sure, do the patients. I want the highest possible standards of medical care, which we get in most of our hospitals, and I wish the medical profession every success in pioneering and developing new and better treatments and maintaining the very high standards that it achieves.

I have asked that all the empty houses owned by NHS Wales should be sold. That will raise over £2 million by 1 April this year for health care in Wales and more subsequently.

Welsh agriculture is flourishing. Total grants and subsidies in the next financial year will increase by 8.3 per cent. over this financial year, well ahead of inflation although not a figure that Opposition Members have ever given any credence to, with their complaints about individual parts of the package. Aggregate farming income, that is net income excluding labour costs and taking into account interest payments, is forecast to have risen by 80 per cent. in 1993 compared with 1992. I know that the base was low, but the increase is most impressive and welcome.

Low interest rates, higher subsidies and better livestock prices are all helping. Quality products at competitive prices will find market outlets, and I am pleased to announce that exports of Welsh lamb now represent over 50 per cent. of production. Farming is important to the rural fabric of Wales. The Government have recognised that through the common policies that we are pursuing in Europe and at home.

To protect more of the beauty of the Welsh hillsides and valleys, I intend to place more and more emphasis on urban and valleys renewal, tempting the bulk, or much, of our new housing, commerce and industry on to reclaimed land. I am keen on urban villages and have given the go-ahead for one at Cardiff bay to join the one in Ebbw Vale. Every house built on a plot of reclaimed land is one fewer planning application in an area of high landscape value.

I want those villages to be more than just mere housing estates. They can provide housing with a heart, villages with centres that create communities. The strategic development scheme offers councils and communities the chance to do something bigger, with more vision, than the old urban programme and special projects schemes allowed.

Mr. Donald Anderson: There will be a general welcome for what the Secretary of State said about making building on reclaimed land a priority. What encouragement, by way of fiscal incentive or otherwise, is he considering to ensure that that is done, apart from the planning mechanisms?

Mr. Redwood: There will be considerable encouragement through the large land reclamation programmes and I hope to agree stretching and ambitious targets with the Welsh Development Agency in the light of the substantial increase in grant and the receipts that it will be enjoying next year, because I want a big programme that clears more land and makes those sites available.

Next year I shall be looking, under the strategic development scheme, for one or two showcase schemes of several combined projects that will make a real impact on a whole area. The West Wales task force area and Deeside industrial development area are two of the larger beneficiaries this year. Valleys development also remains high on my list of priorities, and also development in south Gwynedd in the wake of the power station announcement.

The programme for the valleys is an exciting one. This year it will benefit from the re-signalling of the valley lines, new sports and leisure facilities for Rhondda and six major local strategies bringing jobs and a better environment to Amman and Gwendraeth, the upper Llynfi valley, Mid Rhondda, Merthyr, Tredegar and Cynon valley.

Wales will succeed in the next century only if our children do well at school in this. I am pleased to report to the House a sharp improvement in exam results over the past year, and I pay tribute again to the many teachers and students who have worked hard to achieve this.

As I reported to the Welsh Grand Committee last week, standards need to be raised much higher overall, especially in some schools where the results are well below what is required. I am expecting governors and head teachers in those schools to take action now. I do not want to have to use my powers under the Education Act 1993—I would far rather schools put their own house in order—but I shall use them if there is no action. The inspectors have made clear what needs to be done. *[Interruption.]* Instead of making silly comments from a sedentary position, Opposition Members should be behind me in that because they should want those children to do well and they should want those governors to take action before I have to move in. The inspectors have said what needs to be done. There is no time like the present to take action. Surely we do not want another year of poor performance from those schools.

The Government will provide the training places and college places needed to meet our ambitious targets.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the right hon. Gentleman's hopes for development and improvement in Welsh schooling, which we all share, be helped or hindered by the fact that Gwent county council has been forced this year, because of his spending limits, to cut expenditure on education by £2.6 million, including reductions in additional pupil spending? When we already have 32 pupils per class, on average, in our primary schools, does he think that the education of those young children will be assisted or retarded by the failure to invest properly in education?

Mr. Redwood: I want to see proper investment in their education. That is why I increased the grant to county councils—I did not cut it—and gave them the opportunity to increase it. They then told me that they would have to put their council taxes up by 15 per cent., but they are not coming out at anything like that. They are now, through the right hon. Gentleman, saying that they are making reductions, where they have extra money and extra permission which they should be using for that priority sector. There is nothing more important than dealing with the needs of our schoolchildren.

We have ambitious targets for our training places and our college places. In 1979, one in eight went to university. Three in 10 now do so. One in three is our aim by the end of the century. By 2000, we want one out of two to obtain two A-levels or the equivalent, where three out of 10 do so at the moment. Training and enterprise councils have been asked to meet the demand for all 16 and 17-year-olds to have a guaranteed place on the youth training programme if they need it. Later this year I shall be introducing an engineering apprenticeship scheme.

Investors and employers tell me that a well-trained work force is one of the most crucial factors that they look for when considering where to base their business. Wales is already well known worldwide for its skilled and flexible work force. We need to train more of our young people to high international standards to accommodate the growing army of businesses expanding and setting up here.

Mr. Kinnock: On the subject of high international standards of qualification—to which we would all aspire for the young people whom we represent—is the right hon. Gentleman aware that support for postgraduate education in Wales has been radically reduced over recent years, during which time the Conservative Government have been in power? There is now effectively little or no support available at the discretion of county councils for young people who seek supplementary qualifications after graduating. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that powers and finance should be restored to county councils so that young people with first degrees can get Master of Business Administration degrees or other secondary qualifications, to enhance their chances of gainful employment and their ability to compete with others in the world? They are now being severely disadvantaged despite their talents.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities have considerable discretion in how they choose to spend their money, and the money increases year by year. It is interesting to note that when elections are due, councils can find more money to keep taxes down or to back special projects.

Quangos have been much in the news. The Labour party has been active in slating bodies that it set up and has been short-sighted in overlooking the good work that they do and the wide range of people—of all political persuasions and of none—who help them do it. Labour lives in a dream world, believing that we appoint people because they are Conservatives rather than for their talent. It chooses to overlook the fact that we appoint many who are not Conservatives: four Labour councillors on the Cardiff Bay body, a leading trade unionist on the Welsh Development Agency and a senior Plaid Cymru figure chairing the Welsh Language Board, to say nothing of the political researcher to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who is on the Welsh Arts Council.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): That point has now been made three times in the past few days from the Government Front and Back Benches, so will the Secretary of State accept it from me that my researcher, Councillor Jane Davidson, was in the first place elected to Cardiff city council and then nominated from the council to be a member of the Welsh Arts Council? Her appointment was initially vetoed by a Welsh Office Minister, in spite of the nomination by the Welsh Arts Council. Only when she was nominated a second time by that body was the political veto finally lifted.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman seems to be confirming the fact that his political researcher is on the Welsh Arts Council, which was the point that I was trying to make. I can assure the House that I shall continue to appoint on the basis of suitability for the job. That is the correct criterion and I propose to stick to it.

I can also assure hon. Members that I, like the House, expect high standards of our public bodies and councils. Each body operates under a framework of law and rules. I shall set targets each year for what we expect, and debate progress when required in the House. Each body has a chief executive and an accounting officer responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules. The Public Accounts Committee is there to check up on his success.

I intend to control the number of such bodies and the numbers of people involved in them—I do not normally favour large boards. I shall, as I have already announced, seek reductions in the number of health authorities following the establishment of several new health trusts.

Last week in the Welsh Grand Committee we were treated to the third 15 from the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) embarrassed even the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) by slamming the Labour Government of the 1970s. How right he was. Last weekend, the hon. Member for Caerphilly showed that he had learnt from the new boy. He made news. He hit the headlines with a speech, which is pretty unusual. Even more remarkably, I found myself in agreement with what he was reported to have said. He slammed Labour for its "cult of arrogance" in Welsh local government. So now we have it from the highest Labour source in Wales that Labour local councillors do not always know best, that Labour is weak when it comes to internal party democracy, and it does not listen to the people.

Having made a speech in praise of harmony and sweetness, the hon. Member for Caerphilly tried to stop the hon. Members for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) attending the Parliament for Wales conference in Llandrindod this weekend, but I hear that they will disobey him.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Redwood: Certainly.

Mr. Hanson: As a member of the third 15, as the Secretary of State so kindly puts it, I thank him for giving way. Will he accept it from me that, whatever the situation of the Labour Government of the 1970s, there was more opportunity to go to university in those days, and more

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opportunity for council housing and for employment, and that everything that he does reduces those opportunities? People like me would not be where we are today without the opportunities provided by the Labour Government.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman doth protest too much, and wriggle too much, because he knows that my charge has gone home. Moreover, he has not been listening, because I have just told the House how many people are now going to university compared with the numbers in the 1970s when Labour was in charge and, on the hon. Gentleman's own admission, doing so badly.

So, we hear that Labour Members are not allowed to do what they wish with their weekends, but that the eloquence of the hon. Member for Caerphilly, aided by the wandering minstrel for Cardiff, West, has proved to be not up to the job. Handing the Welsh economy to those gentlemen would be like handing the car keys and a bottle of Welsh whisky to a teenage boy.

Well may the hon. Member for Caerphilly warn his troops, for he hears and sees the march of changing attitudes and changing votes in many parts of Wales where Labour used to hold unchallenged sway. Indeed, he himself should listen to the people of Wales. The majority do not want 16 as the age of consent or an assembly that would mean more taxes and more laws for Wales, and the majority do not take kindly to his stubborn refusal to come forward with an alternative budget for Wales to show what he could, or would like to, do. He is out of touch as well as out of power—and now he is out of sorts with his own party.

The Wales that we want is a successful outward-looking country, sure of its own history, language and culture and of the importance of the Union. It is a Wales that is world class in business, first class at rugby and top of the class in education. Wales is showing the way with jobs, better health care and higher educational standards. Doing it the Conservative way, we will win.

4.56 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): First, I register my strong disappointment that the Secretary of State was not prepared to insist in Cabinet that our traditional Welsh day debate be held on 1 March. As we now have a Secretary of State who does not want Welsh to be an official language in Wales, and does not believe the red dragon to be a clear enough symbol for Wales in Europe, I suppose that I should not be surprised to find that we are having our St. David's day debate on 3 March.

The Secretary of State is clearly not a happy man, and his speech showed just how out of touch he is. He showed a distinct and uncharacteristic lack of courtesy when he made a cheap personal attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Perhaps you will confirm, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is a matter of common courtesy in the House that if an hon. Member intends to make a preconceived personal attack on another Member, notice should be given. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he told my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that he had designed in advance a personal attack on him?

Mr. Redwood: I did not. I thought that the hon. Gentleman would be here himself. Besides, he never extends that courtesy to my hon. Friends.

Hon. Members: The answer is no, Ron.

Mr. Davies: That is clear. It is unacceptable for the Secretary of State to conduct himself in that way. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover does not need me to defend him, but it has to be said that while he has been a Member of the House he has never launched into an offensive or unjustified attack on the private life of any other hon. Member. My hon. Friend has never moralised about the private lives of other Members and it ill becomes a member of a Cabinet and a Government both now enmeshed in personal scandal and political corruption at the highest level to indulge in name calling of that nature.

For the first half hour of his speech, the Secretary of State talked about his roads programme. He then said that he would announce that roads programme later in the spring. It is a comment on his lack of command of his brief that he is unable to make a speech without packing it with information which he knows will be the subject of a statement in a month's time when, hopefully, we can debate it at length. I welcome his announcement of improvements, in particular, to the A465, the A470 and the A55, but will he confirm that his announcement disguises a cut of £10 million in other elements of the road programme? He shakes his head, but that was the basis of the briefings that he was giving the press all day.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the observation of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) commands the support of the Opposition? That road should form the major link between the industrial heartlands of south-east Wales and north-west Wales. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the announced cut in the roads programme will mean that roads in many of our towns and villages in Wales will be less safe, bypasses will not be built, roads and junctions will be in a worse condition and many unsafe bridges in the valleys communities will be deprived of much-needed investment?

Mr. Redwood: I have not announced a cut in the roads programme. As I said, I have not changed the figures announced in the Budget for Wales. Next year, I shall review the money available to ensure that it is up to the task of meeting all the priorities that I have set out. I have announced proposals on some big and expensive roads —and am bringing them forward. I also reject the hon. Gentleman's slurs about my lack of respect for the Welsh language and the red dragon. Of course I am proud of the dragon of Wales, and I use it on the promotional literature with which I am involved.

Mr. Davies: The Secretary of State's record on that matter speaks for itself. Expenditure on the roads programme will be substantially less than it was last year. I do not know how the Secretary of State can present that as anything other than a cut.

Nine months ago, the Secretary of State's first parliamentary duty was to remove from Welsh Members the right to help frame Welsh legislation. We could be generous and assume that he was merely doing the bidding of the Government's business managers. Subsequently, however, we have had ample evidence that the right hon. Gentleman is less sympathetic to Wales, less inclined to recognise our distinctive culture and values, and less willing to work with the grain of Welsh public opinion than any other holder of his office. Any one of his predecessors would regard that as a criticism.

I have no doubt that the present Secretary of State views the concerns of those of us who represent Welsh constituencies, not with understanding, nor even with hostility, but with indifference. After all, his political agenda is not focused on Wales, its people, its institutions or the prospects and aspirations of its people. His ambition is not for Wales; it is for the ideological leadership of the Tory party. The Secretary of State does not represent Wales in the Cabinet. He merely uses the place that Wales has given him in the Cabinet as a platform for the promotion of his right-wing views.

The Secretary of State's office brings together the major Departments of State—education with training and employment, environment with agriculture, and health with local government. It has enormous potential to harness political influence to achieve major political, economic, environmental and social gains. Given the challenges that we face in Wales in the last decade of this century, a Secretary of State who puts Wales first would seek economic advance for our country alongside the motor regions of Europe. He would ensure the development of a coherent policy for the sustainable use of our environment and natural resources. He would seek to develop social policy to reflect our co-operative and community values. Above all, he would seek to recast our political structures to allow the fuller expression of our national identity. He would seek to sweep away the quango system, with its attendant sleaze and corruption, to exert democratic control and scrutiny over the Welsh Office and to give those of us in Wales a greater opportunity to shape our destiny in the developing Europe of the regions.

Instead of grasping any of those opportunities, the present Secretary of State has been hesitant and accident prone, with the tedium of his time-worn politics relieved only by a series of spectacular political own goals. We know that he is not happy with the advice that he receives from his civil servants. He has been only too ready to pin the blame on them for some of his obvious failings. There must be a dream factory in the Welsh Office. There is a view that the Secretary of State's "initiatives" and his use of extravagant forms of self praise can somehow provide a substitute for policy.

Who advised the Secretary of State to take his single parents initiative? I am not suggesting for a moment that the Secretary of State is responsible for any of the single parents in Wales. It is a sad fact, however, that the only impact and lasting contribution to British political debate of the present incumbent has been to put into the public mind his obsession with the prospect of teenage mums obtaining council houses. It is now clear that his St. Mellons speech was the opening shot of the Conservative party's "back to basics" campaign. However, we should not intrude too far into private grief: that initiative did not endear him to the Prime Minister.

The Secretary of State then announced his health initiative. Presumably, he abrogates all responsibility for the past 14 years of Conservative health policy. That was certainly his message when he roundly condemned the bureaucracy and inefficiency created by the Government's health reforms. He was not flavour of the month with the Secretary of State for Health—the lady was definitely not amused.

The Secretary of State tried a quango initiative. He made some cheap comments about the research assistant of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Three weeks ago, I asked the Secretary of State why he does not make information available on the political affiliation of every person he appoints to a quango in Wales. Such information is collected on those appointed as magistrates. If that policy is suitable for them, why should not information be collected and published on those people who exercise trust and spend billions of pounds of public money? Instead of using selective and pejorative examples, why will the Secretary of State not provide all the facts so that we can make an appropriate judgment?

When the Secretary of State tried his quango initiative, he called the chaps together and told them that they must do better. Apparently, he still does not understand that democratic scrutiny is far more effective than private exhortation. In any event, that initiative collapsed with the fiasco of his appointment of a top Tory living as a tax exile in Monaco to head the Welsh Development Agency. If the Secretary of State is to be believed, he did not know that he was appointing a top Tory. He pleaded incompetence to defend himself against the charge of nepotism.

The Secretary of State's latest initiative has been on education standards. He and his policy were humiliated by my hon. Friends the Members for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) in the Welsh Grand Committee last week. It is small wonder that the Secretary of State is now shunned by his Cabinet colleagues for the embarrassment that he has caused them. There is a whispering campaign against him in the Tory party. There is an open campaign against him in the media, with *The Times* newspaper calling for his dismissal.

According to an opinion poll out tonight, under his stewardship the Tory party in Wales has collapsed to its lowest ever rating of 11 per cent. He is so reviled by the Prime Minister that he is semi-publicly traduced in the foulest language—"bastard" being one of the more printable epithets used to describe him. That sort of record takes some beating, even by the standards of the present Government.

My heart went out to the Secretary of State when I read in the *Western Mail* on 11 February that the Conservative party was to cancel its annual conference in Wales. The paper reported:

> "The Tories are set to cancel this year's Welsh party conference to concentrate on minimising their losses in the Euro-elections. Embarrassed Tory party managers have admitted difficulties in trying to arrange this summer's Welsh party conference"—

presumably the difficulty was that nobody wanted to go.

> "The Conservatives expect bad news from the first and fear a thrashing in the second as voters take revenge for VAT on domestic fuel and higher income tax bills."

How much would the Secretary of State miss the renewed opportunity for a further lusty rendering of "Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau?" The Welsh Labour group Christmas party would never be the same again. With that uncanny grasp of Welsh politics and the instinct that told him that Rhondda Conservative association was the proper platform for a major speech on education, he announced that, after all, there would be a Conservative conference in Wales in the current year. The next day the *Western Mail* duly reported:

> "Redwood Wants To Rescue Conference.

[Mr. Davies]

> Welsh Secretary John Redwood has stepped in to save this year's Welsh Conservative conference which has been threatened with cancellation because of a clash with the Euro-elections in June."

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West) *rose—*

Mr. Davies: In a moment. The newspaper continued:

> "He wants a one-day rally after a one-day conference, possibly late in May, to form part of the election campaign for seats in the European Parliament on June 9th."

He is obviously so isolated that neither his press department in the Welsh Office, nor Conservative party central office, nor what remains of the Conservative party in Wales had informed him of what was in the *Western Mail* two weeks earlier on 26 January, when it reported:

> "Party In Election Write Off.
>
> The Tory party have written off Wales in this summer's local and European elections. Cash draft high command and Central Office have decided to limit support to the party in the Principality to a minimum because they have no hope of taking over any of the handful of towns where a third of the seats are up for election on May 5th and there is little chance of taking any of the five Euro seats in the principality from Labour on June 9th. No doubt the few Tories remaining in Wales will have a few words to say to him as they witness the terminal decline of their party, their failure to win a single European seat, their virtual disappearance from Welsh local Government and, on the basis of the present polls, the loss of every single parliamentary constituency at the next general election."

Mr. Richards: If the hon. Gentleman must insist on flaunting the smattering of Welsh that he has picked up, he should try to get it right. It is not "Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nadau": it mutates to "Nhadau"—there is an "h" in it. The hon. Gentleman should learn that before he flaunts it on the Floor of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind Members that the normal language in the House is English.

Mr. Donald Anderson *rose—*

Mr. Davies: I shall give way after I have dealt with the point that the hon. Gentleman raises. Of course I understand that the Welsh for "fathers" mutates after the personal pronoun, but the mutation in south Wales pronunciation is not pronounced as it is in north Wales, where the "h" is sounded.

Mr. Anderson: Following that mass meeting which the Secretary of State addressed in a public telephone box in the Rhondda, if the Conservative party is so strapped for cash—poor dabs—could it not have a whip round among the quangos?

Mr. Davies: I am sure that my hon. Friend does not mean that joke to be in poor taste.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Of course he did.

Mr. Davies: I hesitate to engage in that debate about the personal predilections of Conservative Members of Parliament.

I return to the opinion poll to be broadcast on BBC Wales tonight. More than 1,500 people in Wales were asked their view of the present Secretary of State and whether he was doing a good job or a very good job. The massed ranks of Conservative party supporters in Wales could not even muster a figure of 1 per cent. of that poll who believed that the Secretary of State was doing an excellent job. He had an excellency rating of zero. However, for every one person who felt that the Secretary of State was doing a good job or a very good job, there were three who thought that he was doing a bad or a very bad job. Most striking of all, 70 per cent. of people polled believed that elected councillors and not Government-appointed officials should be in charge of public affairs. Given Wales's special record of sterling service provided in local government, I am not surprised that 70 per cent. of the people think that—

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish my sentence, I will certainly give way. Of course, the hon. Gentleman has a great deal of experience of Welsh local government and I would be delighted to listen to him in a moment.

Mr. Kinnock: More mutations.

Mr. Davies: My right hon. Friend tempts me to comment on the extent to which the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) has mutated. However, it is a point that I would not wish to explore.

Seventy per cent. of people polled believed that elected councillors and not Government-appointed officials should be in charge of public affairs. That reflects the extent to which the Tory party in Wales is exclusively identified in the public mind with the quango system, which means corruption, fraud, nepotism and incompetence. That is the system that Tory greed has produced in Wales.

Mr. Sweeney: Is it symptomatic of the so-called excellence of the Labour councillors in Wales that the South Wales police force has been deprived of £5 million of its much-needed budget? Is that a reflection of the thinking that the hon. Gentleman supports?

Mr. Morgan: Read *Hansard* for 27 January.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West suggests that I refer the hon. Gentleman to *Hansard* of 27 January, when the Secretary of State directly contradicted his statement. A fortnight or so ago, with nine other hon. Friends representing constituencies in the South Wales police area, I led a deputation to the Home Office Minister responsible to press the case for additional funding. Due to the way in which the Home Office and the Welsh Office cannot get their acts together, about £2.5 million of funds are being withheld by the Home Office. The police authority is underfunded because of the 1.75 per cent. cut imposed on the county authorities and as a result the South Wales police authority faces the prospect of closing about 60 police stations in the area. That means, for example, that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West, who has Ely in his constituency—I trust that the hon. Gentleman knows the difficulties of that area—will be one of the few Members of Parliament in the whole country without one police station in his constituency. In the heart of Cardiff, that trouble-torn area is to be deprived of a police station as a result of Government policy. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the level of policing, I wonder why he does not make representations to the Home Office as we have.

Mr. Kinnock: In order further to assist my hon. Friend —not that he needs any assistance in rebutting the challenge made by the hon. Member for Vale of

Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney)—I draw to his attention the fact that the Gwent police force, despite one of the best records of crime detection and prevention, is significantly under strength. On the testimony of the police themselves, that is not a consequence of the inadequacies of the local authority, but the result of the limitations imposed on police numbers by the Tory Home Secretary.

Mr. Davies: My right hon. Friend is correct. It is a further reflection on the present-day Conservative party that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan, who demanded the courtesy of being allowed to intervene in my speech, does not have the courtesy to remain in his seat to listen to the continuation of the debate.

I was dealing with quangos. With that uncanny sixth sense and prescience that has come to characterise the Secretary of State, his response was not to clean up the quango system but to attack the democratic sector—local government. It is now clear how tenuous is his attachment to democracy. This year a Bill that will reorganise Welsh local government was presented to the House of Lords first and not to the Commons—another defeat in the Cabinet for the Welsh Secretary.

Shortly, that Bill will come before this House. Despite the virtually unanimous opposition of all 32 Opposition Members representing Wales and the overwhelming weight of local government opinion, the Secretary of State will try to force it through on a whipped vote of English Tory Members. That is bad enough, but this time the exercise will be especially cynical because the Whips will force English Members, representing counties such as Somerset and Hertfordshire, to vote for a reorganisation of Welsh local government when they have made it clear to their Whips that, such is their opposition to the principles of the reform, they will not be prepared to support similar measures for the areas for which they were elected and which they represent here. That is a travesty of our democratic system.

Another matter reflects poorly on the Secretary of State's commitment to democracy. When his predecessor set out to buy the votes of Plaid Cymru last year—I want to treat the three Plaid Cymru Members as delicately as I can because I know that they are feeling especially sensitive today—so as to ensure the Government's survival during the debates on the Maastricht treaty, a deal emerged which treated local government with contempt and attempted to subvert the democratic rights of 28 of the 38 Members of Parliament for Wales. The deal envisaged a forum, involving Members of this Parliament and Members of the European Parliament representing Wales and Welsh local government. It was conceived—perhaps I should not talk about conceptions when dealing with such matters—behind the backs and, as it subsequently emerged, against the wishes of an overwhelming majority across all the political parties in Wales. The deal was clearly constitutionally unworkable, unprincipled and inherently undemocratic, as we pointed out at the time.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Wales wrote to local government leaders in Wales asking them to get him off the hook. In that letter he acknowledges to the Council of Welsh Districts:

> "I am therefore writing to you to ask you to consider whether you would wish to establish jointly with the Assembly of Welsh Counties such a mechanism."

He was referring to the reporting-back mechanism for the Committee of the Regions.

I shall ask the Secretary of State a direct question and I should be grateful for a direct answer. If the AWC and the CWD jointly propose an all-Wales council of local government to him as a report-back mechanism for the Committee of the Regions, will he accept the proposal? I will happily give way if the Secretary of State wants to answer.

Mr. Redwood: I set out my proposals, following consultations, and I should like an answer to those proposals. I cannot give an answer to questions about other proposals that I have not read. The offer that I made in my letter stands and I look forward to a positive reply.

Mr. Davies: The Secretary of State is getting into a habit of making excuses because he has not read his correspondence. Last time he had not read the CV of a top Tory living in tax exile. This time, he has not read the correspondence from the Council of Welsh Districts, which wrote to him on 16 February 1994 setting out its proposals. Has he received and read those proposals? Will he give us a direct answer? All my hon. Friends want to know, all the representatives of Welsh local government want to know, and I am sure that the leader and members of Plaid Cymru will want to know because their deal is at risk.

The proposals have been put to the Secretary of State, who has had a long time to reflect on them. They are jointly agreed by the Council of Welsh Districts and the Assembly of Welsh Counties. The basis for the support is not partisan or party political and they are overwhelmingly supported by Labour Members and by large sections of the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru. Considerable sections of the Conservative party also support the proposals.

I ask the Secretary of State once more: will he accept proposals if they are put to him jointly by local government in Wales? I want a direct answer. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] This is an example of the contempt and arrogance the man shows for Welsh public affairs. Elected leaders of all the district councils and counties in Wales have seriously debated the matter for the past three months and have made carefully thought out—

Mr. Llwyd: At the hon. Gentleman's instigation.

Mr. Davies: Of course it was at my instigation, but my meetings with Welsh local government were open. They did not take place in the Whips Office behind the backs of the majority of Welsh Members. When I have a statement to make, I do so before the leaders of all tiers of local government in Wales—Labour leaders, independent leaders and the leaders of Plaid Cymru in Wales. There is only one Conservative-controlled district. They were all made fully aware of the discussions and the proposals have been circulated to every local authority in Wales.

The Secretary of State is treating Welsh local government with contempt by refusing to give a straight answer and by the way in which he is trying to subvert its democratic processes to deliver a shoddy deal done with members of Plaid Cymru.

Mr. Wigley: I think that we would all accept the need for an effective report-back mechanism because we all hope that the regional dimension of the European Community will benefit Wales. Does the hon. Gentleman therefore accept that the Committee of the Regions goes beyond being a committee of municipalities or of local government?

[Mr. Wigley]

The regional dimension in Wales includes the Welsh Office and, regrettably, at this point also the quangos. Therefore, to establish a proper report-back mechanism we must bear in mind functions such as agriculture, docks and railways. Those are the responsibility of the Welsh Office, which is answerable to this Parliament and not merely to local government. That is why the forum will have to include elected representatives of all the levels in Wales: Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the districts and counties. Then we shall have a representational body which can give the views of Wales on all those functions to our representatives on the Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Davies: I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you will accept that I mean no disrespect by turning my back to you when I deal with the matter that the leader of Plaid Cymru has mentioned. His arguments would be a little more convincing if he had been prepared to engage in open debate before he did a deal with the Conservative party. If there is merit in that case, it surely needs to be discussed by all 38 Members for Wales and not merely by four Plaid Cymru and six Conservative Members who expected to bounce the rest of us into an undemocratic deal which sells out the interests of Welsh local government. The hon. Gentleman has signally failed to deal with that.

Mr. Wigley *rose*—

Mr. Davies: I shall give way again in a moment as the matter is important, but first I must deal with two other important issues about which the hon. Gentleman is exercised.

I understand that there will be occasions when Members of Parliament, and certainly Members of the European Parliament, and Ministers at the Welsh Office, will want to discuss matters through the report-back mechanism. That is what I and my hon. Friends do regularly. We meet representatives of local government—for example, the Heads of the Valleys Standing Conference. We have that relationship and there is no reason why it should not exist on a voluntary basis.

However, the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) is seeking to turn Westminster Members of Parliament into exclusively Welsh Members. I and my hon. Friends are firmly committed to the fact that a directly elected Welsh assembly is required to meet the democratic deficit in Wales. For the life of me I do not understand why Plaid Cymru—the party which supposedly wants an independent Wales, a referendum on the monarchy and all the rest of it—is prepared to accept the second-best organisation nominated, which will exist with the patronage and at the whim of the Secretary of State for Wales. That has nothing to do with democracy and I want nothing to do with it.

Mr. Wigley: Of course we want to see an elected Welsh parliament. When we have an elected Welsh parliament, representatives elected by that parliament will go to the Committee of the Regions. I am glad to see some hon. Members nodding their heads, though some are shaking their heads. I should have thought that that stands to reason. In the interim while we have a Tory Government, what will be the reporting back mechanism? Is the hon. Gentleman not putting forward something short of an elected assembly? In other words, he is proposing a council for Wales. Is not his criticism of Plaid Cymru not on the substance of the forum but on the way in which it was brought about? If that is the basis of the criticism, it would be better for him to forget about the reason why the body was brought about and see how we can make it work for the well-being of Wales, rather than sulking and refusing to go on it.

Mr. Davies: I am certainly not sulking. I am trying to play a constructive role with all tiers of Welsh local government, representing all parties, to reach agreement. The hon. Gentleman must understand that, my objection is about the way the deal was done because it was dishonourable; it is not only about the way the deal was done, about the substance of the deal.

I will explain why the proposal is unacceptable. The House decided that it wished to defeat the Government on the matter. It decided that local government should decide the representatives who would go to the Committee of the Regions. I do not have the responsibility or the right—neither does the hon. Member for Caernarfon, nor the Secretary of State—somehow to set that to one side or subvert it by the practices into which they entered. The hon. Gentleman must understand that, because local government in Wales is charged with the responsibility of providing representatives to the Committee of the Regions, surely it is common sense that, first, they should be consulted and, secondly, they should be instrumental in constructing the reporting back mechanism—they should be the reporting back mechanism.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman is getting a little impatient. He must let me reply to this point. If we talk about democracy, the independence of local government and the respect that we have for local government—I know that the hon. Member for Caernarfon shares my respect for that independence—we cannot turn round and say that we will ignore local government. I have written to every local authority—

Mr. Llwyd: That is part and parcel of it.

Mr. Davies: With the greatest respect, the hon. Gentleman is heckling when I am trying to respond to the intervention of the hon. Member for Caernarfon. He should let me make this point.

Local government in Wales has its own independence. What I sought to do in my meetings with the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Council of Welsh Districts was to construct a mechanism that was acceptable to them because I respect local government. Of course the Assembly of Welsh Counties has a Labour majority. Of course the Council of Welsh Districts has a Labour majority. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) should not smirk because he has influence in only one local authority in south Wales—Taff Ely—and it failed to support his proposals. That is a measure of the concern that exists in south Wales.

Out of this comes one clear message for Plaid Cymru Members: they should not do deals with an untrustworthy Government, especially when such deals breach their principles and are based on nothing but party advantage. Having first been bought out, they have now been sold out.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: This is the last intervention that I will take. I can never resist taking interventions from the hon. Gentleman because they are always so courteous and relevant.

Mr. Richards: If there were to be a Welsh parliament today, would it levy taxes in addition to those levied by Westminster?

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Government would introduce legislation to establish a Welsh assembly or a Welsh parliament—*[Interruption.]* Standards in the Conservative party are falling daily. The hon. Gentleman asked me a question. I should be grateful if he would do me the courtesy of listening to my reply.

If I thought that the Conservative party was going to introduce legislation in the current Session to establish an assembly, a parliament or a senate in Wales, I would be happy to engage the hon. Gentleman in that debate. I do not think that it is a realistic proposition. However, I am confident that the issue of establishing an all-Wales tier of government will be central to the outcome of the next general election. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has not exactly covered himself in glory in matters relating to local government. I suggest that he goes back either to his flat in Westminster or to Rutland. I can give the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) a guarantee that at the next election I shall be happy to advance the Labour party's proposals for an all-Wales tier of government. We shall then address all of the questions that he wishes to raise.

Mr. Dafis *rose—*

Mr. Davies: I shall conclude as I have given way to all hon. Members who have attempted to intervene.

During the 12 months since our last St. David's day debate, Wales has been badly served by the Secretary of State. Our economy has not recovered the jobs that we lost. We now have 150,000 fewer men in work than when the Government came to office. We are further down the regional pay scale. We are now at the bottom of the scale —we were near the top when the Government came to office. Investment in infrastructure has been cut, and is being cut as a result of the current programmes. From April this year, everyone in Wales will pay an extra £14 a year in tax, thanks to the Government's tax increases and their mismanagement of the economy.

Mr. Dafis *rose—*

Mr. Davies: I indicated that the intervention from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West would be my last. However, I am sure that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) is desperate to put some further points on the record, so I will give way.

Mr. Dafis: This is a debate on Welsh affairs. So far, we have had an extended attack on the Secretary of State for Wales, with which I have a great deal of sympathy, and an attack on Plaid Cymru. I was wondering whether the hon. Gentleman would comment on the state of Wales and his proposals for the development of Welsh political and economic life.

Mr. Davies: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to invite me to attack my own party. I can assure him that I have enough friends without having to launch an attack on my colleagues.

Presiding over all of the cuts, all the unemployment, all the difficulties, all the crime and all the social break-up is a Secretary of State who is so out of touch that he is prepared to play fast and loose with our democratic processes. Undoubtedly, the Conservative party will pay a very heavy price when the electorate has an opportunity to comment on that record. The sooner that opportunity comes, the better.

5.38 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I have never been so glad to hear a speech come to an end as I was when the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) finished. Someone such as myself, who was born and raised in south Wales, knows that corruption, nepotism, inefficiency, waste and sleaze have been the stock and trade of Labour-controlled local authorities. Indeed, they have become so commonplace that many people have become insensitive to it, accepting that being totally secure in power for most of the century has led to that sort of corrupted complacency.

It is therefore outrageous that Labour Members, especially the hon. Member for Caerphilly, should raise the subject of corruption anywhere, at any time and by anyone. The fact that they do so has encouraged some of us to take a fresh look at the fat cats of socialism.

A few days ago, the hon. Member for Caerphilly—as we have seen, a gentle and refined soul—told Labour councillors in Wales to improve their image, and to be more friendly and approachable. Indeed, he almost went as far as to say that they should model themselves on him. Imagine it. Somewhere in the shadows of Caerphilly castle, up in lights—"Ron's finishing school," with a slogan underneath saying, "Smile like a crocodile, sting like a bee."

I suspect that that was the hon. Gentleman's attempt to justify spending commitments which were made on 28 January by South Glamorgan county council. I have some details of those spending commitments by the council, which is, needless to say, Labour-controlled.

The council has committed £368,000 to public relations, including £50,000 for a new public relations director for the council. Gwent county council pulled off a similar stunt after the general election, and it gave the job to one John P. Smith, the defeated Labour candidate for Vale of Glamorgan. I am pleased to see that he is not here today, but that my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) is. We shall certainly watch the appointment of the South Glamorgan public relations director with some interest.

In addition, South Glamorgan county council has committed £313,000 for members' services—the mind boggles at what that money might be used for—and £180,000 for the chairman's entertainment budget. One gets more than tea and sticky buns for £180,000. Of course, today's Bolsheviks entertain their comrades rather more lavishly than before. They are champagne socialists using taxpayers' money, with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) leading from the front.

I can see how the chairman of that county council could spend thousands at Christmas on advertisements in the *Western Mail* and the *South Wales Echo*, consisting mainly of large photographs of himself, wishing readers a merry Christmas and a happy new year. In addition, the county

[Mr. Rod Richards]

council has made a further commitment already to spend £772,000 on leisure, even though that is the responsibility of the district authority.

In aggregate, that is £1,633,000 down the pan. The council is spending as though there were no tomorrow. Of course, there will be no tomorrow for that authority, as it will thankfully be done away with in the proposed reform of local government.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Is there not a subtle difference between what the council is doing and what the quangos are doing? If the electorate in their wisdom decide that they disapprove, they can get rid of the council. The people of Wales can do nothing about the great quangocracy which is home for so many members and supporters of the hon. Member's party.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman, of all people, should know that quangos are accountable to Parliament. The point that I was making earlier, which the hon. Gentleman clearly missed, is that there is a tradition of corruption and sleaze in south Wales, because the Labour party has been in control of councils there for such a long time. As an hon. Member representing Swansea, the hon. Gentleman ought to know more about corruption and sleaze in local government than any other Opposition Member.

Those are the goings-on in the Labour party. It yells about underfunding whenever education, health or any other policy is discussed. How much more should we spend, the Government ask? The Opposition cannot say, or they will not say. They are the same people who waste public money on themselves instead of spending it on schools, roads and social services for the benefit of the people.

Labour councils always plead poverty. I will believe them only when the chairman exchanges his Jaguar for a Metro, and when he melts down his mayoral chain.

Mr. Hanson: The hon. Gentleman represents a seat in Clwyd, as I do. Will he come to the county with me tomorrow to meet the chief officers and chairmen of committees in Clwyd and explain to them why he has voted for cuts which have meant that children in my constituency do not have the books, resources and teachers they need? That is not poverty—that is fact.

Mr. Richards: I will talk to the chief officers of Clwyd county council when it starts to co-operate with the borough council in the transfer of information for local government reform, when the Clwyd education authority stops trying to undermine schools in Clwyd from going for grant-maintained status, and when the Opposition stop being childish in this place and co-operate with the Government so that we can all get away earlier to drive to north Wales in the morning.

I shall speak now about West Glamorgan county council. Anything that that council does not know about nepotism or fixing jobs in the teaching profession for Labour supporters is not worth knowing.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the hon. Gentleman substantiate his claims? Does he have any evidence to put before the House that there is anybody currently holding a position as a teacher or college lecturer in West Glamorgan as a result of any corrupt practice? If not, will he withdraw that statement?

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman is being astonishingly naive for someone who was in the education service and who worked in south Wales for many years. As the hon. Member representing Gower, he will know West Glamorgan well, and the whole history of West Glamorgan education authority is one of jobs for the boys.

Mr. Wardell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: I will not give way on that point again. I want to press on.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a serious matter, because many people outside the House have been subjected to a quite deliberate slur by the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). My hon. Friend has given the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to withdraw that comment. People who are not able to protect themselves in the debate should at least have their names brought forward, or be given the courtesy of an apology.

As a dialogue has started between the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend, would you tell the hon. Gentleman that it would be a courtesy to the House if he were to take a further intervention so that the matter can be clarified?

Madam Deputy Speaker: As I understand it, no names have been mentioned. I would, of course, expect hon. Members of all parties to show restraint when making comments. That is a general observation, which is intended for all.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. The council's latest venture is gerrymandering.

Mr. Wardell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: No, I will not.

The council's Labour leader—one Tom Jones—has attempted to secure political advantage by instructing officers to identify potential gipsy sites in the wards of political opponents. That is in contravention of the council's written criteria for suitable locations. A total of nine potential sites were identified recently in a single ward. Eight of them are on privately owned farmland, and the other is on the football ground of Mawr community council. The sites have been identified without even a county-wide survey.

Mr. Donald Anderson: When the hon. Gentleman rose to speak, I thought that we would descend from the sublime to the ridiculous. The leader of the county to which he referred, County Councillor Tom Jones, is one of the most respected leaders of any county council in Wales. He has received several honours and plaudits from Conservative Secretaries of State. That shows the hon. Gentleman's lack of feeling and knowledge.

If he is so worried, he will be pleased to know that some of the proposed gipsy sites have been identified and some have been established in my constituency, which happens to be the constituency of that very distinguished leader of the county council, who is not here to answer for himself. It is disreputable and disgraceful that such a personalised attack should be made.

Mr. Richards: I shall continue.

It will come as no surprise that the other five wards in the southern half of the Lliw valley are held by Labour councillors. Nor will it come as a surprise to Opposition Members that the planning officer responsible for deciding on the sites is a Labour party activist, one Eddie Jones.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: As the hon. Gentleman is continuing to display his ignorance of the area of which he is speaking, which is part of my constituency, will he accept that a public inquiry had to be held some 18 months ago into the establishment of a possible gipsy site in the ward of a Labour county councillor next to the Felindre tin plate works? Will he accept that as a fact?

Mr. Richards: If the hon. Gentleman will also accept as a fact that one county councillor has the prospect of some nine gipsy sites in that one ward. That is yet another example of Labour putting Labour first and the people last, and Labour working for Labour, not for Britain.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I understood your ruling on my previous point of order, the hon. Gentleman was in order before because he had not referred to anyone by name. As the hon. Gentleman has now named two individuals, does he not have a responsibility to present some evidence to the House of Commons so that we can determine whether there is any substance to what he is saying?

It is disgraceful that individuals who have no opportunity to defend themselves are being insulted in this most cavalier way without any evidence being presented to us. Will you rule on that, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is possible for Members of Parliament to name people in that way, but it is expected of them to exercise restraint and responsibility in so doing.

Mr. Richards: The two people I have mentioned here are aware that others have levelled the same charges against them. So what I have said here this afternoon will not come as any surprise to them.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not relevant whether the charges have been made before elsewhere. We are concerned with the standard of proceedings in this House now.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ainger: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you know, the hon. Gentleman is a relatively new Member. In your experience, is it not normal in such circumstances that an hon. Member provides some evidence rather than simply making accusations?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for the hon. Member involved. I have simply made general observations about the type of remarks that should be made and the responsibility with which serious accusations should be made.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do not want the Labour party in south Wales to become paranoid. Their brothers in the north are just as sinister and generally incompetent.

Mr. Donald Anderson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Have we not reached the point at which this new Member is making a series of such scurrilous attacks and acting in such a disreputable way that perhaps the Secretary of State should take him aside and tutor him in the courtesies of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me to judge.

Mr. Richards: Back to north Wales, close to my constituency.

In Clwyd, for example, the department of commercial services lost £1.5 million in 1993-94. It is expected to lose a further £1 million this year. It is a department which is expected to show a profit. The losses were discovered only by audit. The situation has come about simply because Clwyd county council operates a no-redundancy policy.

So the House will be concerned to learn that the chairman of the personnel committee of Clwyd county council, Councillor Tom Middlehurst, was, before being elected as a member of the county council, the negotiator and full-time officer employed by the National and Local Government Officers Association, acting on behalf of the staff. He is not a poacher turned gamekeeper, but a poacher in gamekeeper's clothing.

The last but by no means least authority to which I wish to refer is Ynys Môn. I gave notice to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that I intended to raise the matter. He is not in his place, so it is a matter for him. There is a saying in Welsh, "Môn mam Cymru," which translates as "Môn, the mother of Wales." I am afraid that the borough council is a case of "Môn, the mother of all scandals in Wales." There are sufficient examples to keep the debate going for a month.

Discretionary grants have been misused. Information has been denied to councillors by the director of housing, who has for many years utilised delegated powers that were not formally granted to him. The chief executive and monitoring officer has refused to sanction independent action, in spite of representations by councillors.

There are allegations that councillors, and possibly even the director of housing, have been involved directly in a company called Tai Môn. A company of that name applied to purchase the borough's housing stock late in the 1980s. Furthermore, the development plan and grant application in respect of Mona airfield for civil and industrial use is also a subject of considerable local controversy and speculation.

The council's track record of granting planning consents to council members and their relatives is a disgrace. To sum up, in the words of one dismayed council tax payer in Ynys Môn, everything in Ynys Môn hinges on grant money. It matters not whether it succeeds, because the same people benefit. We are in danger of creating grant millionaires.

I should like to contrast the magnificent work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues are doing for Wales with the indolence of the Opposition parties and the damage they are causing. It seems that the Opposition parties have heard sufficient of the sleaze and scandal that has been going on in south Wales for many years—so much so that they cannot even sit there, take it and listen.

Mr. Hanson: We are still here.

Mr. Richards: I see that the third team has stayed. I am grateful for that.

[Mr. Richards]

Let us start at the bottom of the Opposition parties, with the Liberal Democrats. He was sitting there on his own, the lone stranger—that part-time, honourable, but mostly learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). He is known in this place and beyond as the moonlighting Member for Montgomery. Last year, he told the Welsh Grand Committee that he would not be attending its first ever meeting in Cardiff, because he wanted to protest at the lack of a Welsh assembly—

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I wish to make a point myself. I must make it clear to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) that, while it is possible to make comments of a nature such as the hon. Gentleman has engaged in, I strongly deprecate personal comments of that nature about any Member of the House. I do not intend to preside over a Chamber where that is commonplace. I ask the hon. Gentleman to take considerably more care before he says any more about a Member of this House.

Mr. Richards: I abide by your wisdom, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said that he would not attend his first ever meeting in Cardiff, because he wanted to protest at the lack of an assembly.

Mr. Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you have said, this speech is an outrage to the usual standards of this House. Is it not the normal practice, when an hon. Member wishes to make a personal attack on another hon. Member, that he should give that other Member notice not only that he will make an attack but of the nature of that attack if it is personal?

It does not surprise me that the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) has given me no such notice. Will you invite the Government Welsh Whip, who is a man of some substance, to sit on the hon. Gentleman so that he goes the way of those melted chains to which he aspires?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is the convention and custom to give notice, but the content of what is said is not normally known. It is left to the discretion of the Member who wishes to raise the point.

Mr. Richards: In the event, when the Welsh Grand Committee met in Cardiff, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery was plying his trade in the legal profession at the Old Bailey, and served an injunction—

Mr. Carlile: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has just told an untruth. Although I practise as a barrister, like many Tory Members, and am proud to do so, on that day I was not at the Old Bailey. That is a fact. Please will you demand that the hon. Gentleman withdraws that accusation, as it is untrue?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Obviously, it is not possible for me to judge the accuracy of these matters. I have warned the hon. Gentleman more than once that he should not engage in what one might call personalities, but should stick to policies. I hope that I shall not have to make the point again.

Mr. Richards: I shall rephrase what I said, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. and learned Gentleman was plying his trade in the legal profession. And he served an injunction—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have asked the hon. Gentleman not to continue with the discussion of personalities but to stick to policies. Does he understand what I have said, or does he not? I shall not warn him again.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. Clearly, I hear what you say, and I withdraw the remarks if they cause that much offence to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

As the hon. Member for Caerphilly devoted so much of his speech to attacking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, with your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I should like to make one or two points about the hon. Gentleman. He pompously proclaims that he speaks for the people of Wales, whereas he does not even speak for his own colleagues. In the shadow Cabinet elections, he secured 121 votes out of 270 cast, so he does not even speak for his own Back Benchers.

Nor does the hon. Member for Caerphilly speak for the people of north Wales. I have made inquiries of many people in north Wales, trying to ascertain how frequently the hon. Gentleman has visited north Wales other than to go to party conferences. I can find no one who knows of an event to which the hon. Gentleman has been, nor a location such as a school or factory that he has visited. That may be wrong, because I have not trawled everybody who lives in north Wales, but, were the hon. Gentleman in his seat, I would invite him to tell us where he has been in north Wales and whom he has visited. Has he visited any schools, for example, as he seems to be particularly interested in education?

I do not wish to detain the House for much longer, except to say that, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, Wales is winning with the Tories. It will continue to do so, despite Opposition attempts to undermine it.

6.4 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): It does not make me happy to follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and I shall not comment on what he said other than to say that I was sad that he descended into the realms of personal attacks.

I shall devote my speech to housing and the homeless in Wales. I am sorry that I cannot be here at the end of this debate because I must go to Llandrindod where I am chairing a conference tomorrow. I must be there a little earlier than the Minister of State to deal with the architectural heritage fund.

Less than five years after the Department of the Environment reviewed the working of the 1985 homelessness legislation and found that it was "adequate" and "appropriate", the Secretary of State for the Environment is presenting a "Review of Homelessness and Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies". He says that it is now virtually impossible for anyone other than statutorily homeless households to obtain a council or housing association tenancy.

The Secretary of State for Wales will not be surprised at that. If massive numbers of council houses are sold off and housing associations cannot meet projected housing needs, it is only commonsense that those who need housing will not be housed. But according to the Secretary of State for Wales, that has nothing to do with it. "Ordinary" people who are waiting for a home cannot get one because of all the young single parents who are having babies just to jump the housing queue.

The Secretary of State says that it has nothing to do with the fall in the number of homes available for rent by 48,000 in the 10 years from 1982 to 1992. It has nothing to do with the rise in the number of households accepted as homeless to more than 10,000 in the same period. It has nothing to do with the estimated 60,000 people who experienced homelessness in some form in Wales last year.

According to the Secretary of State, longer waiting lists for council houses have nothing to do with the fact that high rents, shorthold tenancies, widespread disrepair, the requirement of bonds or deposits and rent in advance, the requirement for tenant employment, the prohibition of children, and the commonplace harassment all make the private sector a non-starter for many vulnerable home seekers.

It has nothing to do, according to the Secretary of State, with the fact that more than one in three marriages now fails. Families split up and often need cheaper and rented accommodation. Nor is it to do with the fact that, nationally, 1,000 homes are still being repossessed each week. In Wales in 1992, more than 19 families a day either lost or were threatened with the loss of their homes. They have to be housed. On average, 30 dependent children became officially homeless every day in Wales in 1992. Such children have to be housed, if not by district councils then by the social services under the Children Act 1989.

There are also the mentally ill, discharged from hospital into community care; there are youngsters coming out of care seeking and needing a secure and stable home; there are young offenders who need a new start; battered wives and children and the chronically sick. All those groups make priority demands on public and social housing.

If the Government will not allow councils to spend the money from council house sales on building special needs housing and if they underfund housing associations so that they can provide only one third of the social housing identified as needed, we can expect council waiting lists to get longer.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): As housing associations will be expected to build for sale as opposed to for rent, what effect will there be on homelessness?

Mr. Wardell: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the balance between houses for rent and houses for sale is significant, but as long as shared equity housing is available and the lower percentage applies, I am sure that will provide some assistance.

To return to the main points, we can expect that more families will have to cope with overcrowded conditions. We can expect more couples who are living with their in-laws to resent intensely the dichotomy between postponing parenthood and raising a family with grandparents, while aunts and uncles sleep on the couch in the living room, and to begrudge the lack of privacy.

According to the Secretary of State, housing needs cannot be met because young single girls are getting pregnant and using what the Government call a fast-track system into housing, pushing ordinary couples back down the list. To close that supposed fast track, the whole fragile framework of homelessness legislation has to be uprooted.

The Government say that they want a constructive public debate on their proposals. I am all for constructive debate, especially when we are debating the need to deny homeless people—the vast majority of whom are homeless through no fault of their own—access to a permanent home, and especially when it is proposed to reduce local authorities' powers and duties so that, at the discretion of the Secretary of State, they will have to ensure only that an as yet undetermined agency can provide for the homeless a roof for the short to medium term.

What determines access to housing is the number of houses that are available and, particularly in relation to housing the homeless, the number of affordable homes available. The Government have progressively cut the housing allocations in England and Wales.

The Welsh Federation of Housing Associations reckons that Government plans to cut the housing association grant rate will result in a £1 a week increase in rent for tenants for every 1 per cent. decrease in grant. That alone will erode the supply of affordable housing in Wales, increasing waiting lists.

As for teenage single parents, they play a minor role in the overall picture. If all young girls under 18 were excluded from applying under the homeless persons legislation, that would affect allocations by a maximum of only 2 per cent., according to a survey of local authorities by the Institute of Housing.

The 1991 labour force survey found that only 0.3 per cent. of the heads of council homes were single mothers under the age of 20. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys "Population Trends" No. 71 shows that more than 50 per cent. of the estimated 1.3 million lone parents in Britain became lone parents as a result of divorce, separation or death. Single women account for only 29 per cent. of lone parents, and a further 10 per cent. are single men. Men comprise one in three of all single parents.

DSS research report No. 6 on lone-parent families in the United Kingdom—I am sure that the Secretary of State uses it for his bedtime reading—states:

> "Despite the anxieties that are often expressed, that many young women are getting pregnant deliberately for one reason or another, . . . we found little evidence that this was the case."

In 1991, lone parents between 16 and 24 comprised only 6 per cent. of all families with dependent children. In the last three months of last year, only 2 per cent. of households housed as homeless under the 1985 Act were headed by a young person. That 2 per cent. includes all young people housed for whatever reason, not only those with children. There is no information whatsoever on housing applications by pregnant women. Those are the very small numbers of tenancies involved.

I cannot believe that a Minister—indeed, no less than a Secretary of State—should not familiarise himself with the factual background information on the area in which he proposes to legislate. I find it incredible that the whole structure of housing policy should be changed because of the blind prejudice of the Secretary of State and a few of his Cabinet colleagues. It is blind prejudice and, as ever, a desire to cut spending.

It is important to look at just what the Government propose. They propose that local authorities will have a duty to "assist" housing applicants in priority need who have no home. They propose to make the new duty

[Mr. Wardell]

applicable only when the home is lost—when there is no roof—instead of when homelessness is imminent within 28 days. That duty starts only after the council has made an assessment of the claim and satisfied itself that the applicant really is entitled to help.

In practice, the pending homeless facing eviction within days will end up, in great distress, in the worst private accommodation; thus, they will never appear as homelessness statistics. At a stroke, the number of homeless will fall, in the same way as unemployment fell when who was or who was not a claimant was redefined.

The councils' new duty to those brave enough to hang on and go to the council offices after the bailiffs have put them on the street will be to find them temporary accommodation. Applicants will be expected to use their time in shelter to find their own accommodation. What is likely to happen to many is what the Institute of Housing and the Institute of Housing in Wales calls a revolving door syndrome, when a homeless application is followed by a temporary letting in the private sector, followed by a reapplication as homeless. As the Institute of Housing points out, that will increase administrative costs for councils and also create insecurity, which could severely affect family life, employment and education prospects. That surely cannot be what the Government regard as improving the well-being of our citizens. Where is the Prime Minister's vision? He is not in the House to hear this piece, and I apologise for not giving him advance notice that I was going to mention him. I hope that he will forgive me.

Under the new proposals, before people living with their parents, relatives or friends can be accepted for assistance, they must be served with a court order to evict them—so much for the Government's family values. The review paper also seeks views on whether hostels should be available for young single mothers. It does not say that the Government plan to provide money to build them. Ninety per cent. of respondents to the Institute of Housing's questionnaire on the review of homelessness legislation were firmly against any move to make the council's housing duty discretionary, temporary, or both. The Institute of Housing, the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations and Shelter Cymru share the concern of housing officers about the proposed change.

In Wales, there has been marked progress in dealing more effectively with homelessness, and co-operative and innovative schemes are in their infancy. All that work is now jeopardised, not because any factual evidence shows that it has failed or because a better scheme has been devised, but on the whim and the convenient prejudice of the Secretary of State and fellow travellers at the Treasury.

The review is devious. It seeks to justify further cuts in expenditure on housing and at the same time cuts the number of homeless by changing the definition of what it is to be homeless. It seeks to divert attention from the real cause of long waiting lists. The root cause of homelessness and the shortage of rented homes in Wales and the rest of Britain is the lack of money and support for affordable and permanent rented housing. It is by building houses and creating homes that waiting lists will be cut. Bigotry towards teenage single parents is a red herring that gets us nowhere. The review is irrelevant. It is constructive only in exposing just how fragile are homeless people's rights. It concentrates the mind on how wide is the gap between housing provision and housing need.

The review should be withdrawn. If the Secretary of State's contribution to the most vulnerable, the most distressed and least secure of our Welsh citizens is to sever their right to a home, the sooner he severs his tenuous connection with Wales, the better.

6.23 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I apologise to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for not having been present during the first part of his excellent speech. I had a long-standing engagement to meet, in the other place, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ferrers, who is Minister of State at the Home Office, to discuss policing in south Wales—an issue which I raised in the recent debate in the House on the funding of local government. I make no apology for returning to that issue today.

We have a great problem. In 1992, the number of recorded crimes per police officer was 51 in south Wales compared with 44 in England and Wales and 42 in the whole of Wales. The number of recorded crimes per 100,000 of the population was 12,355—almost double the figure 10 years ago for the area covered by the South Wales police and considerably more than the figures for the rest of Wales, which was 9,602, and for England and Wales, which was 9,353. The South Wales police performed well, all things considered, in that each officer managed to make 18 arrests in 1992, which is slightly better than the figure for the rest of Wales, 17; and for England and Wales, 15. The number of arrests per 100,000 of the population in 1992 was 4,344 in south Wales; 3,955 for the whole of Wales; and 3,275 for England and Wales. The clear picture therefore is that more crimes are being recorded in south Wales than in the rest of Wales and the whole of England and Wales and that the success of the police in arresting people is slightly better.

The recent catastrophe regarding the budget of the South Wales police has had dire effects in my constituency. I have had discussions with senior officers and can report the following consequences. Operation Bumblebee, an important initiative designed to reduce the number of burglaries, has had to be put back, perhaps for several years. Just before Christmas, I was told that there was a shortage of petrol to put in police cars and, on one occasion, it was impossible to send a constable to Llantwit Major to arrest a burglar because the force could not afford to pay the constable £7.50 for the petrol.

In November last year, my local police force was optimistic that it would achieve a zero increase in crime for last year—the first time that would have happened in many years. Sadly, that aspiration is in tatters. Local police stations are still under threat of closure, although that seems to have been withdrawn for the time being. There has been a substantial loss of police overtime. I was told that it has been impossible on occasion to send officers to court simply because there is no money to pay them overtime and that the only basis on which officers could attend court was by submitting overtime payment claims in the subsequent year.

That is not the way to run a police budget. The local police believe that they have been forced to renege on promises that they made to the public. On bank holidays, for example, there is only enough money to provide 37 officers in the Vale division, instead of 51, which would constitute what they regard as a skeleton staff. That means that, taking into account the shift system, only 10 police officers would be out in the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan and Penarth, and only one traffic car and one dog, where there should be four traffic cars. People who are arrested in the evening have been bailed at police stations rather than being kept in overnight. They are granted bail not because the police are satisfied that that would be appropriate, but because there are not the staff to supervise the prisoners overnight. That shows the scale of the problem. I shall now deal with how the problem arose.

In the past few weeks and months, we have seen an unholy battle over who is responsible for the underfunding. I wish to put the blame where it appears to me squarely to lie—with the South Wales police authority.

Mr. Llwyd: If the blame lies squarely with the police authority, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, why did he waste his time going to see Earl Ferrers?

Mr. Sweeney: I should have thought that that was self-evident. Responsibility for home affairs rests with the Home Secretary and his Ministers, rather than with the Secretary of State for Wales. When I wished to raise my concern about the issue, it was naturally to the Home Office that I went.

What I learnt during that meeting reinforced information that I had already received in correspondence with the Home Office. The South Wales police authority comprises, among others, elected councillors from South Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan county councils. Under the indicative distribution arrangements for Wales, 5.6 per cent. of the budget should be going to the South Wales police this year. Last year, they received only 1.6 per cent. When I have taxed local councillors—Labour councillors, incidentally—with those figures, I have been told, "It is all your wicked Government's fault: rate capping prevents us from giving the police authority the money that we would like it to receive."

With respect, that is nonsense. The total 1994-95 budget for the three local authorities is in the region of £900 million and the amount that the police desperately need to deal with the shortfall and deliver the services that they have promised is a mere £5 million. My arithmetic tells me that that represents a percentage of 0.5 recurring. It is not even as if the three authorities had to find the whole amount; they need find only 49 per cent. of it, because 51 per cent. of the budget for all police forces in England and Wales comes from the Home Office. By giving the police 1.6 per cent. rather than 5.6 per cent., the police authority has deprived them of not only the part that it should have paid them, but the part that would have come from the Home Office if it had paid the full whack.

I appreciate the problems of capping and I realise that all local authorities face difficulties in trying to keep within their budgets. Every organisation, however, must deal with the same constraints and I do not see why local authorities should be exempted. If the Government are to control overall spending levels, local government must play its part. I believe that central Government have been generous to local authorities in Wales, in all the circumstances.

In view of the smallness of the total amount involved —£5 million out of £900 million, with less than £2.5 million actually having to come out of the £900 million —it should be relatively easy for local authorities to trim their budgets elsewhere. Of course, they are right to say that they have statutory responsibilities in a number of areas and that some of their expenditure is unavoidable; but I see the waste that takes place in my local authority, South Glamorgan.

I have written to the authority about issues such as its decision to reduce spending by turning off the lights on the main roads in my constituency. I suggested that that was a very short-sighted policy, given that the accident rate tends to be higher on roads whose lights have been switched off, as does the incidence of bulb failure. What is the point of spending a large amount of capital in installing street lights and then switching them off in a form of short-termism? That is a truly penny-pinching approach.

Although my overtures in favour of switching the lights on were ignored, it may be significant that they were switched on immediately after one person was killed in an accident in South Glamorgan. No apology was made for the fact that they had been off in the first place, but somehow the money was found.

Given the importance that the public attach to policing, it behoves all county councillors who happen to serve on police authorities—and all other members of police authorities—to realise the vital importance of maintaining an effective police force. The public will accept nothing less. It is not simply a question of how much money is made available to the police; it is also a question of how that money is spent. What appears to be emerging now is that the way in which the police budget has been spent has not been properly controlled.

It seems that overtime payments have been allowed to accrue and claims for those payments have not been put in. That means that the treasurer of the police authority has not at any given time had a full grasp of how high or low spending is running. That was certainly brought home to the South Wales police authority in a very painful way. I understand that at one stage it was told that it was spending well over £1 million under budget. Naturally, the senior officers did the obvious thing and started to increase spending—only to be told, as late as July 1993, that they were overspending at that stage to the tune of more than £500,000 pounds and would have to put their budget in order.

Another factor has distorted the police authority's budget. Not only had it overspent on overtime; it had relied on an assumption that substantial savings in salary levels would result from the retirement of police officers. In fact, those savings were not achieved, because the number of officers retiring did not match expectations. In the meantime, a number of civilian workers had been employed. In theory, that should have improved police efficiency, because civilians can perform certain tasks at lower cost than police officers. The net result, however, was a considerable unanticipated overspend.

Those are serious issues, which need to be tackled by the police authority. They need the full support of the county councils, which contribute to the budget of the police authority.

I have an assurance from Lord Ferrers that the Government fully realise the importance of policing in Wales. All that I said to him was that, even if the police authority discharged its duty and the police received the full £5 million that they should have received, better

[Mr. Sweeney]

resources would still be needed for the police in south Wales. That should mean not only more money and more police officers, but better use of existing resources.

It is especially necessary for the police to make much better use of information technology so that there can be a more efficient exchange of information and so that experienced police officers no longer waste a considerable amount of their time typing out charge sheets by hand. Before entering the House I was a solicitor, engaged in the court duty solicitor scheme and in the police station duty solicitor scheme. I frequently visited local police stations in the area and, frankly, I was appalled at the obvious waste of police time resulting from inefficient methods.

The Government are often criticised for taking too much control of the affairs of local government. I believe, however, that in this case the Home Office should be taking more control, not less, of the running of local police forces, especially if police forces are mismanaged and underfunded as a result of poor local control. I would especially like the Home Office to give a firm steer to all police authorities, in England as well as in Wales, to encourage them to spend parts of their budgets on suitable equipment that would enable them to function efficiently.

Time and time again I hear from my constituents that, notwithstanding the increase in the number of police officers which we know—on paper—has taken place, coupled with the increase in white collar staff to back them up, the public see fewer, not more, police officers on the street. That is partly because many of those police officers are in panda cars or high-speed police vehicles. I am not suggesting that they should not be properly equipped in that way; it is no good a bobby on the beat trying to give chase to someone in a fast stolen car.

The police want more police officers to be on the beat. The success of community watch schemes and so on depends on it. It is vital—I know that we are beginning to do it—to achieve a better relationship between the police and schoolchildren and between the police and the public, but we can do so only if we release more of our officers from the burden of unnecessary paperwork, to which inefficient equipment at police stations often contributes.

6.43 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Nothing is sacred, apparently, not even the chains of the mayors of boroughs such as Llanidloes—at least, not to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), although I reassure myself that on the same side of the House sits the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who has a proper sense of Welsh history and would wish those mayoral chains to be preserved. I suppose that after Piltdown man we have Meltdown man, although I comfort myself with the recollection that Piltdown man turned out to be a fraud.

This has been a rather sad debate. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West came to the House with a great deal of promise and was said to have a promising ministerial career in front of him. In this afternoon's debate we have probably seen that promising ministerial career—which would have been based on intelligence—destroyed by bad judgment and melting down into a phial of poison.

At the beginning of the debate, the Secretary of State made an announcement about transport policy. We all listened with much interest and we had a short tour of Wales by intervention. The Secretary of State kindly let us all intervene to make our specific arguments. I am disappointed that we have not yet heard an announcement about the Newtown bypass, but I am grateful for the assurance that it will be considered.

I ask the Secretary of State to consider one small thing, which would cost very little, and about which I have written to the Minister of State—provision for the disabled in towns and villages which are crossed by trunk roads for which the Welsh Office has responsibility. I wrote to the Minister of State specifically about Welshpool. It is a serious problem for disabled people. The right hon. Gentleman gave me a positive response and I hope that that issue can be expedited.

I had hoped today that the Secretary of State would give us a little more hope for the carriage of freight on the railways. Not a bean is carried, in terms of freight, on the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth line. It would be nice if we could hear a commitment—

Mr. Redwood *indicated assent.*

Mr. Carlile: I am glad to see the Secretary of State nodding in agreement with the principle, at least. It would be nice to hear a commitment to transport more freight by railway, rather than to have it trundling through the towns and villages of mid-Wales.

Tonight I shall speak principally about agriculture. I do so because it is very important to rural mid-Wales and also because the Minister of State, who is responsible directly for agriculture in Wales, will, I understand, wind up the debate.

Wales depended on agriculture before Welsh coal and steel were mass-produced to stoke and build the industrial revolution. All hon. Members present are only too well aware of the significant effect that the industrial revolution had on the communities of south Wales. The industrial revolution is now part of history. Today we are in the midst of the post-industrial revolution, of which the main characteristic is probably the deconstruction of the past. Wales has suffered disproportionately, with the spring tide of destruction in the coal and steel industries and with the resulting enormous economic and social upheaval.

We welcome the fact that the Welsh economy has attracted many foreign and multinational companies and few people could doubt sensibly that the investment of such companies has been necessary and welcome. However, I regret that the international investment has not been matched by growth in Welsh indigenous industry, despite remarkable exceptions such as Laura Ashley and, more recently, Control Techniques in Montgomeryshire.

It is a matter of regret that so little risk capital has been invested in Wales in proportion to the risk and venture capital invested in England and indeed in Scotland.

I suggest to Ministers that it is unsound economics and unwise politics to accept that the Welsh work force should be the lowest paid in the United Kingdom and that our school leavers and unemployed people should have to make do so often with inadequate training provision.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the lack of indigenous investment in industry in Wales. He may be aware that the report produced by the Institute of Welsh Affairs 2010 specifically drew attention to the need to develop a spirit of enterprise in Wales, which, it has to be recognised on both sides of the House, has perhaps looked too much to the past. Will he discuss that?

Mr. Carlile: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. Wales has not been awash with entrepreneurialism, which, as I was trying to say, needs to be encouraged. The old business expansion schemes barely featured in Wales whereas in the south of England one could hardly move for leaflets about them. We need to bring the spirit of enterprise to Wales.

I said that I would concentrate on agriculture. At the moment, 18,000 people work in agriculture in Wales. That is still a significant proportion of the Welsh work force, although the number is falling. In 1920, the figure was 70,000; in 1950, it was 50,000; and, as I said, today it is 18,000. The decline is exceptionally relevant to rural and hilly Wales. Many parts of Wales still depend on the direct and indirect jobs and income from farming. In my constituency, as much as 16 per cent. of the work force is still employed in and around agriculture, but the decline in agriculture is apparent to all who visit.

The decline has caused the demise or amalgamation of farms, the loss of chapels and churches, and the closure of schools, pubs and shops and of many agriculturally based businesses. We have, of course, welcomed the work of the Development Board for Rural Wales, but it has often been work of a very different character which has not served to save villages.

As time passes, we once again face the risk of rural depopulation resulting from the decline in agriculture. Agriculture will continue to decline unless we are prepared to be truly radical and imaginative in our approach and brave enough to take the long-term view, which has never been taken in this country, save at the time of the formation of the common agricultural policy in which we chose not to participate. Although there has been an improvement recently—I shall not quarrel with the statistics given by the Secretary of State—the problem is compounded by the historically low income base.

The *Employment Gazette* of February this year gave the average hourly income for all industries and services as £8.44. For farmers the average was £4.97, barely 60 per cent. of the average for all industries and services. Government policies have compounded the disparity. The hill livestock compensatory allowance is, for many farmers, the lifeline that allows them to farm land which would otherwise be unviable. The Government used to recognise the importance of the HLCA. The section on Wales in the most recent Conservative manifesto stated:

> "We will give further resources to our Rural Initiative. And we will continue to support hill farmers through the Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances".

That commitment undoubtedly impressed many farmers in rural Wales—not surprisingly—but, unfortunately, the reality has not matched it. Farmers have been helped by accidents rather than policy, notably by black Wednesday and the devaluation of the green pound. They are temporary conditions which, if the economy—as the Government promise—becomes stronger, lead to a further reduction in farm incomes. We suffer from short-termism in our agriculture policy. As a result, many farmers whom I have met earn £4,000 to £4,500 a year for hard work on a family farm, with little prospect of making a decent living in the future.

Many farmers must also now bear the financial costs of the necessary drive towards increased environmental sensitivity. Farmers are keen environmentalists—if it were not for them we should not have the countryside that we love—but they cannot conjure cash out of the air. The Government have, however, reduced by £40 million the expenditure available for the environment by reducing the grants for agricultural diversification and the farm conservation grant scheme.

Welsh farming needs investment if it is to survive. We have to decide whether it is worth farming on the hills. If we decide that it is not, we shall have a derelict and ugly countryside, bereft of its communities. If we decide that it is—as I believe—we must support it. I shall suggest in a moment how we should do so.

Welsh agriculture is dominated by the common agricultural policy. It is generally agreed—I do not dissent from the view—that the amount of money spent on the CAP is too high. Efforts have been made to change its structure via the MacSharry reforms, but they seem merely to have increased bureaucracy, as happened with the integrated administration and control system, cattle identification documents and the arable scheme which splits Wales into two areas. Although it could not be said that the areas were arbitrary, they are nevertheless proving to be unjust and are exciting consternation among farmers of a kind which, I suspect, would be likely to vote for the Conservatives rather than the Liberal Democrats.

Mr. Ainger: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman; agree that the position adopted by the Welsh Office in relation to arable regionalisation is wholly illogical? Wales produces only 2 per cent. of the cereals produced by England, but England has one system and one payment whereas Wales has to have a two-tier system. Is not that irrational?

Mr. Carlile: I agree with the hon. Gentleman; and he will find that the National Farmers Union and the Farmers Union of Wales agree with both of us.

It is increasingly likely—even inevitable—that the CAP will be altered dramatically. I believe that we should tear it up and start with a blank sheet of paper. The Americans are opposed to it; the third world is opposed to it; and, perhaps most important, the emerging central European democracies are opposed to it. The CAP is self-evidently incompatible with the expanding European Union about which many of us are enthusiastic. The accession in due course of other countries—notably the democracies of central Europe—will provide the opportunity for change.

If and when the CAP goes, it will have to be replaced with something; if not, the rural dereliction to which I referred will follow. We must prepare for that now. It will not be good enough for us to learn, following a meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers, that the shop is now closed. However, some of our experience of the way in which the business of the European Union has been conducted leads one to conclude that that could happen.

Post-CAP farming will be very different from the agriculture of today. It is likely that there will be no more intervention and no more payment for fallow, set-aside land. For many farmers, especially those in Wales where holdings tend to be small by British standards, it will be uneconomic to farm for profit in the traditional way. We must find new systems of farming, with the emphasis on not only food production but land use. Intensitivity will be a thing of the past, but the danger is that many farmers will be blown away in the often cruel gale of the free market.

[Mr. Carlile]

In Wales, we must prepare a structure—a strategy—to ensure that land is used in a diverse and economic way. Farmers must be given the training and funds to enable them to diversify as much as possible. Tourism, alternative cash crops, rural industry and leisure are all very important, but we must bear it in mind that diversification is difficult in the remotest areas—one can sell only so many love spoons at the gate.

I suggest that farmers should be encouraged, probably through a scheme of fairly negotiated contracts, to come up with as many strategies of their own as possible for the future use of their land. I foresee the possibility of a system in which each farmer will have the option of either remaining in the free market or negotiating a contract for the future production, environment and management of his farm, or a mixture of the two. Only if we are brave enough to venture down the road of considering that kind of future will we avoid disaster for the hills.

Farming was the mainstay of the Welsh economy long before coal and steel. Now coal and steel have declined. The challenge is for agriculture not to go the same way, but to show that it can prosper, albeit in a different world. If it dies, a huge swathe of Welsh culture and society will die with it. The solution to this long-term problem is a challenge. It will take a bold and imaginative Government to introduce the kind of agricultural policies which will meet the uncertain future. Rural Wales is rich in those "dappled things" of which Hopkins wrote so immortally. Unfortunately, the survival of the Welsh countryside depends on the mortal weaknesses of economists and politicians, but we must not shrink from the challenge.

7.1 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I wish to go back to where we began the debate, with the Secretary of State's announcement on the road programme in Wales. I wish particularly to congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he announced for my particular part of Wales. The emphasis of focusing on economic needs and at the same time minimising environmental damage is a welcome development.

It is perhaps to be expected from a Secretary of State who represents a constituency in Wokingham that he sees the importance of strategic motorway routes, which are a significant means by which the state can properly contribute to economic prosperity and development. Those of us in south-east Wales are particularly aware of the M4 effect—I appreciate that it does not go far enough; it does not go further up the valleys, and I can see the point that will be made—which has swept down and transformed Reading from the rather grubby railway town of 20 years ago and transformed Swindon into a much more prosperous place than we remember when we used to be stuck there because of British Rail on Sunday afternoons 20 or 30 years ago.

Mr. Ron Davies: The hon. Gentleman should have been in chapel.

Mr. Evans: Yes, I agree. That is probably not a bad sedentary observation. But one well remembers going back to university in the 1960s and being stuck on Swindon station on Sundays, sometimes for four or five hours if British Rail was doing its maintenance work.

The M4 effect has meant increasing prosperity, and it is a very useful way in which public expenditure can assist economic development. But there is increasing awareness in the 1990s that if one is to build roads, they must be economically highly desirable and focused, and we are much more aware of the environmental damage that can be caused by the wrong type of road proposal in the wrong place.

I do not know if, because of the Standing Committee on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) heard the news, which I have no doubt he will join me in welcoming, of the deletion of the A40 Crickhowell bypass proposal.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): He was here.

Mr. Evans: He was here for it. I am corrected. It is a matter of considerable importance for our part of the world. My right hon. Friend very properly told us, in respect of the Abergavenny western bypass, that he would await the inspector's report. That is the correct way of proceeding in these matters. I have no doubt that in Abergavenny the deletion of the Crickhowell bypass proposal will be greeted as an encouraging signal that the Abergavenny western bypass will go the same way.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My hon. Friend may know that it has been estimated that, if the Abergavenny western bypass were to proceed, traffic flows through Crickhowell would increase by 17 per cent. In those circumstances, if we are not to have a bypass in Crickhowell, he will understand that the people in Crickhowell will be anxious to ensure that we do not have the Abergavenny western bypass either.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is right. Those two schemes go together, and the logic and the policy must be that if one is to be abandoned, the other must be as well. In Abergavenny that will be particularly welcome, because the proposal to build a motorway-style causeway across the Usk valley, creating an unsightly urban scar in a particularly attractive piece of rural landscape, with the kind of 10-metre lighting columns which at night can be seen from the top of the Skirrid mountain, and generally debasing the environmental quality of the whole area, is exactly the kind of ill thought-out, old-fashioned, 1960s style of road building that we no longer want in the 1990s.

The other facet of this matter which has become increasingly appreciated is that when one builds new roads —sometimes that is a good thing, when trying to create an important strategic route such as the M4 corridor or to improve the heads of the valleys road through the A465 —and attempts to create and attract traffic, they do attract traffic and that sometimes, by creating new roads in the wrong place, one attracts traffic where one does not want it.

As I understand the position in Abergavenny, the peak traffic jam problem is on Sunday morning at bank holiday weekends, when the type of traffic which is said to be objected to and which stuffs up Abergavenny is visiting tourists, who are exactly the kind of people that we want to see more of in Abergavenny. So if communities are to go on living, and if historic communities are to preserve the quality that makes their environment so attractive, as in the case of Abergavenny, road schemes must be sensitive and be directed more to environmental matters.

I have another problem to put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, if the A40 is not to be the great strategic through route which, as I understand it, both the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office have assumed for many years.

Some of us sometimes, in protest at the M4 being rather full of traffic, take the other way to south-east Wales—via Gloucester—and see, as we are stuck in a traffic jam at Northolt, those enormous notices telling us about the great road scheme described as the "A40 London-Fishguard trunk route". Will we see an end to that scheme in its entirety now that it has at least been realised that it cannot be expected to proceed through the environmentally sensitive part of Gwent and Breconshire in the same way? I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement.

I am particularly grateful to the Welsh Office ministerial team for their recent announcements, not just because of greater respect for the environment but also because of heritage matters. I refer particularly to the emphasis on and increased resources available for re-listing and properly surveying Wales for buildings of architectural and historic importance, and the help to be given in the form of the proposed redundant churches and chapels fund to save parts of Wales's important heritage.

I have one query about local government reform. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) is absolutely right in thinking that I am the kind of Tory who is deeply concerned about mayoral chains. Not only do I not want them melted down: I believe them to be part of the municipal heritage of Victorian Wales, and want them preserved.

But there is an important point here, which goes slightly beyond mayoral chains. It is about what happens when local government is reformed and councils are closed down, which may or may not be controversial. Councils tend to accumulate over the years various types of memorabilia—paintings of former civic dignitaries and so on—which are terribly important and part of the pride of the community. I ask my right hon. Friend whether proper arrangements will be made to preserve these vital parts of the Welsh municipal and county heritage.

7.9 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): There has been a debate on the Government's "back to basics" policies for several months now. Many Opposition Members have argued that the Government were referring to individual morality, whereas the Government would deny that, saying that they were trying to apply those policies to some of the big issues, such as health, education and crime.

It is hard to deny that they were talking about individual morality, because it became obvious when we heard the attacks on single mothers. We were given to believe by some Ministers that all the problems that western civilisation faced were probably caused by single mothers—that is, until one Minister said a few days later that the clergy must also take a considerable amount of the responsibility.

To be fair to the Government, I believe that they were also trying to apply "back to basics" to the big issues. I am surprised that that idea caused such a stir, because in my opinion that is what they have been doing over the past decade—applying that policy to the problems we now face. Every time I hear the Minister of State, Department for Education speak, and every time I hear the Secretary of State for Wales address the Welsh Grand Committee on education, as he did last week, I am convinced that the Government are sincere about going back to basics.

In educational terms, "back to basics" could mean not only changing from comprehensive to grant-maintained schools, but changing from comprehensive schools back to the old 11-plus examination. There is often a lot of debate about the 11-plus, and much time is set aside to say how grand the grammar schools were. That is debatable, to say the least. However, it is remarkable that, when we debate the 11-plus, virtually no time is given to discussing the merits or otherwise of the old secondary modern schools.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: While we are talking about the benefits of the old grammar schools, may I declare an interest and say that I went to the same grammar school as the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the former leader of the Labour party—although I always say that I learned more there than he did. Were not grammar schools a vehicle for social mobility, an avenue by which children were enabled to do so much better in life, and has that not been cut off by many of the changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, which the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) appears to support?

Mr. Smith: That does not show in the statistics; very few children of working class parents ended up in our universities. That is point number one.

Point number two is that, when we discuss the 11-plus examination, we should talk not only of the merits or otherwise of the grammar schools, but also about those of the secondary modern schools, because, under the old system, 75 per cent. of our youngsters were written off and dumped at the grand old age of 11. They were dumped in the secondary modern schools and conditioned for life at 15 or 16, when they would go out to work, labouring in the pit, the factories or the building sites. The lucky few would manage to achieve apprenticeships.

That was a tragedy. Many youngsters with tremendous skills, talents and creativity were not given the opportunity to use them for the benefit of their communities, and even to create the industries in which their fellows could have been employed when they left the secondary modern schools.

What worries me is that, if the Government go back to basics and return to the 11-plus and the secondary modern schools, it will all be even worse the second time round. If it happens again, we shall be dumping youngsters in secondary modern schools that will condition them not for a life labouring in factories and building sites, with a few skilled apprenticeships, but for a life on the dole, with the lucky few doing soul-destroying, menial, part-time jobs in the local factories.

It is a tragedy that Conservatives are still willing to defend the old secondary modern system and the 11-plus, which wrote off 75 per cent. of our youngsters at the age of 11.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman is expressing concern about children who are not academically inclined. Does he not appreciate what the Government are now trying to do

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

by introducing GNVQs—general national vocational qualifications—and so on? Those are aimed at precisely the people whom he is talking about.

Mr. Smith: I am shocked to hear a senior Minister talking about the old 11-plus system and the secondary modern schools in a way that shows that he is willing to write off the 75 per cent. of youngsters who did not go to grammar schools as, in his words, "not academically inclined".

I happen to be an authority on secondary modern schools, because I was one of the children who attended one. I found that the people who went to secondary modern school and joined me in the activities of the school were academically inclined. The tragedy, and the argument against the 11-plus examination, is the fact that those children did not have the opportunity to show that they were academically inclined, because they were written off at the age of 11.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I do not want to intervene too often, but surely the lesson is that we should have been endeavouring to improve the standards of technical and secondary modern education, just as the Minister has suggested, rather than cutting away the grammar schools, as happened in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Smith: I am all in favour of raising standards, but the hon. Gentleman does not understand that the 11-plus worked against that idea, because it said to 75 per cent. of youngsters, "You will spend four or five years in a secondary modern school being conditioned not to expect anything better in life than a job in the factory, the building site or the pit."

It is an insult to those children for the Minister to categorise every one of them as not being academically inclined. That shows a misunderstanding of the nature of schools under the 11-plus system. It is an insult to every one of those youngsters who would have liked the opportunity to use his or her skills, and who objected to being written off at the age of 11.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I am surprised that we are having this argument across the Chamber, because I thought the Conservatives had now come to terms with comprehensive schools. Is not one of the problems with education in Britain the fact that we are still elitist and tend to think only of the top 10, 20 or 30 per cent., whereas Japan, Germany and the United States think that 60, 80 or 90 per cent. of the people need to be very well educated today, because jobs will change so much during their working lifetime?

Mr. Smith: I agree with my hon. Friend. The situation will be exacerbated by student loans, because youngsters from working-class homes will find it increasingly difficult to participate in the colleges and universities in our land.

I shall touch on another area in which the Government are serious in their belief that we should go back to basics. Over the past decade, they have definitely been developing "back to basics" policies on employment—and, indeed, on unemployment. For them, "back to basics" means back to the 1920s and 1930s.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Smith: The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) should know better. He would not shake his head if he revisited the constituency in which he was brought up, and with which I am sure he was proud to be associated. He would see that conditions in that constituency are becoming increasingly similar to those which prevailed in the 1920s and 1930s.

A number of my colleagues and I spent a considerable time collecting and collating statistics on poverty in Blaenau Gwent. We also went out and interviewed people in the villages to find out about their experiences. I should like to quote from the pamphlet. It will be one of the few occasions in the history of Parliament when the words of ordinary working people, who have been subjected to extreme poverty, will be spoken in this Chamber. Some 50 per cent. of the people in one street of families we surveyed were unemployed.

I want to relate the experiences of those people in our community who suffer severe poverty. The first case is that of an unemployed couple with one child at home. [*Laughter.*] The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor may think that it is a laughing matter, but if he bothered to visit our community, I suspect that he would be reluctant to laugh at the people and their experiences, which I am about to iterate.

Excuses are not necessary on this occasion. I repeat that one case involves an unemployed couple with one child at home. The father, aged 49, is on invalidity benefit and suffers from arthritis. He has not worked for 11 years. He says:

> "The Hoover's broken, it'll cost about £70 to repair so we'll just have to go without. We don't go on holidays—just day trips. We don't go out, we don't drink.
>
> We have got into debt but we learnt from that. It we want something now we sit down and talk about it. You've got to watch every penny.
>
> I think we go from day to day. We feel a bit depressed. It affects your whole life—its monotonous. Some days we get up thinking if only something was different. But you've just got to get on with it."

Another case involves an unemployed couple with an unemployed son. The father, who is 62, has been unemployed for 10 years. He has worked in the building trade for 30 years, sometimes on low pay. He said:

> "People like us will get into debt. The social will only give you a loan and then you have to fight for it. We put in for a £70 loan for a cooker and they wanted £8 a week back off us. Well we didn't bother—we couldn't afford to pay that.
>
> We went on holiday once—we paid for a caravan—that's in more than 30 years of marriage . . . I'm not optimistic for me, nor for my grandchildren. The chosen few will be getting all the resources and all the others will get left out."

That shows some of the problems that we have in our communities.

It is right to accept the Government's argument that they are committed to going "back to basics" in terms of unemployment. That policy extends further, because unemployment and poverty are related to other problems, such as low pay. The Government often give the impression that, if we had low pay in our communities, all our problems would be resolved and all of a sudden our communities would flourish. That is nonsense. If low pay were the answer to all our problems, Germany would be the poorest country in the world and India the richest. I suspect that that is not the case.

Bad health is another problem that is linked to poverty, to unemployment and, indeed, to low wages. That issue is relevant in my community and constituency, where we have some of the worst health problems in Wales. A high percentage of people in Blaenau Gwent have a permanent disability. The 1991 census shows that 41 per cent. of households include someone with a long-term illness or disability that limits how they live. The people in my community, therefore, have a vested interest in ensuring that there is decent health care, and that we maintain the national health service.

The Government are sincere in their belief that we should go "back to basics" in the NHS. Their idea of "back to basics" is to return to the position that prevailed before the NHS, when people's ability to receive effective treatment depended not on their health needs, but on the amount of money in their pocket.

The Government are determined once again to go "back to basics". The health service will be increasingly dependent on, and determined by, whether people can make a quick buck out of health provision. By supporting that trend, the Government are going "back to basics". That is true not only of this country—health care in the United States is going back to basics. At least it is now recognised in the United States that there are major problems in the health service, and efforts are being made to resolve them.

A few years ago, when I read a book on health care in the United States, I was reminded that we are copying the position that prevails in the United States. The book stated that the chairman of Kentucky Fried Chicken had resigned his position to head the new Hospital Corporation of America, because, in his words, the growth potential in hospitals was enormous—it was even greater than in Kentucky Fried Chicken.

I do not know how many right hon. and hon. Members have tasted Kentucky fried chicken. Those who have done so will be justifiably concerned that the quality of that product will be similar to the quality of health care that we can expect in the months and years ahead.

Mr. Morgan: Plastic surgery.

Mr. Smith: As my hon. Friend says, plastic surgery. The money that can be made out of health care is not the only issue; the people who run the service are also a matter of concern. We find increasingly that the people who serve on area health authorities have never worked in the national health service, have not devoted their lives to it, do not care about it, and do not know what makes it tick. Increasingly, those serving on health authorities are slick business people who are out to make a quick buck. That is utterly unacceptable.

The Government are successfully attempting to take our democratic process back to basics. They have taken us back to the days when that process had no relevance to the vast majority of people. I do not suggest that the Government intend to abolish the vote in the next few months—even by their standards, that would be going too far—but the result of their policy will be the same.

People will be allowed to participate in the vote for local authorities, but it will be a worthless exercise, because those authorities will no longer have any powers—it will be a charade. Increasingly, powers are being put into the hands of quangos, and of people who are unelected and unaccountable to the local population.

Councillors are often attacked, but the money that councillors receive is nothing compared with the money that some quango members receive. The then Mr. Geoffrey Inkin once fought a parliamentary seat in Ebbw Vale, which is now part of my constituency. He managed to win about 2,000 votes. When the votes were announced, I thought, "That Mr. Inkin, he's a loser"; but I was wrong and I apologise.

Some years later, although Mr. Inkin had become somewhat disillusioned with the democratic process and elections, he was sympathetic to the idea of appointments. He now works for a few days a week. He receives about £60,000 to £70,000 a year. That is an insult to the people who, at one time, he wanted to represent.

If we go "back to basics", we should go back to the time when we gave our youngsters the opportunity to use their skills and talents: when we said to them that there were opportunities for them if they used the available facilities. We should go "back to basics", to the days when youngsters left school and knew that they were going to gain employment. We should go "back to basics" in terms of how we care for our people in hospitals; we should say to them that we will respond to their health needs, and that the money in their pockets is totally irrelevant.

We should go "back to basics" in our communities. Communities, including my own, which is one of the most famous in western Europe, are now breaking up because of the 10 or 12 or 13 or 15 years of "back to basics" from the Government.

7.30 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) because he presented from his constituency the view of unreconstructed socialism that so many of us on the Conservative Benches recognise. It took me back to my childhood in Tredegar, where there were so many people with the same outlook as the hon. Gentleman running the local councils. Does he recall that, in those days, the level of unemployment in Wales was always higher than the national average? Wales was a country heavily dependent on the old, heavy industries. He will recall that there were coal mines in the area. In fact, my grandfather worked in a coal mine in Tredegar.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly outlined, the aspiration of youngsters in that area was either to work in the pits or to go over to the Ebbw Vale steel works, which was a major employer in the area at that time. He has obviously conveniently forgotten that a substantial rationalisation of the steel industry at Ebbw Vale was subsequently announced by the former Member for Ebbw Vale, his own predecessor Michael Foot. That change was brought about not through wickedness on the part of Michael Foot, but through a recognition that the steel industry was not able to carry on with the high level of manning that had previously been the case. That process of rationalisation has carried on in Wales.

Mr. Llew Smith: I certainly do not have a short memory and, because of that, I remember the announcement of job losses in Ebbw Vale. I remember it well, because a few days later it was followed by another announcement that there was to be substantial investment in new factories and developments in the northern part of the constituency. That is what makes that period different from the present period. In the present period, jobs in our community are part-time, low-paid, menial and non-union.

Mr. Evans: I also have a reason to remember that announcement because it was the first occasion, and

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probably the last occasion, on which I addressed many thousands of people at the Ebbw Vale rugby ground and got an immense cheer for my remarks. If I may say so, on that occasion, the hon. Gentleman and his friends in the local Labour party were not as popular in that constituency as they might have been at the election.

In considering the position of the economy in Wales, it is important to recognise that all is not perfect. We must recognise from where we have come during the 20th century and that is why I referred earlier to the position of the old, heavy industries. A more substantial manufacturing base subsequently developed in Wales. Historically, the former manufacturing base was at the end of the line of industries based in the United Kingdom. When there was recession job losses would always occur first in Wales and that is why we always had levels of unemployment that were significantly higher than the national average.

As the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent accepted, we have had to face rationalisation of those old, heavy industries. We hardly have a deep-mined coal industry left in Wales but, at least, we have a rationalised steel industry, which is at the forefront of competition in Europe. We should recognise and be positive about that instead of adopting the negative approach that we so often hear from the Opposition Benches.

We must also recognise the job that has been done in developing the manufacturing base in Wales and the work of the Welsh Development Agency in that regard. I know that it is the favourite sport of Opposition Members to deride the work of the Welsh Development Agency, but we would do well to recall that there are many thousands of people who are working in Wales today primarily because of the efforts of the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: We are concerned about the Welsh Development Agency and the lack of accountability in its structure. Nobody on the Opposition Benches undervalues the work that it has done. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the present reorganisation of the Welsh Development Agency into three regional offices and the closing of the office in Carmarthen will mean the loss of 70 jobs, the loss of 70 key people whose expertise lies in working to develop indigenous industry and to attract inward investment? Is the WDA safe in the Government's hands?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman asked three questions. It has been shown in past months that the Welsh Development Agency is a demonstrably more publicly accountable body than many local authorities in Wales and all the people in Wales attach great importance, as we do in the House, to the activities of that body. The Public Accounts Committee demonstrated the accountability of the Welsh Development Agency. If that were not the case, the occasions when it fell short of the standard that we required would not have come into the public domain.

However, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition of the work that has been done by the Welsh Development Agency in the development of industrial opportunities in Wales. Clearly, every organisation must operate according to a specific plan. In those circumstances, my inclination is to give maximum support to the new chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, helped by the recent appointments made to the board which include—there is silence on the Opposition Benches—George Wright of the Welsh Trades Union Congress and the Transport and General Workers Union. He has agreed to join the board of the WDA, which is carving out the organisation that it requires to take forward the next stage of industrial development.

It is important that we should recognise where the successes have occurred. I am not saying that they are all successes and that we should rest on our laurels, because many concerns have properly been raised by some Opposition Members about sectors in which we need to progress still further. Let us recognise the major achievements in winning new inward investment to Wales. Let us not deride the fact, as some did a few years ago, that we have investment from north America, from Japan and from continental Europe because they do not set a lower standard of wages.

Assessments that have been made of wages paid in many of the new manufacturing plants in Wales show that their levels of pay are in no sense dramatically different from levels of pay in the UK. The overall wage level in Wales is lower than the national average, but that is because of many of the reasons outlined by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) earlier. He said that wages for those who do not own large farms, but for the ordinary family farmer on a small farm in Wales, are about 60 per cent. of national wage rates. Wage rates in indigenous business in Wales are pulling the average down. The new investment from others parts of the world has not reduced wage rates in the Principality.

Mr. Ainger: The hon. Gentleman touched on the accountability of the Welsh Development Agency. He claimed that, because the Public Accounts Committee investigated the scandal of more than £1 million of public money which was not being used in the correct manner, the WDA was therefore properly accountable. The Public Accounts Committee became involved because some Members, not least my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), drew the serious allegations and rumours about the Welsh Development Agency to the attention of the Audit Commission. Its proper route of accountability was through the Welsh Office, but under the administration of the Secretary of State's predecessor that Department totally failed to make the WDA accountable. That is why Opposition Members constantly refer to that accountability.

Mr. Evans: All public organisations within Wales that are within the remit of the Welsh Office are accountable ultimately to the House. That is the factual and the constitutional position.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) has not been in Wales quite as long as I have. At the start of my political and legal career in Wales one of the first cases that I dealt with involved corruption on the old Glamorgan county council—supposedly an accountable organisation. It had decided to delegate authority for all planning matters in an area that covered West Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan to one Labour councillor—the chairman of the planning committee, who came from the Rhondda valley. He ended up serving three years in prison, but that does not mean that the system was not accountable. Nor does the example that the hon. Member for Pembroke gave about the work of the WDA in any way undermine the fact that the agency is accountable to Parliament, as I outlined.

Let me return to the thrust of my argument on the development of the Welsh economy. It is important that we take advantage of some of the positive messages that we have received, for instance from the "Wales 2010" report by the Institute of Welsh Affairs. I drew attention to that report in an intervention as it sets out an important agenda for the future. It suggests that we should aim to become one of the most prosperous regions in Europe and that we should not spend our time looking negatively towards the past but should build on some of our successes—for example, the undoubted growth within the Welsh economy.

During the past 12 months there has been greater growth in the Welsh economy than in the United Kingdom as a whole. The "Wales 2010" report shows that we should be more ambitious and should seek annual growth of up to 4.5 per cent. in Wales. We must also aim to increase the gross domestic product in Wales. That is an agenda that can and must be addressed. It must be our ambition to make Wales one of the most prosperous regions in the United Kingdom. We can do so only by changing attitudes within Wales and that is why I pointed that out to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. I am glad that he dealt with my argument and accepted it.

We need a new spirit of enterprise in Wales, which does not have a great history of entrepreneurial activity. I am pleased that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery at least recognises that it is important that we develop that spirit in Wales, because the growth and jobs that people and Opposition Members want will result from that sort of entrepreneurial activity. The difference between Opposition Members and Conservative Members is that the former believe that such activity is Government-generated.

We shall change the situation in Wales only by dealing with the concerns outlined by the Institute of Welsh Affairs. Yes, we all agree about improving skills and about the importance of achievement for our school children. The Secretary of State for Wales remarked on that recently. However, we should also develop that entrepreneurial spirit. All those issues are of the utmost importance.

The Secretary of State mentioned the roads programme and I welcome his announcement about the Crickhowell bypass. Judging from what he said, he has clearly taken into account the weight of local representation on the subject. I am slightly disappointed that my intervention in my right hon. Friend's speech about traffic-calming measures was treated with derision by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. I do not know whether he has received any representations on the subject from his constituents, but many groups in my constituency strongly believe that traffic is travelling through our towns and villages much too fast and that in the past, sadly, roads policy has not dealt with that problem. The thrust of that policy has been to get traffic moving more quickly from one main centre to another, without dealing with the traffic management problems, such as how one gets traffic through a community other than driving a bypass around it. That is one reason why I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement.

Mr. Alex Carlile: If derision is the right word, it was for the measures available. Has the hon. Gentleman observed some of the traffic-calming measures, such as those in the village of Crew Green in my constituency, which are ineffective and almost encourage motorists to accelerate?

Mr. Evans: I certainly think that it is an important matter. As I returned to Westminster this week I approached Glangrwny, the most southerly village in my constituency, and saw 37 Welsh Office approved traffic signs within 100 yd, many of which merely tell people to reduce speed. That is not what we mean by traffic-calming measures.

On Saturday I attended a meeting at Llanwrtyd Wells in my constituency—the smallest town in Britain—where the Welsh Office has sponsored serious proposals involving placing gateways across the road to the town. They are interesting and innovative proposals, which I discussed in detail with representatives of the traffic department at the Welsh Office.

Although it is a well-known fact that I do not have the highest opinion of the Welsh Office's previous approach to the roads programme, I was much encouraged by its attitude to that development. I want more developments of that type. That was the essence of my intervention on the Secretary of State. That is why I was surprised at the derision expressed by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, as I thought that he would have welcomed my observation.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will convey to the Secretary of State my next point. It is perhaps known that a "Panorama" programme revealed that I am one of a group of Members who have asked questions about Government transport policy. However, the Secretary of State's announcement on the roads programme shows that he has carried out the type of review that I have been urging Ministers to undertake nationally. It would be churlish of the House not to recognise that he has dealt with the issue and caused that first review to be undertaken in Wales and he deserves great credit and support. I am happy to convey that to him.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery mentioned agriculture and said that it was the oldest and the largest industry in Wales. I recognise that fact and he knows that our constituencies are not dissimilar in that regard, although he painted an especially bleak picture. As we all recognise, there has been a decline in employment in agriculture since the 1950s. I take some solace from the fact that the number of agricultural holdings has not declined during the past 10 years and that is another factor. Having said that, many of the holdings have become larger, as the hon. and learned Gentleman outlined.

I wonder whether the imaginative and radical solution that he outlined—scrapping the common agricultural policy—is the answer that so many of our constituents want hear. Would they accept that it is uneconomic to farm for profit in many parts of mid-Wales? When the hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the need for diversification it took me back to those days when my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) used to make similar observations, as the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As I remember, he had a somewhat rougher passage from Liberal Members on those occasions.

This year, income from agriculture is better and it improved last year. Although that was partly helped by what the hon. and learned Gentleman derided as the

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accident of black Wednesday—I still refer to it as black Wednesday—many other factors have also led to an improvement in income. Many other factors have led to an improvement in income. One of them was falling interest rates, which has been a great help to the farming industry. We also have seen a significant increase in market prices. That is the truth of the situation.

For those who have them, quotas have buttressed agriculture, in cattle and sheep production, but those who do not have quotas have become involved in a mammoth bureaucratic exercise. Hon. Members who represent completely agricultural constituencies will know what I am talking about.

On several occasions, I have expressed disappointment about at least a few of the recent decisions as they have affected farmers in Wales. I have always made my position clear with regard to the hill livestock compensatory allowance, which is regarded as a central part of support for farmers in Wales. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) will recall that I raised that issue in the Welsh Grand Committee at the sitting before last, so it is some time since the matter arose. I was the first person to be concerned about the issue.

Agriculture has also been buttressed by arable aid. The Secretary of State is aware of my consternation—that is the lightest word that I can use in the circumstances—at the announcement about the arable aid scheme. He wants to sweep away regulation, and I agree with him. In those circumstances, the easiest way to sweep it away is to have an England and Wales region for the scheme. Everyone —even the nationalist party—wants that because it is the way to resolve the matter. To split Wales for the purposes of arable aid on the basis of LFA and non-LFA is deeply damaging to cereal farmers who happen to be within the LFA boundary.

Not many farmers are able to take advantage of the livestock premiums that are available within the LFA. It is no good telling a specialist cereal grower that he is in the LFA and, as a result, is eligible for other premiums because we have introduced a quota system. Unless he was in livestock production in 1991, he will not be able to get his livestock production now and receive those premiums, so that is totally irrelevant.

Another matter of great importance is that cereal producers in less favoured areas form a more substantial group than many would recognise. Only last night, I looked at the statistics published by the Welsh Office, which show that the majority of arable farmers in Wales are based in less favoured areas. There is more arable land in the less favoured areas of Wales than in any other area of Wales. That also underlines their difficult position. We shall have to come back to that issue.

The tourism industry is always important in the rural parts of Wales, and I am pleased that a number of tourists will be attending a Parliament for Wales campaign meeting this weekend, which will be held in Llandrindod Wells in my constituency. *[Interruption.]* I shall be there, in a sense, as the home Member. I am talking about the tourists from the other parties who will attend the meeting.

When I began my speech, I referred to the way that things used to be in the valleys of Wales. We now know that Labour Members and their friends wish to revisit the 1970s by raising again their ideas about the need for a democratic Welsh assembly. As Labour Members rightly said from sedentary positions, I intend to attend the meeting for the Parliament for Wales campaign. However, I intend to do so because I think that I will be virtually the only person present who was among the 83 per cent. of the people in Wales who voted against the setting up of a Welsh assembly on the last occasion.

I point out to those people—so many of them are on the Opposition Benches—who talk about a democratic deficit in Wales that the people of Wales have been given an opportunity to speak on this issue. They spoke resoundingly in a way that Labour Members did not like, so Labour Members decided that in the future the people of Wales would not be given a vote on it at all because they could not be trusted on the issue. If one reads the statements made subsequently by the protagonists for a Welsh assembly, one will see that the elitism is evident among those sitting on the Opposition Benches rather than among those sitting on the Government Benches. Labour Members spoke of people who had rejected the advice of the intelligentsia in Wales. I am sorry that so many people in the Labour party, churches, universities and so on believe that in some way the lot of the people in Wales could be advantaged by setting up a separatist assembly.

When I was first elected to the House and made my maiden speech, I made it clear that for all the time that I am here I am determined that Wales will remain an integral part of the United Kingdom. The Parliament for Wales campaign is a wedge to take us down the road to separatism. We can say that loudly with a certain knowledge that the people of Wales, when asked to judge this issue, agreed with us, not them.

7.55 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), despite his final remarks, because he is a lively contributor to debates. I find it easy to listen to and disagree with him. His speech was in marked contrast to the earlier contribution from the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). Perhaps some time later this evening or next week, I hope that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor will have a few words with the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West in terms of demeaning the House and Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman put her in a very difficult position. I do not know what he had in mind when he made his wild allegations about whoever he saw at that moment. It was a pleasure to listen to the regional speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor.

The Secretary of State made a statement on the roads programme. Although I expressed some pleasure that the Whitland bypass was to go ahead, in an intervention I asked the right hon. Gentleman for an assurance about the Carmarthen eastern bypass. We have been waiting for that bypass for the past 20 years. There is appalling congestion in Carmarthen town throughout the year. It is especially horrific in the tourist season, but I can promise that we have appalling congestion problems in the rush hour, at 4 o'clock and 5 o'clock in the evenings and on Wednesdays when there is a market in town. I want that bypass to go ahead with the utmost urgency, as do the people of Carmarthen. I got a reasonable assurance from the Secretary of State, but I hope that the bypass will go ahead and the Government will stick to the timetable.

The map of Wales that was circulated as part of the announcement shows that there is a large empty area where there appears to be no roads at all. That is north of Carmarthen, between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth. There seems to be a void where one must imagine that there is an enormous mountain range which we cannot cross. Indeed, that is good agricultural land.

Unfortunately, the road links north of Carmarthen to Llanybyther, Newcastle Emlyn and up towards Aberystwyth should be one of the strategic routes. Dyfed county council believes that the northern links are extremely important and I hope that the eastern bypass will go ahead. We see that bypass as the first stage of a major development programme of our northern links.

I shall make most of my remarks about a Welsh assembly and the proposed forum on which there have been some developments this week. In contrast to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, I have always been a firm believer in the need for some devolution of power away from London to all the regions of Britain. In the referendum on St. David's day in 1979, I worked hard for the yes campaign and it was a deep disappointment when the vote went substantially the other way.

The hon. Gentleman did not recognise, however, that there has been a fundamental change in public opinion in Wales during the past 15 years. We have endured 15 years of Conservative Government that have gone absolutely against the grain of all the people of Wales. That change of opinion applies also within the Labour party in Wales at local government and parliamentary level and among our supporters. Where once the Labour party looked on an assembly as a concession to nationalism, we now see an assembly in a different light, a Labour-controlled bulwark against the excesses of any future Conservative Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): The hon. Gentleman suggests that there has been a change of opinion on the subject of a regional assembly for Wales. How can he demonstrate that that is the case? If he is so confident that there has been a change of opinion, why is he determined to refuse to give the people of Wales a say on the matter?

Mr. Williams: An opinion poll conducted by BBC Wales has been referred to this evening, but I do not know whether the question was put in that poll. [HON. MEMBERS: "It was."] I am told that the question was included.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I was one of those who, in 1978-79, opposed the setting up of a Welsh assembly. Like my hon. Friend, I realise that there has been a massive change of opinion in Wales, largely as a consequence of 15 years of a Government who were not elected by the Welsh people. The opinion poll run by the BBC showed that 45 per cent. of the Welsh people were in favour of an elected assembly, 22 per cent. were against and 33 per cent. did not know but were likely to support the idea of an assembly.

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who beautifully answered the point made by the Minister. As I interpret those figures, there is a 2:1 majority in favour of a Welsh assembly.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *rose—*

Mr. Williams: I want to make progress.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *rose—*

Mr. Williams: I will give way to the Minister.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman is kind in giving way, but he is still missing the question. If he is so confident that there has been a change of opinion, why is he determined not to give the people of Wales a say in the matter?

Mr. Williams: The Labour party will contest the next election, as we did at the previous election, by being firmly committed to the setting up of a Welsh assembly. Hon. Members may cast their minds back to the general election, where 72 per cent. of the people of Wales voted for parties that wanted a Welsh assembly.

If the Minister wants government by referendums, why do the Government not offer the people of Britain a referendum on their tax policies or, better still, call a general election? We see the matters as being resolved at the next general election, when our policy will be to set up assemblies for Scotland and for Wales in the first year in power. We need an assembly to democratise the work of the Welsh office, and to take over its role in education, highways, health and the Welsh Development Agency. The assembly would run Wales, not by quango, but with elected and accountable local people.

There is to be a rally in Newport called "Forward to Victory", which will launch our European election campaign. There will be four main themes at the rally—the government of Wales, the health service, unemployment and the place of women in Europe. We will have a resounding rally with many good speakers. We know that there is a rival event at Llandrindod, which has been organised by the Parliament for Wales campaign. My view is that if we want an assembly or a regional tier of government in Wales, the only way to achieve that is by electing a Labour Government. All my energies in that regard will be channelled via the Labour party.

Earlier, we debated the setting up of an interim measure until we get a Labour Government and an assembly. The interim measure would set up a forum to receive reports back from the Committee of the Regions, and other matters. Unfortunately, the origin of the proposal which the Secretary of State has made is shrouded in mystery and is highly undemocratic. It came out of that dirty deal last year over the Maastricht treaty where, to win the support of nationalist Members, the Government agreed to establish a forum not only of council representatives but of the European Parliament.

Mr. Llwyd: Does the hon. Gentleman realise exactly why the Committee of the Regions is being set up? It will deal with regional policies and structures, and so forth. Those matters are frankly beyond the competence of people in local government, and I mean competence in the strictest terms. That is the point I am getting at.

Mr. Williams: I will come back to that point in my own way in a minute, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me. The Labour party supports in principle the establishment of an interim forum, but that forum must be acceptable to our county councils and district councils, and it must have transparent accountability and democracy. At the moment, the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Council of Welsh Districts are two all-Wales forums in existence.

We propose the development and the merger of those organisations as the unitary authorities are set up. There should then be a council for Wales, based on the principle of one member of the council per 100,000 people in each

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of the unitary authorities. That would make a total of 41 members representing all the new unitary authorities in Wales and would give a neat structure for the council, or Cyngor Cymru.

The council need not meet just four times a year, and it would not just take reports from the representatives of the Committee of the Regions. In a sense, it would inherit the work which is now done by the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Council of Welsh Districts, and the bodies would evolve naturally into the council for Wales.

I will answer the point made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd). It is absurd that Members of Parliament will serve on the body to which he refers. Our job is here at Westminster, and I find that I have quite enough work with a constituency to look after and my work in London. The last thing I want is a third part of my job based in Cardiff.

I read carefully a press release from the nationalist party last Monday, in which they referred to Bavaria and Catalonia as having their own Parliaments and members of the Committee of the Regions, who then report back to their Parliaments. There was no mention of having Members of Parliament from Berlin or Madrid also taking part in the discussions.

The arrangement which the nationalist party is trying to foist on the Government, and which the Government are reluctantly willing to accept, would be unprecedented in Europe. No region in Britain would have such an arrangement. No region in Europe would have such a report-back mechanism. I take rather harshly the doubts that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy expressed about the competence of local government representatives.

Mr. Llwyd: I was using the word "competence" in the strict sense. That is the point that I was making.

Mr. Williams: I am sorry. I accept that. It was a misinterpretation on my part. The hon. Gentleman is a lawyer and he should not use technical legal language on a scientist. The legal meaning of the word is different from the colloquial meaning.

In Wales, despite the comments of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, we have elected councillors. They are people of the people who know about their local area and have long experience, much longer than most Members of Parliament, of the affairs of local government. They work in Wales. They live in Wales. They travel across Wales. Members of the Council of Welsh Districts and of the Assembly of Welsh Counties criss-cross Wales in a way that ordinary Members of Parliament do not.

Elected councillors know the towns, the industries, the infrastructure and the roads of Wales and the highway problems that we have. They know where people work. They know our problems much better than the average Member of Parliament because our main job is naturally in Westminster. It is my firm conviction that local councillors know best what is needed in terms of advice to the Committee of the Regions.

If we set up the new body, it should, of course, appoint its three representatives on the Committee of the Regions. They would be accountable to the council. It is a curious structure in which the appointment is made by the Secretary of State and the accountability is to an amorphous body that is not democratic. The Labour party and I see the new arrangement as an interim measure.

Mr. Murphy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene a second time. He is, of course, aware that of the three representatives of Wales on the Committee of the Regions, the only one who is directly elected is our Labour representative.

Mr. Williams: Absolutely. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. It is an appalling commentary on the structure of government in Wales that the Secretary of State has the power to make nominations and has nominated a Conservative Member of the House of Lords. No one knows him in Wales. He has no reputation. The third member of the committee comes from a party that has only 8 per cent. of the support—

Mr. Llwyd: He is a county councillor.

Mr. Williams: As it happens. But he comes from a political party that has only 8 per cent. of political support in Wales.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The hon. Gentleman has derided the Conservative representative and the Plaid Cymru representative. Does he believe that all the representatives should be members of the Labour party? Is that his case?

Mr. Williams: No. We are willing to set up a mechanism that would ensure that the three representatives on the Committee of the Regions accurately reflected political opinion in Wales. We could build such a mechanism into the structure of the election of the representatives.

The interim measure may last only three or four years.

Mr. Murphy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way a third time. We ought to put on record what we mean by direct representation. We are not talking about the fact that the three representatives on the European Committee are elected to their ward as councillors. We are saying that the Labour party representative was directly elected by all the Labour councillors in Wales, whether county or district councillors.

Mr. Williams: Absolutely. I am grateful once again to my hon. Friend. I hope that when the Secretary of State reflects during the next few weeks on the comments that have been made about the forum, particularly in the early part of the debate, and receives representatives from the Assembly of Welsh Counties and the Council of Welsh Districts, he will decide that the Labour party's proposal goes with the grain of Welsh local government and makes much more sense in the European context; otherwise, the new body that will be set up will be an unusual, very odd body.

The forum will have an interim existence because the Labour party wants a Welsh assembly. The people of Wales want a Welsh assembly with real powers, not just influence. The forum of Welsh counties will have some influence, but we want a body that is democratically elected, with real powers to administer the whole budget of the Welsh Office—that £6 billion—to take charge of the health service, the education system and the infrastructure in Wales and the Welsh Development Agency. Some comments were made earlier about the problems of the

Welsh Development Agency and its lack of accountability. The WDA should be directly accountable. It should be part of the Welsh assembly.

My time scale for setting up an assembly is as follows. If we have our general election in 1996, in the first year of a Labour Government—1997-98—we will introduce the legislation. We could have elections to the regional assembly in 1999. As we turn into the new century, we will have a structure of government in Wales befitting of the 21st century.

8.15 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): The past 12 months have allowed us to try to get to know the Secretary of State a little better. I have to confess that I did not know much about him. I think that some of my hon. Friends suffered from the same ignorance. We did not know what made the new Secretary of State tick. At least in the past 12 months we have had a chance to take a closer look.

I agree with those of my hon. Friends who observed that we have probably for the first time a Secretary of State who at least has agendas. That has become clear. He has an agenda that might have something to do with Welsh needs and an agenda within the Conservative party. The second agenda is one for him, except where it might become inimical to or in conflict with the interests of Welsh people and Welsh needs. At least we can offer him some advice as he proceeds on his second agenda.

I draw to the Secretary of State's attention an observation once made by Mr. Harold Macmillan. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is not of the same persuasion or tendency, or perhaps even of the same party as Mr. Harold Macmillan. Nevertheless, it might be worth his remembering a remark made by the former Prime Minister and great Tory leader. He once said that the Cabinet was a prison without bars. The Secretary of State has begun to find in some of his attitudes and in his approach to the issues that he has raised in the past 12 months that the Cabinet has been a bit of a prison.

At least the Secretary of State is a quick learner. He has picked up one or two Welsh habits, one of which is a belief in crusades. The Welsh have always had a strong belief in evangelical crusades. Recent press releases have been headed:

> "Redwood calls for a crusade to set the best education standards".

Then the Secretary of State wished to lead a crusade through all the corners of the Welsh health service. So the right hon. Gentleman is following a good Welsh tradition in backing or being part of a great crusade.

The crusade on health launched by the Secretary of State was the first in Welsh history to begin with an apology, after he had made an interesting statement. It began:

> "I am a child of the National Health Service".

He then found that he had ruffled the feathers of the Secretary of State for Health, who did not like his statement. So we had a sort of apology.

I was more interested and more pleased in some respects that the Secretary of State appeared to take some of his ideas forward, unlike the Under-Secretary of State who, when I asked him how much progress was being made on the health crusade, took a month to reply. He gave a list similar to those that we have had many times in the past 12 months about so-called successes in the health service. At least this time the right hon. Gentleman appeared to take some of the ideas in his original statement about being a child of the national health service further forward. I hope that he pursues some of those targets and observations.

My family has a long tradition of nurses and sisters in the health service. The scrapping of sisters and matrons, who form the core of the health service, was a bad move as they were some of the best audit officers, with real responsibility for the running of wards. They were prudent about the resources available. It was not a creation of the Labour party which led to managerial problems and the present position where managers and contracts are discussed more than service to patients. We need to redress all the mechanisms that were set up to try to create a new internal market but which led to a great increase in salaries and numbers of managerial staff. Let us get back to the concept of a service and we shall not go far wrong.

I agree with the Secretary of State when he said:

> "Nor should the health service be too ready to want to destroy all the great old hospitals of Wales. . . . it is not always the right thing to do to seek to build on a green field site and bulldoze the existing one"

which has support and affection in the community. I hope that we shall see the practical application of those remarks. If the Mid-Glamorgan health authority ever proposes a plan to vandalise the health service in our community by closing Mardy hospital in my area or Mountain Ash hospital in the area of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), I hope that the Secretary of State will stand by those principles rather than the consequences of some of the health proposals that have been put to us, often in the name of so-called efficiency and internal market changes.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Will my hon. Friend extend his plea to the Secretary of State to look also at the venerable institutions in South Glamorgan, for example Cardiff royal infirmary? Old hospitals that have served the community well have not necessarily come to the end of their time.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend makes his point forcefully. Like all good crusades, we have a good text from which to work. I hope that my hon. Friend will invoke the text that I have drawn to his attention. He might also invoke the next part of that text, when the Secretary of State went on to say:

> "Nor will I be very pleased if the search for economies begins and ends with the search for ward closures."

That is exactly what has been happening in the past couple of years. Searches for economies have been about ward closures and reducing services and not about employing trained and skilled nurses. That is what has gone wrong. I hope that there will be a reversal not of some historic policy but of recent Government policy, the consequences of which the Secretary of State describes vividly and, quite rightly, pejoratively. I hope that the text of the crusade will be implemented in practical decision making.

Mr. Ainger: Is my hon. Friend aware that the recent minutes of the Pembrokeshire health trust contain a statement by a senior trust executive that, as the provider of health care in Pembrokeshire, the trust should be careful not to exceed the number of patients it is contracted to treat with Pembrokeshire health authority? In other words, if one more patient than the number in the contract is treated, more money will be demanded.

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend draws attention to one of the most insidious developments in the health service. As a result of contracts and strict budgets, there is now a real danger that the treatment of people will not be undertaken or will be questioned because it does not fall within the budget. I am presently locked in negotiation on an extremely serious case, the details of which I shall not go into on the Floor of the House, but it illustrates my hon. Friend's point. We are already seeing signs of an extremely worrying trend—decisions on medical care, for example, whether to operate, being made according to the budgetary position at any given time of a hospital or district unit. That fundamentally undermines and destroys the principle of a national health service.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Those symptoms can also emerge with GP budget holding.

Mr. Rowlands: I agree with my hon. Friend. We must be careful not to lose the fundamental principles attached to the national health service. That is a "back to basics" policy which we want to maintain.

May I direct my central remarks to the economic, industrial and employment position of communities such as the one that I represent? Before the Minister puts on the same old record and says that we are trying to run down our communities by drawing attention to our present problems, may I say that I am excited by many of the infrastructural changes that are taking place in my community. Those include the largest land reclamation scheme; a road programme; urban investment; and, I hope, an accelerated improvement in the A465. I do not regard Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney as threatened by the M4 corridor. It could be an M4 society in the sense that we can reach the M4 as well as the midlands and the north, by the road network. We can go east, west, north or south as a result of our road infrastructure, which I hope will be completed in the next few years. As a result of those infrastructural changes, we have the potential to remove our historic inhibitions to development. The questions of environment and roads communication are both being dealt with fundamentally, so I have no argument about that.

The fact that is now emerging is that infrastructure alone will not be enough. The work that I have been doing recently on the history of the 1930s to 1950s revealed that one of the lessons to learn is that, even if one has invested in infrastructure, it is not sufficient of itself. Sadly, the figures that are emerging have demonstrated that point all too forcefully.

I am frightened and shaken by the figures from censuses of employment and the official census of the past 18 months to two years. May I describe what they have meant for Merthyr borough? In 1981, which was not a good year for us as it was the first recession, 20,800 people were in employment in Merthyr borough; 13,100 of those were men, of which 400 were part time; and 7,700 women were in employment, of which 3,200 were part time. The figures reveal that, one decade later, only 16,700 people were in employment, of which only 8,700 were men. That is in a borough of more than 60,000 inhabitants which was the centre of the first industrial revolution. The 16,700 comprises a 50:50 ratio of men to women. Of those 16,700 —including the 8,000 women—4,100 or half are part-time, poorly paid employees. That is the present-day 1991 employment base of a borough and a constituency of the character of Merthyr Tydfil. It is not just frightening, it is wicked; it really does require attention.

Our largest employers are public administration and health, which are the newest Government targets. In addition to the fact that our employment base has shrunk, the largest part of what remains is the target of the Government's major new attack and shake up.

I did not come here to preach gloom and doom, but to present the problems and the issues. Irrespective of how it was caused and who caused it, let us examine the consequences of such a fundamental shift in the basis of our local economy and society.

The jobs in our community partly determine its character. They create the distinctive character of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. When a community loses jobs on the scale and of the character that we have lost jobs in the past decade, there are bound to be consequences which neither the Government nor any of us have wholly addressed.

I shall tread on dangerous ground, so I choose my words carefully. I believe that one of the consequences is the enormous shift from full-time, predominantly male jobs to part-time, women's jobs within a community such as mine. In no way do I express what everybody believes to be a historic old male chauvinist attitude. I do not represent such an attitude, but I believe that tremendous consequences flow from shifts of such character in a short time.

Everybody in the House—certainly those who know our community well—will recognise the role that Mum played in the nature of the social fabric. The personal, familiar nature of society was part of the distinctive character of our community. Much of the internal family and community discipline arose not from men, but from women. It was mother, as much as anybody, who drove me to do my homework or insisted that members of the family took piano lessons and practised. A tremendous feature of the community and society was the role played by natural internal discipline.

If, as the figures show, the nature of society shifts and changes, consequences will follow. There is no way—and rightly so—that women in the 1990s will play the same rôle as they did in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. They do not want to do it for two reasons. First, it was not a liberating role in many respects; and, secondly, they cannot do it because they as much as anybody are propping up the local economy in terms of jobs. Some 50 per cent. of jobs in communities such as ours are now employing women.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Does it not have the further consequence of totally demotivating young male teenagers in terms of their future?

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend anticipates my conclusion. I do not believe that anybody listening to my remarks thinks that I am blaming women for the problems in society. Of course we do not.

No one expects women in the 1990s to play the historic role that women played in our communities. However, we have to admit that that has happened and is happening. The decline in the number of jobs and the idea of work reduces the independence and dignity that comes from having a job and the shrinking of that potential which represented other sets of values.

The Secretary of State should not look for easy scapegoats and symptoms in single parents or anything else, but should instead try to address the deeper shifts in social attitudes in society. If I had an answer to that conundrum, I should be Prime Minister, or at least Secretary of State for Wales. I do not have an easy answer and I do not think that there is any single answer. Househusbandry has not yet caught on in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney or across the valleys—certainly not in any meaningful timescale.

We have to address the issues and find other ways to resolve the social consequences that flow from such a fundamental and fairly dramatic short-term change in many of our communities.

I have only two fundamental suggestions. First—I have been coming here for 25 years to argue this case and I shall continue to do so—jobs are at the centre of the solution. If we recreate jobs, we raise expectations. The prospect of the job has an amazing stabilising effect; it creates all sorts of values.

The great difference between the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was the decasualisation of work. The creation for the first time of reasonable expectations of employment created a more socially stable and independent society—more independent of Government than ever before.

In a curious way, Thatcherism has created greater dependency on Government in the 1990s in communities such as mine. I do not want to come to the House and talk about clawing back benefits, or about fighting for invalidity benefit or any other benefit. We have subsidies here and there, but if we create jobs we can do away with that dependency.

We become dependent on Government, but some Governments, when it suits them or when they have to, take away certain props from the communities. The current Social Security Bill is doing that now, with a rather dramatic and immediate effect on purchasing power in communities such as ours. We do not want the dependency that has been created by the destruction of jobs and the erosion of the jobs base in many of our communities.

I follow everything that the Secretary of State has said and done and I have become a connoisseur of his statements and speeches. I have noticed that he frequently says that we need more jobs. We shall do everything we can to help, but the right hon. Gentleman has to go away and get those jobs—and quickly. He was not here when I quoted the figures on the shrinking labour force in my community, but I hope that he will hear them from his right hon. Friend.

Secondly, the solution lies in training and education. At the eleventh hour the Government have been trying to rescue training from a deadly decade when, in the eyes of many people—especially the young—it represented nothing more than income support and bus fares. At last, we are beginning to reconsider the concept of modern apprenticeships and manufacturing. It is a good sign, but it is a very late conversion.

For too long, the Government have spent a great deal of money on substitutes for proper training to take more people from the dole queue—what in the 1930s were called palliatives. We have had many palliatives until, late in the day, there has been a conversion.

I think that there has been a conversion, but it has not yet been seen in the approach to education. On education policy, the right hon. Gentleman should cut the umbilical cord with Whitehall and the Department for Education. For 15 years, we have watched education policy be determined by a Government with a bilious, prejudiced and ideological view of what has happened in parts of inner London and other cities. It has had virtually no relevance to the educational arguments of Wales. Although the right hon. Gentleman has tried once or twice to defend corners, he failed rather sadly in defending us against most of the nonsense of their policy. Many of the same arguments and solutions have been peddled. Scotland might have survived this, but we have not.

There are two areas in which the umbilical cord should be cut. First, the Minister should stop arguing about grant-maintained schools. They have not caught on in our communities. We do not want to create a competitive education system. It does not make much sense. Most parents and children believe that there is one school to go to; they want to make that school better. Parents do not want to set one school against another. Let us return to the principle. Now, with the idea of unitary authorities, there is an ideal opportunity to create a community education system based on unitary authorities, which the right hon. Gentleman will introduce in his Bill—with some changes, I hope. From that unitary authority basis, Ministers should build on the concept of community education. Schools should not compete with colleges, or with other schools. We are ending up with schools spending money to try to compete with each other—tool up here, tool up there—and not produce, particularly in technical education, one decent centre of excellence of character of which the right hon. Gentleman speaks so much. I have told him that he should abandon the rigid national curriculum and develop vocational education.

Two years ago, I made a speech in the Welsh Grand Committee, pleading with the Government not to impose a rigid national curriculum and to go for technical vocational education from age 15, not 16 or 17, because sixth forms are no longer like the comprehensives of the past 25 or 30 years. As youngsters stay on in school longer, sixth forms are now trying to play multi-purpose roles.

An opportunity exists now to transform technical vocational education, as a distinctive alternative route, with an alternative qualification to GCSEs, of the sort that was such a feature of the training vocational system of the 1950s and 1960s, developed primarily by the great nationalised industries—the coal board, electricity, water and other major companies. That has collapsed in the past decade and we have had to look for alternatives. Among the suggestions could be the regeneration of communities such as mine. But given what has happened in the past decade in terms of numbers of jobs, and the shift in the nature of work in the community that I represent, we are at the eleventh hour. I hope that the Secretary of State will listen and heed the voice of our communities.

8.49 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The debate has been interesting and I have enjoyed many of the contributions, particularly from the Opposition side of the House. It is my heartfelt and sincere view that we in Wales have consistently been marginalised by this Parliament for far too long. This is the annual Welsh debate, and Welsh Members of Parliament are supposed to debate matters of considerable importance to us and our constituents in this single debate. The Welsh Grand Committee sits from time to time as a forum of debate, but it has no teeth whatever

[Mr. Elfyn Llwyd]

and is normally a platform or an opportunity for the Secretary of State to make press releases detailing his latest largesse.

It would be churlish of me not to say that I welcome the announcement today about the road structure in Wales. I welcome it unreservedly, but I respectfully remind the Secretary of State that I hope that the A470 could be accelerated—I am sorry to use that word—in as reasonable a manner as possible, because it is vitally important, especially in the light of the closure of Trawsfynydd which, in fairness, the Secretary of State mentioned.

I understand that the Secretary of State for Scotland recently introduced some plans to strengthen the role of the Scottish Grand Committee. He says that it should deal with exclusively Scottish legislation and various other pointers that would strengthen the Committee and make it more viable and, indeed, give it real purpose. Unfortunately, so far as I know, there are no plans in the Welsh Office for that to be done with the Welsh Grand Committee. I refer to what the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. David Hunt), the previous Secretary of State, said during the debate on the structure of government in Wales on 8 March 1993 in Cardiff:

> "As Secretary of State, I make it clear that I regard this as a vital, continuing debate. I look forward to hearing Members of the Committee tell us how they would like the Committee's role and influence to be strengthened."

What was vital to the then Secretary of State is not even on the current incumbent's agenda. That is disappointing and frustrating.

The so-called democratic deficit in Wales has already been mentioned, and it really is a deficit. Indeed, I would go further than that and say that it is a huge abyss. If the present structures are to retain even a veneer of respect and credibility, Welsh Members' powers of scrutiny need to be overhauled by revamping the Committee or even transferring its role and incorporating it into the all-Wales forum.

We have heard much about the way in which the all-Wales forum has been set up. I shall not go into its history, but for the first time ever in the history of Wales an all-Wales body would meet on Welsh soil to discuss Welsh government issues, and representatives of all the tiers of government in Wales would meet in one chamber to discuss and debate. It will have representatives of local government, county and district, Members of the European Parliament, Members of this House and members of the Committee of the Regions. I sincerely believe that it will be a true and real opportunity which all democrats should grasp immediately.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I put one problem to the hon. Gentleman? I have followed with interest the case that he is developing, but he will know that it is the view of many Opposition Members that the Welsh Grand Committee should be empowered to take legislation through the House which specifically affects Wales. I ask him to cast his mind back to this time last year when he joined us in the Lobby opposing the repeal of Standing Order No. 86 because we wanted the Welsh Language Bill, for example, to be taken in the Welsh Grand Committee. If what he is proposing comes about and the Welsh Grand Committee is subsumed into a local government structure, surely we will lose not only that opportunity, but others in which to scrutinise in this place the working of the Welsh Office.

Mr. Llwyd: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I did say "either/or". I said that the first premise was to strengthen the Welsh Grand Committee in terms of what has been proposed in Scotland, which in effect would give the Welsh Grand Committee an opportunity to deal with exclusively Welsh legislation. I then went on to develop the theme of a possibility of the forum becoming involved. It is an alternative, but I take on board what the hon. Gentleman says and I understand the point that he makes. I have to say genuinely and sincerely, however, that the Labour party's stance on this is mistaken.

It is clear that the Committee of the Regions will deal with regional, structural issues—transport links, broad structural funding and larger issues. Such issues are beyond the everyday competence—if I may use the word again—of local councils, even before the new Bill slashes them further, denuding them of their powers and obligations.

I plead with Opposition Members to reconsider the position. I do not think that history will record who initiated action, or how it was initiated; what it should record, in due course, is the establishment of a forum representing the opinions of all tiers of Welsh representation. We should grasp this opportunity. I am sure that the shadow Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies)—is in favour of a powerful Welsh assembly; he is entirely sincere in that regard. The forum, however, would give us a form of assembly pro tem, although it would be a poor substitute for the proper Parliament with full legislative and tax-raising powers that my party wants.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I accept that the hon. Gentleman sees the forum as an interim measure, but he has questioned the competence of those involved in local government. Does he envisage interference by Members of Parliament in the relationship between the Committee of the Regions and the Welsh assembly, when it is eventually established?

Mr. Llwyd: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a PhD. I am not sure what kind of PhD he has, but it is certainly not in linguistics.

Let me make one point clear for the third and, I hope, final time. I have no pencil with me, but I will try to spell out what I mean by "beyond the competence of local government". I am trying to say that councillors do not deal with regional policy; they do not deal with Interreg funds, objective 3 and 2B5 status, and so on. The point is that the Committee of the Regions will deal with such matters.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: My question was this: does the hon. Gentleman envisage Members of Parliament being involved in the Welsh assembly's relationship with the Committee of the Regions, when we have such an assembly?

Mr. Llwyd: As far as I am concerned, the Welsh assembly is just a milestone on the road. I want a full Welsh Parliament, and I have not even given the assembly much thought. I understand that the Labour party is in favour of an assembly without tax-raising or legislative powers. I wonder what it will do to keep anyone there, let alone Members of Parliament. Clearly, however, the assembly would be a step in the right direction, and provide an opportunity to scrutinise the disgraceful position that now exists in Wales, where all these quasi-autonomous non-governmental bodies are ripping us off day after day. I seem to have got away with using a certain phrase; it did not work this afternoon.

On a more serious note, the forum and/or strengthened Welsh Grand Committee would be a poor substitute for a Welsh Parliament. I believe that the denial of the democratic right of the people of Wales to self-determination is holding the nation back. That affects all of us, day after day. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who speaks about his area with great authority, stressed our current very worrying employment position. There is long-term unemployment, and young people have not a hope in hell of finding jobs owing to the underfunding of various courses. Even if they are given places on such courses, what are they to do next? That is just one of the serious problems that exist not just in Merthyr, but throughout Wales.

I am afraid that we have a Secretary of State who is not interested in Wales: that is the real problem. I was interested by a press release issued in the last fortnight by a Conservative hopeful in connection with the forthcoming Euro-elections, headed

> "John Redwood speaks to packed lunch at Haverfordwest".

I believe that the words "and the lettuce curled" appeared in brackets, although I am not sure whether that is entirely true. Can it be that, at last, the Secretary of State has found a captive audience in Wales? Or is the job getting the better of him? I am not sure which it is, but no doubt time will tell.

I mentioned earlier that the people of Wales were suffering as a direct result of Westminster misrule. Nowhere is that more evident than in the crisis currently facing our police forces. They are highly trained and motivated, but they cannot beat the crime wave without the resources that they need. My area—the North Wales police area—has an excellent force, but for years that force has been seriously undermanned. For years it has applied to the Home Secretary for an increse in its staff complement. It is currently undermanned by 70 officers, and has been for more than five years. The Home Office, however, refused point blank to sanction the employment of one new officer. What kind of Government do that? What message does that send to the public in an area of north Wales where crime is soaring?

The message is clear: the Home Office has other priorities and interests. The interests of Wales are—to put it succinctly—peripheral. The situation is critical in south Wales: police stations are being shut and police cars left in garages because they are damaged and there is no money to repair them or even, in some cases, to put petrol in them. I do not think that the Home Office has offered any help, and I think that it is unlikely to do so. The best that it can do is to blame local government—in accordance with the Government's hidden agenda, which will be evidenced in the Welsh local government reorganisation Bill.

I believe that the Welsh public are now concluding that the only way out of the conundrum is to campaign for a Welsh Parliament. Would such a Parliament starve that most basic and necessary service, the police, of the funds and resources that it requires? I do not think so. I believe that, for the time being, responsibility for Welsh policing should devolve to the Welsh Office; otherwise we shall continue to stand at the end of the Home Office queue with our empty begging bowl. The Government have a serious responsibility which, unfortunately, they are shirking. The blame for inadequate policing in Wales lies wholly and directly with the Home Office. That is unacceptable and I believe that the people of Wales will signal their disapproval and frustration at the next available opportunity—the local and European elections in June.

The Conservatives' standing in Wales has never been lower, which is entirely understandable. We in Wales have great respect for law and order, but it is disgraceful that large parts of Wales must be policed by neighbourhood watch schemes. Welcome though such schemes are, they would not be necessary if the service was adequately funded. Our communities are in crisis: housing waiting lists are unacceptably high, and ever rising. I ask again: would a Welsh Parliament assign to housing such a low priority as is assigned by the Government? I do not think so.

I am appalled to think of the number of people on housing waiting lists in Wales. Some are on those lists for years on end, denied the basic requirement of life—a roof over their heads. What kind of Government sanction such an anti-social policy?

Mr. Win Griffiths: A Tory Government.

Mr. Llwyd: Quite so. Why should people be sleeping rough on the streets of Cardiff and Swansea? The answer is clear: a Welsh Parliament would not allow it. We have a better set of principles. I do not want to go "back to basics", or we shall become embroiled in a laughing match, but I think that we think more about our people and have more respect for our fellow men than is evinced by the Government.

What of those other obvious facets of a community in crisis—unemployment and lack of youth training? I shall not dwell over-long on that subject because the problem was eloquently described by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. Every civilised society must aim for full employment, although perhaps it is unattainable. That should be the aim of any civilised society because chronic unemployment brings with it a plethora of social problems. Among the most serious are high anxiety levels and sickness, low morale, low self-esteem and, unfortunately, crime. Although I do not subscribe to the view that unemployment per se is directly responsible for crime, it would nevertheless be idle to ignore the fact that it is a major constituent in the formula.

What advice does one give a young person who has been unemployed for five years or, as is often the case in many areas in my constituency, even seven or eight years, ever since leaving school? What incentives are there for him or her? In the absence of training schemes, that is worrying, but even when there are training schemes in areas such as my constituency, young people feel that it is almost a waste of time to go on them because they will not lead to employment.

Steeped as we are, in Wales, in the work ethic, historically and traditionally, I cannot believe that a Welsh Parliament would attach such minimal priority to employment and training. The answer for the people of Wales is obvious once again. I was speaking with a Trades Union Congress official last night who argued that, unless the Government wake up to the fact, in 10 years we shall be left way behind virtually the whole of the developed world, simply because nothing is being spent, in real terms, on employment and training. It is all very well bowing our heads and saying, "We are spending such and such". We

[Mr. Llwyd]

are not spending anything like the amount that we should be spending. Everyone who has ever considered the situation realises that. We shall end up in 20 years' time with an undisciplined society and in a situation in which we are virtually competing with third-world countries, directly because of the unenlightened stance of the Government.

Agriculture is still a major source of employment in Wales. The traditional Welsh hill farm has both kept the fabric of rural society together and proven to be a guardian of the Welsh hills and the precious environment, but the Government have set their face against the agriculture industry. I see the Secretary of State grimacing. He may be grimacing even more in a minute.

Mr. Redwood *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Llwyd: If evidence were required, we need only consider three or four recent moves by the Government. The cuts in the hill livestock compensatory allowances will affect upland families very badly. I acknowledge that there has been an improvement in farm incomes during the past 12 months, but we must consider that improvement in the correct perspective.

First, the improvement came about due to some market changes and, which is more likely, as a result of the green pound devaluation. Secondly—this is vital—the improvement came after eight or 10 years of regularly decreasing income, so the improvement is from a very low base. Therefore, let us not delude ourselves by saying that the cuts will not hurt. In the next 12 months, the full force of the cuts will be felt. Many farmers used their HLCA payments to pay for wintering their sheep. HLCA payments exist to assist them because it is a difficult region in which to "produce the goods". However, the cost of wintering increases regularly and the HLCA has now suffered two savage cuts. Inevitably, there will be a great deal of hardship in the next 12 months and it will badly hit some areas such as my constituency of Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, where one family in five relies directly or indirectly on agriculture.

What the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) said is all very well, but I note in passing that not one Conservative Back Bencher is in his place. That shows the real priority—*[Interruption.]* Not one Conservative Back Bencher from Wales is in his place; yet this is the annual Welsh debate.

Mr. Donald Anderson: There is one Member representing a Welsh seat.

Mr. Llwyd: The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) is right; there is one Member representing a Welsh seat, but I know that he has a great deal of gravitas and I am sure that he is there to look after their interests.

Sir Wyn Roberts *rose*—

Mr. Llwyd: I see that the Member in question has been tempted to intervene.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) will have noticed that he is only a quarter of his party here this evening.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The right hon. Gentleman is a good deal less than that.

Mr. Llwyd: I am a quarter, but 75 per cent. of my party attended the debate and I think that shortly there will be 50 per cent. here.

Mr. Ainger: The right hon. Gentleman is only a sixth.

Mr. Llwyd: Yes. My mathematics are not very good —he is only a sixth. Despite the obvious gravitas, he is only a sixth of his Welsh party. Anyway, I shall not get embroiled in this or I shall be mimicking, dare I say it, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards).

The farm conservation grants scheme was recently cut. That cut will bite hard and it is very damaging to the average farmer. I must question the bona fides of the Government. If they dictate to farmers that they must handle the environment carefully, put funds in place to enable them to do so, and then chop off that funding, it is a serious and retrograde step and will be financially damaging to Welsh farmers.

The Government have also given in to strong lobbying by the landed classes for a reform of tenancy law. The reform is overwhelmingly opposed by Welsh farmers, who regard it as damaging in the extreme, but because English farmers are happy with it farmers in Wales have to toe the line. What better example of misrule could there be?

Cereal growers in Wales also suffer from discrimination. They are paid substantially less for producing exactly the same amount of grain as growers elsewhere, which is patently unfair. The message to Welsh farmers is absolutely clear: the Government do not want anything to do with them. They want the farmers to be guardians of the rural areas, but they will not pay them for it. Welsh farmers are low on the Government's agenda: the Government have worked out that they can do without them. I urge Welsh farmers to accept that a Welsh Parliament must be the answer because without a properly funded agricultural industry, and without taking account of the changes in guardianship mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), the fabric of rural Wales will crumble and the culture and language which are so precious to us all will disappear. That is a signal danger that we must bear in mind.

During the passage of the Welsh Language Act 1993, I realised how undemocratic and how unrepresentative of Welsh opinion Westminster is. There was a weight of informed opinion in favour of a clear statement in the Act on the status of the language. Against that opinion, and with the assistance of Conservative Members who knew nothing about the issue, every amendment was defeated. That is yet another example of Westminster rule adversely affecting the interests of the people of Wales.

In case further examples are needed, I cite the question which I tabled last week and which was answered on 1 March. It read:

> "To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will recommend that St. David's day be designated a bank holiday and a national holiday in Wales; and if he will make a statement."

The Secretary of State's answer was:

> "No."—*[Official Report*, 1 March 1994; Vol. 238, c. *651.]*

I am not concerned about whether that response was an insult to me—I am sufficiently thick skinned to take an insult from the Secretary of State—but I do not think that the people of Wales are happy about it. They are not comfortable with a person who just says no without going into any further detail. That is not the type of government that Wales wants; nor is it the type of representation that we want. The Secretary of State will no doubt realise that fact one day, if it is not too late already. I do not know whether he thinks it is funny, but I do not find it funny and one of these days the people of Wales will ensure that he realises that it is not funny.

Of course, this is the Secretary of State who wanted to turn back the clock and ruin the good work carried out by Welsh bodies on mainland Europe. He wants to remove Welsh dragons from Welsh Development Agency literature, or rather confuse the issue by including a Union Jack, too. When we have at last got the people of mainland Europe to recognise "Wales in Europe" as a selling point which is readily understood, he wishes to confuse the issue by bringing in the Union Jack which is unrepresentative of Wales because Wales does not feature in it.

Is there any truth in the report in *The Herald* that the Secretary of State is considering closing the Welsh centre in Brussels? I understand that he said today that he did not intend to do so, but I should be pleased if at some point he could undertake to continue to support that vital centre.

Mr. Redwood: I have no plans to close the centre. That is just another of the silly rumours put about by Opposition Members. The hon. Gentleman's previous point was also inaccurate. I have passed comments on literature that we send to potential Japanese investors who do not know Wales well. He is confusing that with "Wales in Europe", which is entirely different, as he well knows.

Mr. Llwyd: I will not argue the point. I know that time is short.

Is it just a coincidence that the same Secretary of State for Wales has seen the changes to the national curriculum which will undoubtedly slow down the process of bringing bilingualism to our young people in the schools? It may be just a coincidence: I do not know, but I tend to think that his heart is not in the job, that he is really here just on his way up the greasy pole and that he has no real respect for Wales. He certainly never stays there. He has stayed there one evening, I believe, since his appointment, or perhaps two. The Secretary of State shakes his head. Maybe he will tell us in due course.

It was said earlier that because of the vote in 1979 which went against devolution that is the end of the story. Hon. Members are expected to vote on hanging at every opportunity. We are supposed to vote as often as possible —vote early, vote often—on that issue, but on this vital subject of extreme importance to the people of Wales we are not to have a referendum because in 1979 the country decided against it.

A former Prime Minister, Lord Wilson, said that a week was a long time in politics. Fifteen years of Tory misrule is a very long time in politics. That fact alone has led the people of Wales to the inevitable conclusion that they have had enough. Bearing in mind that 72 per cent. of the electorate of Wales voted for parties which had in their manifesto some form of devolution—be it a Parliament, as we want, or an assembly—if we had a referendum tomorrow the answer would be an overwhelming and resounding yes. I want to be awake to greet that day when it eventually comes, because the misrule of this place and the way in which we have been treated is an insult to the people of Wales.

9.11 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): My contribution will be brief because I know that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) wants to speak before the Front-Bench speakers wind up.

I want to comment on what the Secretary of State said about roads in Wales. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) referred to the Secretary of State's attendance at a private function in Haverfordwest on Monday, after which the *Western Telegraph*, the local weekly there, ran a headline this Wednesday about the major announcement to be made on roads in west Wales by the Secretary of State. I was, therefore, extremely disappointed by the statement about roads that he actually made because, it appeared to me, all he said was that the "Roads in Wales" supplement 1993 was to stand in relation to those roads. When he publishes the new 1994 supplement, I hope that work on the Robeston Wathen bypass, in particular, will be brought forward and that the Red Roses to Llandowror section will be included in the road programme. The Secretary of State nods. I am not as disppointed now as I was when he first spoke some four hours ago.

The other issue to do with roads that is worth addressing, particularly as the Minister of State is sitting next to the Secretary of State, is the Cleddau bridge. It is a very important road in west Wales. The Minister of State has received a delegation about it. I hope that he will find a few moments in which to comment on trunking the Cleddau bridge, on possibly significantly reducing the tolls and in removing the massive debt burden with which the new Pembrokeshire authority, following local government reorganisation in Wales, will find itself saddled.

The final point that I want to make before I move to the main part of my contribution is perhaps the most serious. Today, I learnt from the office of Bruce Millan something about the Interreg II proposals, about which I, in company with a delegation from west Wales, recently spoke to the Minister of State. I was informed only this afternoon that those proposals, which exclude Dyfed but include Gwynedd, now also exclude south-east Ireland, which had previously been included. As the Minister of State will be aware, the fact that south-east Ireland has now been officially removed from the formal document makes the situation serious.

Previously, we had an illogical situation. On one side of the Irish sea, Rosslare, in south-east Ireland, was included for Interreg funding, whereas on the other side south-west Wales, Dyfed, was excluded. We thought that an omission had occurred because that pattern was paradoxical and illogical. Unfortunately, we understand that the Commission has now altered its submission and removed south-west Ireland, too. As the Minister of State will appreciate, that makes our case far more difficult to argue.

I shall rattle quickly through the rest of my speech because I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East wishes to speak. In south-west Wales, as throughout Wales, we have more than a crisis of unemployment. In my constituency, rather than our seeing the end of the recession and the beginning of the recovery, unemployment is worse than it was a year ago. In the Pembroke constituency, unemployment was higher in January 1994 than in January 1993. There has been no recovery at all in west Wales.

[Mr. Nick Ainger]

The issue is not only unemployment, bad though that is. One of the consequences of unemployment is low pay. I have contacted my local jobcentres over the past couple of days, and I can tell the Secretary of State what people are expected to live on in west Wales. In the Milford Haven jobcentre, a vacancy for a butcher is advertised at £2 an hour and vacancies for a full-time cook and for a care assistant in a private nursing home at £3 an hour.

Milford Haven jobcentre has 50 vacancies on its books. That means that it has one vacancy for every 30 unemployed people registered there. In Pembroke Dock, on the other side of the Cleddau bridge, a security guard's job is advertised at £2·70 an hour, a job for a bus driver, with all the responsibility that that involves, at £3·22 an hour and one for an experienced chef at £3 an hour. Goodness knows what pay an inexperienced chef would command.

In the south Pembrokeshire travel-to-work area we have the highest unemployment rate in Wales—more than 22 per cent. That means a crisis not only of unemployment but of low pay. The impact that that has on families is best illustrated by a case which I came across that I referred to the Secretary of State for Social Services. Mr. Stephen Rees, after a period of unemployment as a building contractor, got himself on a course and finally found a job. Before that, he was drawing benefits, and benefits in kind such as free school meals, totalling £179·90 a week.

When he started the job, he lost his income support and free school meals but gained his wages and family credit, and kept his child benefit. The new total was £161 a week —but the family still had to pay £9·50 a week for two children's school meals. In the end, after finding a job after following a course of education, Mr. Rees was £35·80 a week worse off. What sort of society are we when people who have followed a course and obtained work find that, because the work is so low paid, and family credit makes up only part of the difference between their income and what is called a living wage for a family, they are worse off?

I wish to draw the attention of the Minister of State yet again to the crisis in our discretionary awards system, and I hope that he will touch on that subject. Whether one receives a discretionary award in Wales is a lottery. The system is based on where a person lives and his or her age. Many local education authorities are forced to limit discretionary awards to those aged between 15 and 25. A 26-year-old in Powys or Dyfed on a further education course does not receive help. Some people in Mid Glamorgan do not receive help with fees. Some people go on a further education college course after being made redundant or because they want to be retrained. Goodness knows how they live. Where are we going if it is better for people to stay on income support or unemployment benefit than to go on a further education college course, during which they cannot support their families or themselves?

Something has to be done. I know what the Minister will say, "Well, we have given this discretion to the local authorities." But the Government have also significantly reduced local authorities' resources. As it is a discretion, sadly, after 15 years of Tory rule, authorities have started to chip away at the resources. When local authorities had the resources, they resourced further education places well. Now they have to make significant cuts. We should encourage people to come off income support and unemployment benefit and enter further education colleges to acquire the right technical skills.

Unless we tackle those basic issues and are willing to make resources available to create a highly motivated and skilled work force, we shall continue to be at the bottom of the pay league, not only in Britain but in Europe. Ultimately, we will be competing against the Pacific rim countries. That is not good enough for the people of Wales.

9.21 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): This has been a good debate, with the exception of the disgraceful speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). For me, the high spot of the debate was the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who described graphically, and with an intensity of feeling and knowledge, the crisis in his community. I hope that the Secretary of State will read that speech with great care.

This is our annual Welsh day debate, and there is a certain symbolism in the fact that, while it is usually held on St. David's day, it is being held on 3 March. What arrogance that shows. It is as if the Government were announcing that, as a result of the diktat of the Secretary of State, Christmas day was to be held on 27 December.

The problem involving disabled facilities grants in Wales should be brought graphically to the attention of the Minister. I shall give him one example and I shall not elaborate on it. In April of last year, a constituent of mine applied for the disabled facilities grant because of the crisis in her personal health. I am told by the city council that

> "Unfortunately . . . the Council's allocation for discretionary grants (which includes mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants) is fully committed for the current year and the number of applications already in the system will take up the whole of the sum allocated for 1994-95. What is more alarming is that it seems unlikely that all the outstanding applications will be approved in 1994-95 with the consequence being that some will be waiting until 1995-96 before they can be considered for approval.
>
> This means that for someone in"

my constituent's

> "position, they are unlikely to receive an inspection for some considerable time—probably not until the latter half of 1995—and the speed with which an approval can be issued will be dependent upon the capital allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants in 1995-96."

So much for the preparation for care in the community, a principle that we all support.

The general point that I shall make briefly is that, on St. David's day, what is the idea of Wales that we wish to promote? Do we believe in the value of a Welsh identity and, if so, what, if anything, are we prepared to do to encourage it? I ask not for any exclusive identity, as there are other identities, but for something of value in itself which gives roots, meaning and value to life. We should be concerned that some all-Wales institutions are now under threat. For example, British Gas Wales is scrapping its Welsh region and is likely to close its headquarters. Does it matter? It says that the service to the consumer will be the same, as if that sentence in some way justifies the removal of an institution which, with its predecessor, has been in Wales for a long time. It is not an answer to say that.

We know of the crisis in the Welsh national opera. As a result of underfunding, we have had not only the recent resignation of the general manager but, in my city of Swansea, the reduction by Welsh national opera of half of its number of appearances. It may not matter, but I believe that it does and it is of some significance. Other institutions are being marginalised and reduced. The Government may say that we shall have the Committee of the Regions, but such a Committee was grudgingly accepted by the Government and Wales is not being given a constitutional focus. It is not a separatist argument. I hope that my contribution during the 1970s suggests that I am not someone likely to be swayed by separatist arguments.

I see the value of a Welsh identity and think that it is wrong in community terms that there is such an erosion of that identity. The Government talk of the linking of Wales with motor regions. It is absolutely clear that Europe is going for greater regional identities and that each of the motor regions with which we liaise has its own institutional focus and its own elected and administrative unit. We in Wales do not and I believe that that is wrong.

We must return to the position of the Secretary of State for Wales. I see many great virtues in the Secretary of State. As a person, he has political courage, but he represents Wokingham. He is from outside the folk and outside the culture. Imagine what would happen in Scotland if the Secretary of State for Scotland were to come from Wokingham. Why is Wales so quiet when that insult has been delivered to us? The Secretary of State has his own constituency with its own ideas, which he is pursuing and which puts him, effectively, as part of an English nationalist party. For example, when he tried to prevent the use of the symbol of Wales in Brussels, was his argument against Wales or against Europe? Why cannot Wales project its proper national identity internationally in that way?

It is quite wrong that the Government are acting in a way that dilutes, reduces and removes our Welsh identity. There is a Welsh identity, which is seeking to define itself. The debate on that is under way in Wales today and the Secretary of State and his party have largely opted out of it. That is why the Conservatives are an irrelevance in Wales. The more negative they are, the more that they will promote that which they seek to undermine.

9.29 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I shall take up where my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) left off. This debate does not have one topic, but is a review—an annual debate during which we can paint a picture of the Wales that we see.

The Secretary of State has done his best—he perceives a land of milk and honey. I am pleased to see him back in his seat after his visit elsewhere—probably to Wokingham—so that he can hear more contributions from Opposition Members, which will show him why Wales has, strangely, become more united as it has become more divided from him and from the Tory party.

The Secretary of State has accused Labour Members of not having constructive ideas or offering an alternative vision, but we have just heard one from my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East, and I shall do my best.

The Secretary of State also accused those on the Labour Front Bench of being Trappists. I have been accused of many things, but never of being a Trappist. I tried hard to join that order as a young man, but I failed the oral examination!

My hon. Friends the Members for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) and for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) painted a picture of the devastating changes taking place in Wales—fundamental changes, for example, to our concepts of the family, of society and of the breadwinner, of council houses and a steady job. People of our age group had been brought up to expect such things, but those fundamentals have been withdrawn and our dreams and expectations have not been replaced by anything else. That is an extremely worrying development, as it is difficult to recreate a society.

The Secretary of State said that he would reintroduce engineering apprenticeships, which were very much a part of people's expectations. People thought that the existence of such apprenticeships would create a sort of working-class aristocracy. Many entrepreneurs followed that route; they did an engineering apprenticeship, attended the local technical college, knew that they were pretty good at their jobs, and, after working for five or perhaps 10 years, started their own businesses.

It is pretty rich for the Government to try to present engineering apprenticeships as a great development, instead of apologising to the people of Wales for destroying them 12 or 13 years ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney witnessed the decline and painted a devastating picture. Firms such as Hoover, Teddington Aircraft Controls and Thorn used to supply engineering apprenticeships in numbers a hundred times greater than the number today.

Mr. Rowlands: And the Coal Board.

Mr. Morgan: Yes, the Coal Board and GKN Dowlais also supplied many of them, but that has all been taken away.

It is a devastating U-turn for the Government to say today that they have decided that what they did for the past 12 years was a bad idea, and that they want to bring back one of those fundamentals. We are pleased to see any conversion on their part, but I hope that they will not expect us to congratulate them.

We recognise the damage that was done to Welsh and to British society at a time when other European countries, such as Germany and France, did not abandon engineering apprenticeships for 14-year-olds, but merely tried to extend them so that more girls were taken on. Apprenticeships for girls were always a problem for my generation and people who are slightly younger, such as the shadow Secretary of State for Wales.

The Secretary of State also made a major announcement about roads. He tried to claim that he was proposing a new strategic direction for roads. The missing elements of his speech were as important, however, as the content. He stated that he would concentrate on the three east-west routes, and said little about north-south routes. The latter are not as important, but they cannot be ignored.

We want some progress reports on the A470, and we want to know whether priority is being removed from the A483.

As has been said, Clwyd is an extremely important industrial powerhouse in north-east Wales. The connection to Wrexham, Mold and the other important industrial areas around Deeside from industrial south Wales is enormously important. The Department of Transport in England and the roads division of the Welsh Office have put in excellent new routes south from Wrexham through the Ruabon bypass to the Chirk bypass, from Shropshire in England with the Oswestry bypass, and the Welshpool bypass.

[Mr. Morgan]

There are about 30 miles along the Severn valley where a bypass could easily be constructed—I am sure that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) will agree with me—at a reasonable cost, given the nature of the Severn valley. That would give us a connection between the powerhouse of north-east Wales and the powerhouse of industrial south Wales. We see enormous lorries carrying forestry, for example, to the shop and paper mill from mid-Wales and the Brecon Beacons area in south Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Does he agree that we need a policy which consists of putting freight back on the railways, and not running a dual carriageway through central Wales but having a road of the sort of standard which we have on the Welshpool and Llanidloes bypasses?

Mr. Morgan: I entirely agree. I defer to the views of local Members. Certainly, the last thing I want is despoliation of the countryside by roads ripping through. A bypass would make it possible to travel, say, the 60 miles from immediately south of Newtown to Wrexham in one hour without difficulty and the sort of hold-ups that one gets at present when one is between Newtown and the southern edge of the Oswestry bypass. A bit of continuity would enormously improve communications there.

There was a big gap where the Secretary of State should have talked about north-south communications. Surely, even on the railways and roads, and the connections to England, I thought that he might have mentioned the one thing on which he as the constituency Member for Wokingham and the Members of Parliament elected by the people of Wales might agree, which is the need to do something about connections to Heathrow from the west.

The Secretary of State mentioned the importance of Heathrow. Why will we have to go all the way to Paddington and then back out again when what we need, as do the Secretary of State and his constituents—6 million or 7 million people live west of London, as well as the people in industrial south Wales, Bristol and so on—is the same access through the Heathrow express link without having to go all the way to Paddington and back out again?

The Secretary of State should be pressing that matter, because it is something on which he and the people of Wales can agree. He should take advantage of and push for it, along with Members of Parliament from the western edge of the home counties. Obviously, that is the origin of his political status which enables him to have the platform to become the Secretary of State for Wales, for however brief a period that may be.

We have also mentioned the issue of morality and housing, on which the Secretary of State made his name. The chairman of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs referred to that issue as well. I do not want to intrude further on the Secretary of State's difficulty in trying to recover his reputation for talking about single mothers in an unprepared and off-the-cuff manner, so I shall turn to a subject on which he has also done a bit of talking off the cuff—the health service and bureaucracy.

Today, the Secretary of State said that he will merge the national health service in Wales with the health policy division, thereby saving one top civil servant's job. That is his way of giving practical effect to his attack on bureaucracy in the national health service which has caused such trouble between him and the Secretary of State for Health. We have been told that the Secretary of State for Health knee-capped him on the issue. After all, it is not every Minister who can combine the good looks of Nancy Kerrigan with the brains of Tonya Harding. The Secretary of State for Wales has had to learn that the hard way.

I think the right hon. Gentleman will agree that we want not a lot of pretence and populist drivel about needing to drive down the number of bureaucrats, but acceptance that, in an internal market-based national health service, there will undoubtedly be a large army of accountants to shuffle bits of paper from one health authority to another. That is what we are seeing in the health service at present.

It is no use the Secretary of State pretending that one can introduce an internal market—which undoubtedly he supported in the Lobby, although he was not in the Cabinet at the time—but not like the consequences of it in terms of the number of bureaucrats. He must realise that, in an accountancy-driven health service, not a needs-driven health service, we will get the sort of crisis at the end of the financial year that we are experiencing at the moment.

In the Cardiff area, we are aware that Llandough hospital is not taking any more non-urgent patients from South Glamorgan health authority because the contract money has run out. I believe that there are problems in the Ceredigion health trust, which is not taking any non-urgent patients. I think that there are similar problems in Pembroke involving contracts.

Mr. Ainger: There have been redundancies.

Mr. Morgan: Those problems have knock-on effects on employment. There is the problem of boom and bust in the Prince of Wales orthopaedic hospital. Mid Glamorgan health authority has paid for so many orthopaedic operations, including knee and hip joint replacements, that the Prince of Wales hospital cannot do them in time. I have talked to members of staff of the health authority and Mid Glamorgan will ask for its money back on 1 April if the hospital cannot complete 47 outstanding hip and knee joint operations.

The health authority has come up with a wizard scheme. As well as working late at night after doing a full day's work, the staff come in at the weekend. Eight hip operations are carried out on each day of the weekend for two successive weekends, as that is the only way of completing the Mid Glamorgan contract. Otherwise, the health authority must pay the money back to South Glamorgan.

The doctors are being offered £250 a day to come in on Saturday and Sunday, while nurses get double time. However, the doctors cannot get anaesthetic cover without breaching the Royal College of Anaesthetists' professional rules. As a result, the scheme seems to be falling apart and the money may be repaid from South Glamorgan to Mid Glamorgan on 1 April because it was unable to complete the contract. What a way to run the health service.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the patients charter is pioneering work to raise the standards of quality in a way which the Opposition never envisaged when they ran the health service? Will he welcome the fact that we are close to delivering those targets for the first time and does he agree that the Opposition got nowhere near that kind of performance?

Mr. Morgan: I reject that completely. The patients charter has produced an army of clerks who tick little boxes to say whether a patient has been treated one or two years after he got an appointment with a consultant. There is a delay in getting an outpatient appointment with a consultant until the consultant is confident that he can see the patient within the maximum time specified in the patients charter.

The Minister asked me for examples of that, and I have given them. Out-patient appointments are now impossible to get. Constituents have come to my surgeries and said that their GPs tried to get them a first outpatient appointment with a consultant. The consultant's secretary has rung the GP and said that the appointment cannot be made and the patient cannot get on the waiting list, because the consultant is still seeing his cases from 1992. The patient is not on the waiting list—he is on a waiting list to go on the waiting list. That is the problem.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The hon. Gentleman asked me to investigate those cases. I have done so, and his constituents are on the waiting list, as are all the others who are in the same situation.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister will confirm that he did not tell me that. I supplied him with the information for which he asked, but obviously he has not supplied me with the information that I asked for. That is not an entirely good thing.

Mr. Richards: On a point or order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The debate is about Welsh affairs. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) spoke solely about south Wales and the hon. Member for Cardiff, West is speaking solely about his constituency. Is that in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the debate is on the Adjournment. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West is entirely in order.

Mr. Morgan: Conservative Members were complaining five minutes ago that I was talking about the constituency of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. I do not know where that remark comes from. The House has learnt the hard way with the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). I am a fairly plain man myself and I believe in calling a shovel a shovel. However, it is what is sticking to the shovel that worries me about the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) spoke about police and crime. It was a useful contribution, because he was a calming influence after the previous speech from the Government Benches. The hon. Gentleman was more PC Plod than Flying Squad, despite his name, but he gave a proper illustration of the way in which the shoe is pinching on the police and crime front.

The hon. Gentleman said that he had been to see the Home Office Minister, Earl Ferrers, about the matter. We have taken a deputation to see Earl Ferrers because of the problems with the South Wales police authority, for which the situation appears to be "capped if you do, damned if you don't." The problem is that it has been told by the Home Office to spend 5·5 per cent. but by the Welsh Office to spend only 1·75 per cent. That is a classic example of interdepartmental cross-sterilisation.

The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan thinks that the main part of the blame should lie with the South Wales police authority. We do not agree with that, simply on the basis of the extremely instructive letter that the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) dated 27 January as part of a parliamentary reply.

He made it clear that the 1·75 per cent. restriction applied even to police expenditure. There was no ring fencing and no way out of the restriction. The authority is bound hand, foot and finger. He will see that if he reads the reply that he gave in *Hansard*. That is the problem. We have to solve it somehow. I wonder whether, in his reply, the Minister might make some reference to the approaches that Lord Ferrers has made to Welsh Office Ministers to try to solve the problem.

The other major topic that has been covered extensively today is the constitutional issues relating to Wales. That is natural on a day like this. We have referred to the quangos, the forums and the assemblies. We have seen the Secretary of State's press release today about his letter to the two local authority associations in Wales. His press release contradicts the letter that he has sent as regards the position of Members of Parliament on any future forum or council of local authorities.

The press release says that Members of Parliament will be invited to attend. Therefore, they will not be part of the body. Clearly, one does not need to be invited to attend if one is part of the body. The letter to the local authority associations, which may have been doctored later, says that Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament probably could be part of the body. There is some confusion here, which we hope the Minister of State will clear up.

The Secretary of State said that we were running down Wales by referring to criticisms of the quangos, and that the criticisms were partisan. He seems to forget—he ought to know—that the Public Accounts Committee has taken on most of the burden of criticising the quangos in Wales. It is the most non-partisan Committee. It has a Tory majority, although it has a Labour Chairman. Criticisms of quangos have come from both sides of the Committee. It would be wrong of us to seek to limit the powers of the PAC to make such criticisms.

Our problem is that the Secretary of State is the Secretary of State not for Wales but for quangoland in Wales. He is anti-Welsh, as most Opposition Members who have spoken tonight have mentioned. People in Wales look at him as a rising Tory placeman who missed his turn-off on the M4 one night. They do not have confidence in him, simply because he has not earned it. We shall find out on 19 March, because there will be a clash between his constituents, who will expect him to cheer for England, and people in Wales, who will expect him to cheer for Wales.

We have also said tonight that this debate should have been held on Tuesday. I tried to get some inspiration before I came to the Commons today by looking up at the gilt relief statue of St. David. I tried to get some inspiration to apologise to St. David that the debate was being held two days late. I heard an other-worldly, ethereal voice saying, "Hammer them, Rhodri." Everyone has told the Secretary of State that, if we had a vote tonight, the result would be 32–6 to this side. We hope that the result on 19 March will be the same. We know that St. David would be pleased about that.

9.48 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Today's debate, as most of us expected, has wandered over the fair face of Wales. I am not so sure that the debate has been such a good advertisement for a Welsh assembly, if we ever get one. Be that as it may, the first thing that I want to do is reassert the prime importance and high priority that the Government, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I attach to the successful development and strengthening of the Welsh economy. That matters more than anything else because the living conditions and quality of life of Welsh people depend on it.

Achieving a greater measure of prosperity requires a single-mindedness and a unity of purpose on the part of all involved, which is never easy to achieve in Wales.

We are making progress out of the recession and business optimism is high. But no one is more aware than the Conservative party of how far we must go to raise GDP per head and average full-time earnings in Wales. We are driving hard on the inward investment front and our success in attracting manufacturing industry shows the way forward. We are also actively promoting exports, particularly by our small and medium-sized companies. Joint ventures between them and similar companies abroad are also being promoted because we know that full order books are one of the keys to safeguarding existing jobs and creating new ones.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) pressed us to get alongside the "four motors", but we have been doing precisely that since 1987. One of the developments as a result of our connection with the four motors was to establish, through the Welsh Development Agency, Eurolink at Stuttgart. That has now developed links between some 50 European and Welsh companies. What is the Opposition's policy in that vital area? They always give me the impression that they think that inward investment and expansion by existing Welsh companies will continue automatically. I assure them that it will not unless the conditions are right—low interest rates, low inflation and low corporate taxes.

Mr. Ainger: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Alas, I was given less than my ration of time by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

We have also adhered firmly to our policy of improving infrastructure, with record high investment in roads—both Welsh Office trunk roads and county road schemes—and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, there is more to come in the years ahead. I am delighted that most of his road proposals announced today were welcomed by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who realises that the A465 can be a lifeline to Merthyr, as can the A470, which he and I had the pleasure of opening not so long ago.

That investment is crucial to the future development of all aspects of the Welsh economy, as is our investment in education and training. We have heard nothing of the Opposition's policies in those areas. It is all very well to criticise us, but they are repeating many of the points that we made in last week's debate and claiming them as their policies. From what I hear of their education policies, they would appear to take us backwards rather than forwards. They would undo much of what has been done in schools and elsewhere. Indeed, the Opposition's policies are very sleazy in the true sense of that word, which is "thin and flimsy".

Nothing could have been sleazier, in those terms, than the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly, which consisted largely of personal imprecations against my right hon. Friend and an attack on Plaid Cymru.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell), who, alas, is no longer here, reacted strongly to our review of the homelessness legislation and referred to our consultation document, "Access to Local Authority and Housing Association Tenancies". The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) also referred to that. May I emphasise that we must always ensure that the operation of the homelessness legislation is fair to all those in need of social housing. It is in the interests of people in genuine need for us to ensure that no one uses wholly unjustified fast tracks to a council or housing association home provided with public funds.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred to agriculture and to hill livestock compensatory allowances in particular. As my right hon. Friend said, I am sure that he will be aware that the average level of net farm income for hill livestock farms rose by some 35 per cent. in real terms in 1991-92 and 1992-93 and is forecast to rise further in the current year.

Total direct subsidies to hill sheep farmers in Wales have increased by 38 per cent. over the past two years to an average of more than £26,000 per farm. During the same period, the average level of HLCAs paid to these farmers fell, but the reductions in HLCAs were more than offset by the overall increase in subsidies. Some 16,000 farmers are expected to benefit. There has also been a 16 per cent. rise in sheep annual premium rates in 1993 and farmers will benefit from the substantial increases in suckler cow premium for last year.

Total payment of direct subsidies to hill farmers in Wales will be at least £160 million in 1994. That surely shows the Government's commitment to the farmers in the hills and uplands. Only recently, my right hon. Friend announced the addition of the Clwyd and Preseli environmentally sensitive areas.

There have been numerous references to education. We all know that more children are staying on at school or going on to further and higher education. I must tell the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) that that is why we are encouraging children to achieve vocational qualifications as well as or instead of strictly academic qualifications. We are encouraging them to take GNVQs instead of A-levels.

The staying-on rate at school has meant a tremendous increase in student numbers in the past 10 to 12 years. Since 1980, student enrolments in higher education in Wales outside the university have more than doubled, while at the university of Wales numbers rose by more than 50 per cent.

The higher education sector in Wales has grown by 53 per cent. since 1987-88 and we are increasing the total funding available for students by some 4 per cent. next year. Those students are very important because they will make a significant contribution to the trained work force which is essential for Wales to remain competitive.

There has been a remarkable development in further education. We have given high priority to the launch of the new further education sector, which is the key to producing many more people with technical and other skills so that Wales can compete more effectively in the world economy.

This year's funding is intended to support an increase of nearly 10 per cent. in student numbers to an overall total of 46,000 full-time equivalents. So resources for next year will rise from £144 million to £160 million and further increases in funding have been provisionally earmarked for the following years.

As my right hon. Friend reminded us earlier, over the weekend the hon. Member for Caerphilly lectured Labour councillors on their arrogance. The *Western Mail* called it a stinging attack. Today he lectured us on our indifference. So, in the hon. Gentleman's view, friend and foe alike are guilty of the besetting sin of pride. If I were on the Opposition Benches, I should be worried as to when he would start lecturing me.

Opposition Members must be as puzzled as I am about what really lies behind the castigations of the hon. Member for Caerphilly. Is it all part of a softening-up process before we see Comrade Ron's little kingdom, his very own little Moscow, his dream socialist-style estate in Wales? Or is the real explanation that the hon. Gentleman is at fault in that he lacks a proper degree of humility? That is a fatal flaw in a leader and a sure prelude to riding for a fall. The Labour party may be riding high in the polls at the moment, but it is very uncertain about its policies and has nothing new to offer the people of Wales but stale and unprofitable policies, such as devolution.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

CHIROPRACTORS BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—
Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session resulting from the Chiropractors Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by the Privy Council under the provisions of the Act relating to the default powers of the Privy Council.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Anthony Coombs be discharged from the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Mr. Andrew Hargreaves be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Bronchitis and Emphysema (Mining Industry)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am aware that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Back-Bench Member of Parliament for Pontefract and Castleford, played an enormous role in the fight to persuade the Government to accept chronic bronchitis and emphysema as an industrial disease. I pay tribute to that work.

I requested the debate tonight for three reasons—first, to look closely at the new regulation, which I shall call "Amendment No. 2 regulation"; secondly, to draw the attention of the House to the restrictive nature of the regulation, which is causing much concern in mining communities; and thirdly, to suggest how the regulations might be amended to provide a fairer test for diagnosing the disease.

I am aware that the "Amendment No. 2 regulation" is based on the recommendations of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, but the recommended prescription is clearly too harsh, particularly because the council reported that the prescription test should be rather tight. Although the council established for the first time a connection between the retention of coal dust in the lungs and the development of chronic bronchitis and emphysema, it nevertheless put forward a prescriptive test that we feel is much too restrictive.

The concern in our mining communities is highlighted markedly by the failure rate of that test. I am informed by the Yorkshire National Union of Mineworkers and by the DSS office in Doncaster that the failure rate in south Yorkshire is as high as 90 per cent. However, the DSS pointed out that there are some regional differences and that the failure rate in Scotland is even higher. I understand that the failure rate in Wales is slightly lower.

Hon. Members who represent mining communities are all too aware of the terrible, debilitating effect of chronic bronchitis and emphysema. We all know men who can hardly walk 100 yards without having to stop several times to fight for their breath. We are all aware of men who, having spent a lifetime in the colliery, cannot venture outside their doors and, in summer time, must sit watching television with an oxygen mask on to help to ease their fight for breath.

The cautious welcome that we gave to the regulations when they first appeared has turned to despair. There are several reasons for that, but the main one is the prescriptive criteria that are used in the diagnostic test.

In some instances, miners with 40-odd years' service underground, who have been treated by their doctors for chronic bronchitis and emphysema for many years, are now told by the examining authorities when they apply for a disablement assessment under the regulations that they do not have the disease. Naturally, that is causing considerable concern.

I feel that the problem arises from the prescription test of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which I know that the Minister adopted and which is implemented in the new regulation. The Minister ought to be aware that it is

[Mr. Michael Clapham]

possible under the test for a man who suffers from the disease to be ruled out of benefit because he does not meet other criteria laid down in the regulations.

As the Minister knows, a miner must pass three tests to proceed to full medical examination and then—hopefully—a disablement assessment. First, he must have the qualification of 20 years' work underground; secondly, there must be X-ray evidence of dust retention in his lungs; and thirdly, there must be a reduction of 1 litre in the forced expiration volume.

At the examination stage, miners are screened to eliminate those who do not meet the criteria. If a miner has worked underground for fewer than 20 years, he is ruled out, and no further examination is conducted. If he is successful at that stage, he is then given an X-ray. If he succeeds then, he proceeds to the FEV test. Only if he passes all three tests will he be referred to a doctor who will give him a full examination.

There are means of appeal to a special medical board, and, finally, to a medical appeal tribunal but there are flaws in the appeal procedure. I have not enough time to describe those flaws, but I will write to the Minister about them.

The procedure is clearly onerous and the prescriptive test is too restrictive, debarring genuine cases. An additional problem is caused by the difference between the pneumoconiosis principle of diagnosis and the new regulation principle. Let us suppose that two miners, A and B, have worked together underground for 17 years. Both leave the pit at the same time. Miner A takes a job outside the colliery, in an office, while miner B continues to work on the surface, in the coal preparation plant. At the time of retirement, both men have a respiratory disorder and apply to the pneumoconiosis medical board.

In the first instance, miner A is examined and found to have pneumoconiosis and attendant chronic bronchitis and emphysema. He is given an assessment for his pneumoconiosis and then an additional assessment, because his pneumoconiosis worsens his chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Let us say that he is given 20 per cent.—10 per cent. for his pneumoconiosis and 10 per cent. for his chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Miner B, who has spent a lifetime working at the colliery, is examined and found to have dust retention with acute chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Because the dust retention does not meet the criteria for pneumoconiosis, he is referred for an examination for chronic bronchitis and emphysema, under the new regulation, but, because he does not meet the criterion of 20 years underground, he is ruled out. I am quite sure that that was not the intention of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

There are other examples, one of which is a situation that confronts many miners. As the Minister is aware, tens of thousands of young miners have been made redundant over the past few years. Those miners worked, using new technology, in conditions that were more dusty than was the practice in the mines in a previous age. However, as a result of the implementation of the redundancy scheme, many of those miners will not be given the opportunity to work for 20 years in the industry, and will have worked for only 10 to 18 years. Yet, inevitably, many of those young men will develop chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Under the current regulation they will not be entitled to claim benefit. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council could not have intended that.

I ask the Minister to consider three matters. First, I ask him to consider reducing the qualification condition to 10 years, to equal the pneumoconiosis qualification condition. Secondly, I ask him to consider reducing the threshold for disablement benefit under the regulation. The threshold is now 14 per cent. and it ought to be equal to the pneumoconiosis threshold, which is 10 per cent. There is no logical reason for the difference under the new regulation, compared with the threshold under the pneumoconiosis scheme. Finally, I ask the Minister to consider seriously replacing the FEV test with a much more sensitive test for detecting obstruction in the lungs. The FEV test is much too rigorous. It has proved so restrictive that very few cases pass it. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that he is prepared to take those three items on board and to review the situation regarding the prescription test.

I also ask the Minister to think about the compensation aspect. As he is proabably aware, in the mining industry we have a no-fault liability scheme for pneumoconiosis. We should like him to enter into discussions with his colleague, the Minister for Energy, to consider extending the scheme to cover chronic bronchitis and emphysema. There is no logical reason why chronic bronchitis and emphysema should be outside the no-fault liability scheme.

With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall invite my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) to add to that.

10.11 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know the history of the matter and as an ex-National Union of Mineworkers activist, one of the reasons that I became a Member of Parliament was to try to alleviate the anomalies that cause pain to the sufferers of those two diseases. I was also delighted when the Government accepted the recommendation, because an academic medical argument was going on and many people who had a great deal of disability in the past were not covered by the pneumoconiotic or silicotic coverage.

I do not have much time to go into detail, but I support the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Pensitone (Mr. Clapham) because I am confronted in Scotland, as are many Members of Parliament in their constituencies, with ex-miners who are bitterly disappointed at having been turned down. At this stage, I must thank the people in the Department of Social Security, who have brought things forward very smoothly. Mr. John Strachan is in charge in my area and he and his team are doing the best that they can to alleviate the problem.

Many people feel disappointed because, even when they meet the 20 years requirement, the X-ray that is looked at could be an X-ray that was taken up to 18 months previously. The argument is that the X-ray does not show traces of retention of dust in the lungs and that fibrosis is not visible so people are being eliminated from the scheme. Many people were proved to have pneumonoconiosis only after a post-mortem had been carried out because nothing showed up on the X-ray.

The National Union of Mineworkers asked five eminent chest consultants to produce a paper on the subject but two of them produced a minority report on the diseases and their elimination. I remember being part of a delegation that went to see Reg Prentice who was the Minister of State for Social Security. We were knocked back—because of the cost, he said.

I do not have time to read out the details, but I have reports of consultants and doctors from the hospitals attended by sufferers. They say that the people involved are chronically ill, some are in wheel-chairs. I have here a copy of a letter sent to a widow, which gives an example of the terminology being used. It states that the "customer" has not been suffering from the prescribed diseases known as chronic bronchitis and emphysema. However, many such people have "puffers" or other equipment to alleviate the hardship of merely drawing breath.

I must stop now in order to allow the Minister time to reply. I say only that the people to whom I have referred have given their lives and their health to make Britain "Great" Britain. They have created the wealth and energy that we needed to make our industries tick. We cannot replace their health but we can make their lives more tolerable. I shall not repeat all the arguments but the question of the time limit, the capacity of the lungs and the dust on them must be considered more compassionately. We cannot give people back their health but we can make their lives and those of their relatives more tolerable by providing the compensation that we seek. We are not seeking a fortune but it would help. The needs of these people are greater than those of healthy people.

I thank the Minister for allowing me to speak.

10.16 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) on securing a debate on what I acknowledge is an important issue that deserves the attention of the House. I very much appreciate his concens and the way in which he expressed them. I am conscious of the distress experienced by those suffering from these unfortunate respiratory conditions. I also listened to the passion in the voice of the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) as he expressed his concern on behalf of those with whom he has worked so closely and whose interests he holds close to his heart.

I echo the remarks of both hon. Gentlemen and acknowledge the tireless campaign that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford, have conducted on behalf of miners to have chronic bronchitis and emphysema added to the list of prescribed industrial diseases. You have spoken and corresponded about those matters for a long time, but unable, because of your distinguished position in the House, to campaign as others have been able to do.

I know, however, that you met the Prime Minister to discuss the issue with him in March last year and I am well aware of your continuing close interest in the operation of the scheme and the fact that we have, after a long period —the history of which I shall deal with briefly in a moment —recognised that these conditions should rightly be prescribed as industrial diseases under the industrial injuries disablement benefit scheme.

Industrial injuries disablement benefit is payable only for prescribed diseases, as we all know. The legal basis for this prescription has remained unchanged since the industrial injuries scheme was introduced in 1946. The statutory provision, which is now in section 108 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, states:

> "A disease or injury may be prescribed in relation to any employed earners if the Secretary of State is satisfied that—
>
> (a) it ought to be treated, having regard to its causes and incidence and any other relevant considerations, as a risk of their occupations and not as a risk common to all persons; and
>
> (b) it is such that, in the absence of special circumstances, the attribution of particular cases to the nature of the employment can be established or presumed with reasonable certainty."

There are therefore two aspects to prescription, both of which must be satisfied. The first criterion requires unequivocal evidence of a causal relationship between occupational exposure and disease. The second criterion —attribution to occupation in the individual case "with reasonable certainty"—has in practice been interpreted as meaning "on the balance of probabilities", that is, more likely than not. Evidence of an increased incidence of disease in relation to a particular occupation or occupational hazard does not, on its own, necessarily justify prescription. The association with occupation must be sufficiently strong to show that the disease in the individual case is more likely than not to have been caused by the person's work, and that implies a relatively high risk.

I should like to move from that general outline of the scheme to the specific instance that we are discussing this evening. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council first considered the prescription of chronic bronchitis and emphysema in coal miners in 1973, when it decided that it had insufficient evidence to recommend prescription. In 1985, it undertook a further study which culminated in a report in 1988. The limited information then available to the council suggested that the effects of coal dust exposure on lung function were less than those of cigarette smoke, and it was generally agreed at the time that tobacco smoke inhalation was a major cause of lung function impairment in coal miners as well as in the general population, and the council, therefore, again felt unable to recommend prescription.

In the following three years, however, as I think both hon. Gentlemen will recognise, reports were published in this country, in Belgium and in the United States which demonstrated that the risk of developing disabling impairment of the lung function increased more than twofold in coal miners, whether or not they were smokers, who had accumulated significant coal dust exposure, and it was with that evidence that the council felt able to recommend prescription of chronic bronchitis and emphysema in relation to those coal miners and former coal miners whose disability could most confidently be attributed to coal dust rather than to some other cause, such as tobacco smoking.

The council recommended the criteria to be used for evidence of sufficient exposure to coal dust for that to be the probable cause of the disability. Those were, as the hon. Gentleman identified, a minimum of 20 years' underground exposure and definite evidence of coal dust retention on a chest X-ray of at least category 1 on the International Labour Organisation classification of pneumoconiosis. The council also recommended that prescriptions should be based on an objective measure of

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

impairment associated with clincially important disablement. It recommended that that measure should be a loss of lung function of at least one litre on the expiratory test, commonly called the FEV1 test, against that predicted for a person of the same age, height and sex as the claimant. The Government accepted and implemented the council's recommendations in full from September last year.

I do not set myself up as an expert on chronic bronchitis and emphysema. I have had conversations with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with other colleagues who have had much more direct experience of, and contact with, people who suffer from these conditions than I have ever had, and I have listened to them. But in this matter the Secretary of State and Ministers in the Department have always been governed by the expert opinion of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. It is right that we should look to its members to read the literature and to accumulate for themselves such evidence as they can discover about each of the individual matters of concern that are raised, and offer advice to the Secretary of State.

For the reasons that I have outlined, it is on that advice that we invariably depend when we make our decisions.

The covering leter from Professor Malcolm Harrington, the chairman of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, concludes by saying:

"the Council suggest that the qualifying conditions should be reviewed after a suitable period of operation of say five years."

So the IIAC and its chairman recognise that the judgment made on the qualifying conditions already outlined in the debate was not like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, but was something that should properly be reviewed after some experience.

I cannot say whether the council was influenced in coming to that judgment by the knowledge that there had been a substantial take-on of case load in the initial stages of the introduction of the new scheme. However, at the end of the covering letter, the recommendation was clearly made that the conditions should be reviewed after a suitable period of operation. The period of five years was mentioned, but the council was not being especially prescriptive about that. The Government accepted and implemented, as we invariably do, the council's recommendations.

I understand the concern of Opposition Members, but in general my impression is that the addition of chronic bronchitis and emphysema to the list of prescribed diseases has been widely welcomed. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have appreciated it, as have the unions representing miners. I am glad to say that the new scheme has been successfully implemented, too. Indeed, the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone paid tribute to that fact.

The hon. Members for Barnsley, West and Penistone and for Midlothian came to see me before the scheme was launched, and impressed on me the importance of smooth implementation and of making proper administrative arrangements. We did that, both in terms of pure administration by the Benefits Agency and the Department of Social Security and by making arrangements for proper medical tests to be conducted smoothly and efficiently.

Special arrangements were set up with British Coal and the mining unions to help to make the operation a success. We can rightly claim that in administrative terms it certainly has been a success, however disappointed hon. Gentlemen may be at the moment by the number of miners and former miners who have satisfied the existing conditions for qualification. In my view, there continues to be a positive, constructive and successful dialogue between the unions and the Benefits Agency—a relationship that is valued by both sides.

We staggered the take-on of claims in two six-month stages. The first stage has just been completed and the second started on 1 March, two days ago. Manifestly, the burden of work has been largely confined to traditional mining areas, and we had to make a number of special arrangements, including setting up special centres in some areas to cope with the groups of applicants.

On the medical side, we have sought to design procedures to minimise the inconvenience to those who claim the benefits. The procedures ensure that they do not have to attend for tests or examinations more than once, whenever it is possible to arrange that, and handling arrangements have been enhanced to control the flow of cases throughout the organisation and to provide us with proper and valid criteria.

In the last two minutes or so, I shall emphasise a couple of points. First, whatever I may feel personally, the Government—and I, in view of my responsibilities—have to rely on the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on the prescription of industrial diseases. The council in turn relies on acceptable scientific evidence. We have implemented in full its recommendations on chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

The scheme is still in its early days. We are still talking on the early cases. I read out Professor Harrington's advice on reviewing the conditions after a suitable period of operation, and I am certainly willing to receive correspondence from Opposition Members expressing any concerns that they have about their experience of the scheme.

However, we should be pleased that the council eventually came to the conclusion that it did, and I hope that the Government can get some credit for swiftly accepting the recommendation and implementing it successfully. The first phase has gone well, thanks to the careful planning, special resources and considerable effort that have been put into this extension of the industrial injuries scheme. We are committed to a similar successful implementation of the second phase, and we shall continue to see how it all works out in practice.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 4 March 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Dioxin, Staveley

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I present a petition from Vicki Lang and 2,000 other citizens of Staveley in Derbyshire, which seeks a full investigation into environmental problems in the area, drawing together expertise from a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies. It reads:

> To the Honourable, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of residents of Staveley, Chesterfield, Sheweth that your petitioners demand that a public inquiry should be undertaken following the discovery of Dioxin in the area.
>
> We further demand that the Department of Health undertake an extensive medical survey of local residents.
>
> Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will take measures to ensure that such pollution should not occur again. That the required inquiry and health survey are undertaken. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table

Point of Order

9.35 am

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A fundamental axiom of the British constitution has been that no Parliament should bind a future Parliament. In the light of the ruling by the Law Lords yesterday, has any Minister sought your leave to make a statement about the Government's inability to deliver their employment policy because of decisions by previous Parliaments, which are apparently binding on this Parliament?

Madam Speaker: As yet, I have not been informed that any Minister wants to make a statement today.

Orders of the Day

Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

As you will appreciate, Madam Speaker, I am something of a novice in the matter of private Members' Bills and that will doubtless become apparent during the morning. When I was lucky enough to draw a low number in the ballot, I was surprised at the onslaught by a posse of single-issue pressure groups and lobbyists, who pursued me for at least three weeks to persuade me to legislate against all sorts of things. The taste for legislation has obviously not diminished, which, in many respects, is a pity.

The most ambitious of them was an elderly gentleman who has borne a grudge against the Chancellor of the Exchequer for many years, since the introduction of independent taxation. He suggested that I should introduce an alternative Finance Bill. Procedurally, it might have been rather difficult, but we might have had some fun with our own version of such a Bill and, if nothing else, we could have knocked a couple of pence off the price of a bottle of claret.

On a more serious note, all the Bills urged on me were aimed at stopping people doing something or regulating them, which I found depressing. This Bill, despite its title, does not stop people doing things, although it will require a small amount of regulation. I do not know whether it is a regulating deregulatory Bill or vice versa; that is something for hon. Members to consider.

I am grateful for the support from both sides of the House for the Bill because, without it, several major sporting and cultural events that take place on the highways could be threatened.

The Bill has a dull-sounding name and has become known privately as the Tour de France Bill, which is useful shorthand, but its scope is vastly wider.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Given one of the reasons for it, perhaps it would be appropriate to call it the Tour d'Angleterre Bill.

Mr. Atkinson: I agree. In view of comments coming from across the channel recently, that would be a good idea, provided that we get the French right.

The Bill has two main objectives. One is to allow those large events to take place without challenge, and the other is to allow those events to take place only after proper consultation, and the decision has been taken by an accountable and elected authority, which is different from the situation today.

I shall explain to the House how the Bill arose. The tour de France is coming to this country for two days in July this summer, as part of the celebrations to mark the opening of the channel tunnel. It is due to spend two days in different parts of the south-east of England. It is a matter of regret for me that it did will take place in the north country, because there we have plenty of open space.

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): I appreciate that we will hear at, I suspect, considerable length from various hon. Members today where the tour de France will go and the merits of each town and village through which it will pass, but how will it get here? Will the participants cycle through the tunnel or will they come by train? If they will come by train, it seems rather to defeat the object.

Mr. Atkinson: Yes; that very question occurred to me, because I thought initially, in my innocence, that the participants would cycle through the tunnel, which would be a rather grand gesture. Unfortunately, apparently that is not possible because of security arrangements. They would probably get electrocuted on the way so, unfortunately, they are going on Le Shuttle and will arrive and decamp at Dover on an appropriate day.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Will my hon. Friend deny or confirm the rumour that they will be serenaded by Luciano Pavarotti?

Mr. Atkinson: I know that Mr. Pavarotti is involved in the shenanigans to mark the opening of the channel tunnel, but I do not think that he will be involved in the tour de France. The convoy that comes through the tunnel will be enormous because the tour de France is not simply a cycle race. It involves about 200 riders and 1,500 other vehicles. They are the vehicles of sponsors, who design their vehicles in the most peculiar ways—appearing like profiteroles in one case, I am told—and support vehicles. A vast cavalcade of vehicles will emerge from that train.

Perhaps it would be worth while to dwell on that. The tour de France will be one of the biggest sporting occasions to be held in Britain since the world cup. I have no great knowledge of cycle racing, and I had not realised how much its popularity has increased in recent years. The television audience for the tour de France amounts to nearly 1 billion people worldwide. It is an incredible operation, therefore, and involves an incredible amount of money in television rights and organisation. It is a valuable and major event.

Mr. Butler: The number of people who watch on television has nothing to do with the way in which the tour de France takes place. It is not necessary for it to come to England for that to happen. Will my hon. Friend tell us how many people will turn up to watch it?

Mr. Atkinson: I detect a touch of chauvinism creeping into the debate at an early stage—possibly jealousy.

Many thousands of people in the south-east of England will watch the tour de France while it is over here, before it returns to France by ship and aeroplane.

The responses that I have had from local authorities and people involved in the south-east of England—there may be Members present who represent seats in the south-east—show that they are delighted that the tour de France is coming here, because it will give a great promotion to the region and help tourism and industrial development.

Mr. Butler: I dispute any suggestion of chauvinism. I was merely trying to get to the figures. Bearing in mind that the effect of this pernicious little Bill, which I have come here to support today, is that a few or many thousand people will be able to watch the tour de France, is my hon. Friend aware that the RAC rally—which will not in the least be facilitated by this—has 2 million spectators and is the largest sporting event in this country? Even the London to Brighton run is attended by up to 1 million people each November. Yet my hon. Friend is talking about a few thousand people. Why is he going to bar the Bill from enabling that type of event to take place?

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend makes two important points. One is the factual accuracy of the number of people who will watch the tour de France. I do not know, because the tour has never come to this country. I expect that tens of thousands of people, if not hundreds of thousands, will watch it. I will return to the reasons why it does not allow for motor sport on roads.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): On the subject of chauvinism, given the recent performance of British sporting teams, does my hon. Friend agree that in that field of sporting endeavour, if there is to be a British team—I know not whether there is—and if we are to seek its success, it is an essential precondition for that success that the team does not have a manager?

Mr. Atkinson: I sympathise with my hon. Friend on that. It is probably more a disadvantage than an advantage to have managers these days. There will be British competitors, but I am afraid that my knowledge of cycle racing does not extend to whether they will operate as a team or are managed.

I shall now describe the route of the tour de France. It will spend two days in this country. The first day will be spent in parts of Sussex on a 128-mile course, I think, and it will end on what one might call our equivalent of a mountain course, which is Wilson avenue, Brighton. I do not know whether anyone—

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend may know.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend knows that I am the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, but perhaps he does not know that I was born in Rottingdean, four miles to the east of Brighton, and that in my school I used to play football just by the rubbish dump, which is to the east of Wilson avenue. The participants in the tour de France will have a tremendous view of the Sheepcoate Valley rubbish dump to the right and a rather—I had better not say what I was about to say—interesting housing estate to the left.

Mr. Atkinson: I am grateful for that help with the geography, because I was rather surprised that the hill climb section will be Wilson avenue. It does not quite ring as well as the section in the Alps, but I am sure that it will be as testing as any alpine class.

The second day of the tour de France will be in Hampshire—including the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone)—and will end at Portsmouth.

The tour will be a major sporting event. Considerable planning is necessary. The problem is that when the lawyers in East Sussex county council considered the necessary road closures to allow the tour de France to take place—roads have to be closed for a considerable period—they examined the legislation and discovered that it was flawed. That flawed legislation would affect not only the tour de France, but some of the well-known major events in this country, such as the London marathon, the Notting Hill carnival and the great north run.

The various pieces of legislation that apply to road closures and empower the police and other people to close roads are very archaic and appear to be deeply flawed. The organisers of the tour de France made it clear that they could not afford the capital investment in setting up the tour, with all the television coverage and all the support vehicles, unless they could be certain that a resident of, for example, Wilson avenue, who might feel aggrieved at the inconvenience of having the tour de France going up the road, was not able to go to the court and challenge the right to close the roads. The view of the lawyers was that if someone did challenge it, there was a chance that the challenge could succeed. So, although we are taking the Bill with some levity this morning, it is extremely important for the future of those major sporting events.

The difficulty is that we have let the genie out of the bottle. Having brought the subject to public notice, which we are doing today, we are alerting people who may feel that, for example, the Notting Hill carnival is something not of their taste, who would then challenge it. It is important that we enable the Bill to get a Second Reading today.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would tell the House what his Bill will do, bearing in mind the fact that he mentioned Kent and Sussex earlier. Kent and Sussex's inclusion in the route raises the prospect of retired colonels fulminating at great length, quite incapable of getting to their golf clubs for hours on end. What will the Bill do for them?

Mr. Atkinson: I will deal with that matter later.

The purpose of the Bill is to give new powers to close roads and to regulate the traffic that is disturbed by those road closures. The police currently have some powers to close a road. However, they do not have power to divert traffic up one-way streets the other way and that type of thing, which means that it becomes difficult to manage an event such as the tour de France.

I shall briefly review the existing rules that apply, currently, which can be used to close roads. Although section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 allows roads to be closed for cycle races, they are not the same kind of cycle races as the tour de France. They simply power through an area quickly and there is a rolling programme of road closures. Because of the vast number of spectators that we expect at the tour de France, the roads will have to be closed for much longer and that Act will not apply.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend seems to be saying that the power to close roads for cycle races already exists. Is he now proposing to close the roads for profiteroles?

Mr. Atkinson: I would not necessarily agree with my hon. Friend's phraseology, but I agree that those are two different things. A cycle race that passes swiftly through an area where there are no spectators or vehicles dressed up as profiteroles is different from the tour de France, when the roads will be closed, huge crowds will gather and there will be much razzmatazz.

Mr. Fabricant: It may help my hon. Friend if I remind him that the milk race, which is a well-known cycle race, also starts in Brighton and attracts more than 100,000 spectators. Moreover, it brings in many millions of pounds worth of tourism to Brighton, so it is valuable and easily comparable with the RAC rally.

Mr. Atkinson: I totally agree. Interestingly, there was uncertainty about whether roads could be closed for the milk race, but, because it disappears through places quickly, it is probably covered by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that the milk race has now disappeared completely and will not take place this year. That is a great pity, because it came through Milton Keynes last year and roads were closed successfully for the purpose under existing law.

Mr. Atkinson: I am grateful for that information.

The major legislation that allows the police to close roads for such events goes back a long way. There are two such Acts. The first covers London and the City of London and events such as the marathon and the Notting Hill carnival, and is based on the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 and the City of London Police Act 1840, which was introduced by Sir Robert Peel to establish a police force in this country. It is still used in London today to close roads to allow events such as the London marathon to take place. One can see the problem with Acts of Parliament that predate the invention of the motor car.

For most of the rest of the country, the other Act that comes into play is section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, which is also an arcane, ancient Act. I have done some interesting research into that Act and discovered that it would knock the current criminal justice legislation into a cocked hat. The Town Police Clauses Act stops people doing all sorts of weird and curious things in the street and gives the police an inordinate amount of power. For instance, it makes a penalty for

> "Every person who exposes for show, hire, or sale (except in a market . . .) any horse or other animal, or exhibits in a caravan or otherwise any show or public entertainment, or shoes, bleeds, or farries any horse or animal . . . or cleans, dresses, exercises, trains, or breaks, or turns loose any horse".

It goes on to deal with rabid dogs and says that it is an offence to have a dog suspected of canine madness. People were not allowed to slaughter animals, dress them in the streets or put plant pots on their window sills in case they fell off and dropped on people's heads. An abundance of people around the countryside today could be prosecuted under that weird and wonderful Act. It is also makes it an offence to knock on people's doors and run away. In their youth, one or two hon. Members may have done something similar from time to time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Mr. Hendry.

Mr. Matthew Banks: In my maiden speech to the House some time ago, I pointed out that I had a problem putting my constituency on the map. With the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I should have put myself on the map first. I am still trying to do so.

My hon. Friend referred to the 1847 Act. I do not recall whether he referred to the Metropolitan Police Act 1839. Will he spare a moment to share my concern that our elders and betters in those days did not have the foresight to empower the police to close down parking bays and pay-and-display systems? The police, therefore, do not have the appropriate power to do that now, yet they have been doing it for some time.

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is exactly the problem. They can close the roads, but they

[Mr. Atkinson]

cannot close the parking bays, remove left and right turns, reverse somebody down a one-way street, or put an event through a town centre's pedestrian-only area.

The cyclists in the tour de France go considerably faster than 30 mph. While that is not an offence because no speed limit applies to cyclists, speed limits do apply to their motor cycle escorts, who happen to be a contingent of the Gendarmerie Nationale. Although they do not act as policemen when in this country, it would be embarrassing for Anglo-French relations if the Gendarmerie Nationale were nicked by the British police force while escorting the tour de France. So I take my hon. Friend's point about the difficulty with such an old, but nevertheless illustrious, Act.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Gentleman will agree that this small Bill attracts widespread support throughout the House. Has anyone told him of his or her intention to oppose the Bill? Is it, therefore, necessary to take the large number of interventions that the hon. Member has already taken within the first half an hour of this debate to try to explore every detail of the Bill? Would not some of those points be better made in Committee?

Mr. Atkinson: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. We should debate the Bill fully because some people outside have raised objections to it and I am still not clear whether my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) will object to it. He feels that it is inadequate for his interest, which is racing vintage Bentleys up the M1. He wants the Bill to include a power to hold a special vintage rally up the M1. So we are not all in harmony about the Bill, although I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support.

Mr. Spring: I was disturbed by my hon. Friend's remark that the French police would be here. Will they operate under the supervision of our police force? Residents of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire might be concerned about that. I understand that French police carry arms. I hope that they will not be permitted to do so in this country. I am sure that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) would wish to have that clarified.

Mr. Atkinson: I am pleased to do so. The Gendarmerie Nationale, which is the traditional escort that surrounds the tour de France wherever it goes, will have the rank of officer constable and will not be able to carry guns because they will be exactly the same as us, except dressed in a funnier uniform. I assure my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that that matter will not cause a problem.

May I use this short debate to put in a plug for the great north run, which could be threatened if the Bill does not go through? It is a substantial half marathon which is run in the north-east; many of my constituents take part. It is Europe's largest road race, with more than 30,000 competitors, and is an amazing occasion which requires a substantial number of road closures to deal with the large number of runners and the crowds. This year, it is sponsored by BUPA and my local paper, the *Newcastle Journal*. It would be greatly missed if it were affected by an objection to the Bill.

To get on to the meat of the Bill—I am sure that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill is waiting for the facts—the purpose of the Bill is to put beyond doubt the powers to close roads. I should also stress that the powers that now reside with the police will be given to what has been deemed a local traffic authority. In many cases, that will be the local authority or the county council, or its successor.

For trunk roads, the position will be slightly different because the Secretary of State will have powers. However, as a matter of practice, he will devolve the powers to the local traffic authority. That means that in order to implement a road closure of the scale referred to in the Bill, a large consultation process will be necessary to convince the local traffic authority that it should agree to close the road. One of the conditions in the Bill is that the road can be closed for only three days every year. The events normally happen only once a year; to hold an event twice in a calendar year would require the permission of the Secretary of State.

We seek to balance the perfectly justifiable need to run such events, which many people enjoy, with the interests of local residents, who are obviously disturbed by them. One of the clauses of the Bill makes it clear that the closure of roads must not prevent pedestrian access to any premises. In other words, no one should be shut out of their home because of such an event.

I regret, for the sake of my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East, that the Bill disallows closure of roads for motor races and non-authorised cycle races. That was a matter of concern to us. We considered it hard. The difficulty is that motor racing on public highways is a much more complicated business. My hon. Friend will be aware of the race in Birmingham, which is established by its own Act of Parliament. I believe that it involves only formula 3000 cars and drivers. The difficulty with road racing is that many road races involve saloon cars.

One of the lessons that we have sadly learnt in Britain, particularly from the motor cycle race in the Isle of Man, is that although races involve professional or semi-professional drivers in saloon car or on motor bikes, after the race, amateurs will race each other around the circuit when it is open to traffic again. They may try to emulate the speeds achieved by the professional racers. Last year at the Isle of Man TT races, six people were killed in accidents after hours. We reluctantly decided that we would have to exclude motor racing from the Bill.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My hon. Friend has obviously made a great study of the matter. Has he established an example from abroad where motor races are held over public highways? One thinks of the Monte Carlo rally. The result is an increase in road traffic deaths on those highways in the days following the race. My hon. Friend has clearly made an important exclusion in his Bill. The House should be told the statistical basis on which he has decided not to allow road closures for such events in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkinson: I cannot give the statistical basis for the aftermath of the Monte Carlo rally or other such events. All I can say is that Britain's experience from the Isle of Man is that such accidents happen. The Bill is a private Member's Bill. Like all such Bills, it is a delicate flower. It seeks to put right something that could cause enormous damage to some well-respected, well-liked institutions such as the London marathon.

If we embarked on allowing road racing in this country, we would meet much more considerable opposition from environmental groups and so on. It is likely that a Bill of this nature would run on to the rocks as a consequence. I am afraid that a combination of funk and practicality made us take road racing out.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I think that my hon. Friend is being unduly modest. He has produced a most original and fascinating Bill. That is why there is such a large turnout this morning to consider it in some detail. Will my hon. Friend give further consideration to the analogy that I put to him of the Monte Carlo rally? It is my impression that the towns and villages in France on the circuit of the Monte Carlo rally appreciate being part of it. They are flattered by it. It increases their tourist appeal, gives them publicity, and so on. My hon. Friend may be unduly cautious in assuming that there would be opposition to his Bill if it made it possible to hold races on public roads in the United Kingdom on the right sort of occasions.

Mr. Atkinson: I hear precisely what my hon. Friend says. He makes an extremely good point. In many respects, people might welcome road racing in the sense that towns and villages in France enjoy it. The difficulty is that in Britain it would spark controversy to establish such road races. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would object and oppose the Bill on those grounds. So, taken together, it was a wiser course to leave road races out, although I did so with some regret.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree, in view of the intervention of the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), that the reason why there are so many Conservative Members present is that they wish to delay proceedings to such an extent that the Bill, which does not appear to be opposed, prevents a later debate about the role of women in our society in advance of International Women's Day on Sunday?

Mr. Atkinson: The hon. Lady is accusing me of filibustering. I take great exception to that. The Bill deals with a matter of importance to thousands and thousands, and hundreds of thousands and millions of people who take part in such events. It is right that the matter should be properly explored and not simply nodded through, as the hon. Lady appears to want. It should be debated properly.

Ms Walley: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the matter should be debated properly; indeed, I agree with the Minister for Roads and Traffic that it should be debated properly. I was referring to the unnecessary filibustering, rather than debate on the real issues that the hon. Gentleman seeks to raise.

Mr. Atkinson: That is most unfair. My hon. Friends are here on a Friday to support the Bill—

Mr. Butler: Perhaps.

Mr. Atkinson: Perhaps to support the Bill—but also to raise points that they find of interest. On a more relaxed day, which Friday is, it is right that hon. Members have a chance to intervene and an opportunity to take part in a fairly simple debate.

Mr. Clappison: There are several important issues that I want to deal with in respect of this legislation. My hon. Friend has just come to one of them. While I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) said about allowing motor racing to take place, I have genuine fears about safety. I welcome what my hon. Friend said earlier and the approach that he took to safety, and the caution which was inherent in his approach. That is one of the things that I want to hear about in the debate.

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend is right. One of the key factors is public safety. One of the reasons why it is necessary to close a road for an event such as the tour de France for such a length of time is that although the cavalcade may pass within an hour, the crowds gather much earlier. As the race passes through towns and built-up areas in the south-east in July, there will be many people on the roadside and crossing the road.

In those circumstances, it is essential that, from an early hour of the day, alternative traffic plans are put into effect so that spectators can stand in safety by the roadside or sit in the stands built for them, knowing that they will not become victims of a traffic accident. One of the factors at the heart of the Bill is the proper management of traffic to allow for safety.

I mentioned that there had been one objection from an outside body. The Ramblers Association considers that the Bill may be misused to prevent people from using legitimate rights of way. I can assure the Ramblers association that that is not the case. In its letter and its complaints, it has missed the point. It was worried that owners of grouse moors would use the proposed legislation to stop people using footpaths across the grouse moors. As much as some people who run grouse moors would dearly like to do that from time to time, it is completely wrong that the Bill should be used in that way.

Hon. Members may recall that I said that one of the conditions in the Bill stipulates that roads could be closed on a maximum of three days of year, with the approval of the local authority. I believe that a grouse moor owner who sought to shoot on three days a year would not be wise to close a footpath and I am positive that a local traffic authority would not allow him to do that.

The Ramblers Association might bear in mind a further point; it is, of course, illegal to discharge a firearm within 15 yards of a footpath. It is completely wrong on that matter.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that local authorities, which will be given power to make decisions if his Bill proceeds, would be acting in a manner that was ultra vires and beyond their powers if they were to seek to prevent road traffic on grouse moors?

Mr. Atkinson: Pass. I cannot give an honest answer to that, but I know a man who can. Perhaps later on I will be able to answer my hon. Friend. I think that they would be. Clearly we are talking about footpaths across grouse moors, but I do not know whether vehicles can use them. I have to take his point away with me for further consideration.

The Ramblers Association has no justification for its fears. It gets slightly hysterical when anybody puts any obstruction in the way of a footpath or pedestrian. No doubt, such a road closure will cause some inconvenience to a walker who, for example, is walking down to a road that has been closed, wishes to cross it and continue on a footpath up the other way. But the fact that roads are closed to traffic does not mean that they are closed to pedestrians.

[Mr. Atkinson]

I must admit, however, that that rambler might have to wait at the roadside and watch the tour de France and the profiterole vans go past, and then cross the road. That is an inconvenience to that rambler, but one must balance that inconvenience with the enjoyment of the tens or hundreds of thousands of people watching the tour de France.

That is why, in my view, the traffic authority is a far better organisation to make that decision than the police. The police do not wish to make that decision. They do not want to have to balance the overall good of the public with the inconvenience to individuals. That is a job for an elected accountable body—in this case, a local council.

I must make the point that the police are very much in favour of the Bill. Indeed, I have received a large number of letters from Winchester city council, Hampshire county council, East Hampshire district council—all the local county council and district authorities in the area—in support of the Bill. In particular, I have received a letter from the assistant chief constable of Sussex police, who is in charge of co-ordinating the tour de France in July. Speaking on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers, he warmly welcomes the Bill and hopes that it will become law, simply for the reason that the police do not see why they should have the task of deciding whether a marathon should take place.

Mr. Quentin Davies: My hon. Friend's Bill makes provision to protect the right of individuals to walk to and from their properties and go about their business, so that pedestrians will not be interrupted. That is quite clear throughout the Bill. However, under clause 1(8), he allows the authority that is giving consent for an event to take place to restrict the riding of horses. Does that mean that an individual whose normal form of transport is to ride—who, reasonably and rightly, has abjured the motor car, which, after all, as we all know, is a dangerous and unpleasant form of transport, and prefers to use a horse to get about —and who wishes to come and go on horseback, can be prevented from doing so by the authority, in the context of the authority licensing an event within the meaning of my hon. Friend's Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a mini-speech, not an intervention.

Mr. Atkinson: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. Curiously, a few individuals still go to and from work on horseback. Many years ago, I used to know one. He was a district reporter of a newspaper in Sussex, who used to cover his district on horseback, taking with him a large, old-fashioned, heavy, iron Imperial typewriter, which he used to keep in a special saddle bag. He was a well-known character because he had done the job for so long. He used to set up the typewriter in parish council meetings and, as the councillor or politician spoke, would type away, which drowned out what was being said. That used to make for rather interesting meetings. I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I digress.

We cannot allow horse traffic through the crowds of people who are waiting for an event, unless we can be certain that they are police horses, and of a sufficiently docile and disciplined nature not to be frightened or cause injury or damage if the crowd went out of control. I have to say that, under the Bill, the person who still goes to and from work on horseback or, indeed, in a pony and trap, will probably be inconvenienced and have to take the diversion route, not their normal route.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's explanation, but am disappointed that the interests of those who go to and from their residence or place of work on horseback are not protected in his Bill. What is the position for bicyclists, because I cannot find any reference to them in the Bill? Is it his intention to prevent someone from coming or going to or from his residence or place of work by bicycle?

Mr. Atkinson: Such a person would, under the Bill, be prevented from cycling down the road. He would not be prevented from wheeling his bicycle from his house, through the closed-off stretch of the road and mounting his bicycle when he reached a diversion, or a road that was not affected by the closure. Again, he would be inconvenienced—I hope only marginally—but he would be able to transport his bicycle as a pedestrian to the place where he could start riding it. That might be slightly inconvenient for him, but when balanced with the good of all those enjoying and watching the event, it is a small inconvenience for a limited time, and for a maximum of once a year.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I am sorry to keep interrupting my hon. Friend, but another provision in the Bill, in clause 1(8)(c)(ii), concerns me. I must declare an interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it refers to

"the leading or driving of horses, cattle, sheep or other animals."

I have a flock of sheep, as the House may know, and I speak for all those who have sheep and may need to move them from time to time from one field to another. That sometimes means crossing the public highway. Does that mean that when an event—as foreseen in the Bill—occurs, it will be impossible for those with livestock to move them across the public highway?

Mr. Atkinson: I am afraid that I must pile disappointment on disappointment on my hon. Friend. I regret that, in the same way that he will not be able to ride his horse or bicycle down these roads, he will have to restrain his sheep for a period until the cavalcade has passed by. I am sure, because the police are remarkably flexible on those matters, that, should he tap the officer on the shoulder and say, "Will you mind if I just move my flock of sheep across the road?" he would no doubt facilitate that at the earliest possible opportunitity. If one can imagine 1,500 vehicles, 200 bicyclists, French gendarmes and a flock of my hon. Friend's sheep, I suspect that we could end up with a great muddle of mutton and profiteroles and Gallic oaths. I regret to say that this prohibition will have to stay in the Bill.

Mr. Butler: I am increasingly concerned by my hon. Friend's repeated references to French gendarmes. Any hon. Member who has been to Paris will know the success of the French gendarmes in controlling traffic, keeping it moving, preventing collisions and so on. Will they be assisted by some English policemen, or will we have to put up with French gendarmes on their own?

Mr. Atkinson: In these enlightened times, my hon. Friend is being much too chauvinistic about the matter. The fact that the gendarmes are prepared to send a contingent to this country is a great compliment. We may beat the French at rugby—we possibly do—but we would certainly welcome them over here. As I said, the French police will be here only in the role of ordinary visitors. They will have no more rights than any other citizens in this country; they will be here simply as visitors. The actual job of controlling the police and riding with the tour de France will be the responsibility of the local constabulary, which obviously has the locus to deal with the crowds and matters that may occur.

Mr. Fabricant: Can my hon. Friend confirm that either there will be the expense of having to put up signs "tenez à gauche" or road traffic regulations will be suspended and people will have to drive on the right of the roads that are closed?

Mr. Atkinson: That was a matter of great concern to us when we considered the Bill, because we thought that there might be pressure from French cyclists to cycle on their traditional side of the road. We then took the view that there would be some British cyclists and we felt that if the French came to Britain, they should conform to our regulations. Therefore, we have specifically excluded any change from left to right.

Mr. Spring: Can my hon. Friend give an assurance that the French police will be mindful that French farmers have shown a terrible disposition towards British sheep, and if French police come over here they must keep a sharp eye on our sheep flocks in the verdant counties of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire? The last thing that we want to do is destroy Anglo-French relations after a successful tour de France has taken place, and further deprive our farmers of an export market which has been closed to them because of the inability of the French police to control their farmers in some instances.

Mr. Atkinson: That raises another serious issue which, regrettably, we did not fully consider in our discussions on the Bill. We dealt with the question of moving sheep flocks, but we did not think that our indigenous flocks would be too much at risk from those who came here. Some farmers may come over in the cavalcade, and local sheep farmers may have to bear that in mind in the security precautions that they take.

I think that most of the people will be here to enjoy the tour de France and hand out profiteroles. I do not think that they will pose a great threat to the sheep in the south-east. Coming from the borders and the north of the country, I never think that the sheep in the south-east have as much class anyway. The French, who buy 40 per cent. of the lambs produced in Cumberland, prefer north country lamb, so I am sure that the sheep in Sussex, Kent and Hampshire will be safe from the depredations of any stray French farmers who tag on the back of the tour de France.

We have given the Bill careful thought in order to balance the needs of the people who will inevitably be inconvenienced by these events, and the needs of the organisers who run such popular events. It is important for, and incumbent on, the House to give the Bill a Second Reading. Now that we have discussed the measure, it will become public knowledge that people will be able to mount a legal objection to any one of these events; it would be a great pity if they did so. Therefore, I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

In conclusion, I thank the staff of the Department of Transport and express my appreciation to them. They helped me considerably in the preparation of the Bill and discovered most of the loopholes and the likely questions that I could be asked. The only question on which we were probably foxed was that of sheep. We had not discussed attacks on sheep perhaps as much as we should have done. However, I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me for that and give the Bill a Second Reading.

10.24 am

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on bringing forward the Bill and explaining it so coherently and persuasively. The objective is clear. As my hon. Friend said, it will give traffic authorities—usually local authorities—the right to restrict or prohibit traffic in the case of a major sporting event, social event or entertainment.

My hon. Friends will know that my constituency of Bury St. Edmunds has had a long-standing connection with the state of California. I mention that because what happens in California tends eventually to spread to the United Kingdom. I raise that point because I shall examine in some detail the whole matter of health and exercise, which will be given a considerable boost by the tour de France.

In the past few years in California, people took to exercise and healthy living in a way that many of us would feel was perhaps somewhat excessive. What concerns me is that there is a new trend in California of going back to high-cholesterol living—that appears to have happened literally in the past few months. Restaurants that previously sold salads and other low-calorie foods are now offering indulgent, high-calorie items, including foie gras in the more expensive ones. I mention that because if there is a reversion to more unhealthy living in California, inevitably it will spread to the United Kingdom, as so many social trends have done in the past. The state of health of our nation is poor, compared with some of our European neighbours.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): All that is irrelevant.

Mr. Spring: The Bill is important because flowing from it will be a renewed interest in cycling and environmentally friendly activities, which will be wholly welcome and desirable. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) said that all that is irrelevant, but the tour de France will have an important exemplary effect on the health of the nation and demonstrate the need to increase exercise and improve health.

Mr. Clappison: My hon. Friend makes an extremely valuable point in the context of the debate. Is he aware that the Sports Council has made cycling a focused sport in the south-east and is gearing up for a major increase in participation in cycling as a result of the tour de France and its associated benefits? Does he agree that that will be, as he rightly said, a major boost to health promotion in this country?

Mr. Spring: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is an important aspect in terms not only of health but of tourism. Although there is an important, narrow definition to the Bill, which was so ably put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham, the broad issues that relate to it are also important.

[Mr. Spring]

I come back to the health of the nation because, after all, there has been considerable controversy about our national health. There are clear, specific targets, for both men and women, to reduce high cholesterol levels and high blood pressure, and to encourage physical activity. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) said, cycling is part and parcel of that process.

I applaud the measure because it is important to encourage participation in sports, especially by our young people. People will be encouraged to do that, especially if they have the assurance of safety that the Bill brings forward so competently.

I think that it was the Duke of Wellington who said that the battle of Waterloo had been won on the playing fields of Eton, but the sad truth is that 600 sports sites in England, no fewer than 200 of which are school pitches, are under threat from planning applications or appeals. For many people, especially young people, sport increasingly means watching television or video games. The number of physical education teachers has fallen by one eighth in the past decade and the number of schools without umpires and referees has increased.

It is interesting and important to note that it is not only "The Health of the Nation", which was published nearly two years ago, that alludes to the need for exercise. The national curriculum also refers to the need for two hours of physical education a week. I was brought up in a rather harder school and remember doing at least two hours a day. However, only one third of our schools meet the undemanding target that has been set, so the example of the tour de France will be important in encouraging young people to take up cycling and physical exercise in general.

Standards of exercise and good health tend to be higher in many other European countries. There is a danger that we could be regarded not as a nation of shopkeepers but, regrettably, as a nation of lounge lizards. I hope that by securing the tour de France this summer, we shall provoke more interest in cycling and health. The Bill would also enable important international events such as the London marathon to take place in greater safety.

I cannot stress sufficiently how strongly I feel about good exercise, especially for young people. Young people need role models, but, sadly, today's sportsmen, whether in cricket, rugby or ice-skating, are not doing especially well. It was sad that we failed to qualify for the world cup final in America in the summer and it was of course a tragedy that Manchester failed to win the Olympic bid.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend said that our ice-skaters had not done very well. Following their regular daily training at the Milton Keynes Bladerunners' ice-rink, Torvill and Dean did reasonably well in coming third. My hon. Friend is perhaps being too disparaging.

Mr. Spring: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's observation. I was going to mention Torvill and Dean.

The Bill would enhance—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman, rather than mentioning Torvill and Dean, should stick to the Bill.

Mr. Spring: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was going to say that the Bill would enhance our ability to host important sporting events and would perhaps encourage better sporting performances. I hope that I shall be allowed to observe that I was in Sarajevo 10 years ago when Torvill and Dean triumphed. However, I pass quickly on.

As the Sports Council said, cycling is excellent exercise. For many years, I cycled from my flat in Pimlico along the Embankment to work. It was good for my health, as it was for all those who did likewise, but, sadly, my cycling is now confined to the House of Commons' gym. If cycling increases its hold on the popular imagination, it will bring other considerable benefits. I am thinking especially of the county of Suffolk, part of which I represent.

My county has more churches per person than any other part of the United Kingdom and one of the most important by-products of seeking to preserve the unique beauty of our churches has been a great cycling event that occurs once a year. I believe that the tour de France will boost charities in the county of Suffolk and elsewhere because of the increased interest in cycling that it will generate.

The event takes place every September. Hundreds of people get on their bicycles and cycle around some of Suffolk's 450 churches, which are open. It is not a competition—one can visit as many or as few as one wishes—but one can obtain sponsorship from companies or individuals. Since its inception in 1982, about £1.2 million have been raised for the magnificent wool churches. It has encouraged young people in my constituency to become interested in cycling and has got them out into the fresh air. The arrival of the tour de France, whose success would be helped by the Bill, will thus help to increase interest in charitable giving via such sponsored cycle races. I hasten to add that the Suffolk constabulary plays an important part in ensuring the road safety of the many young people involved.

The Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, who not only cycles regularly but who undertook a grand cycling tour of his diocese, taking in the parish churches on the diocesan perimeter, sets a marvellous example not only to his clergy but to everyone in the county.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere said, the Sports Council is extremely anxious to promote cycling. The Cyclists Touring Club gave me some fascinating statistics, which I am sure that the House will wish to hear. There are 15 million cycle owners in this country, 2 per cent. of all journeys are made by bicycle and—believe it or not—more journeys are made by bicycle than by rail, although I am confident that, once British Rail is privatised, that will change. The club also said that 1 million bicycles are used daily. Cycling provides exercise which is useful in promoting good health, it is environmentally friendly and it may also have benefits in terms of charitable giving as I described.

From a cycling point of view, the growth of tourism has been a tremendous phenomenon in many parts of England. That is so not only of the areas that may be covered by the tour de France but in areas such as East Anglia, which produces specific maps on which routes are set out for cyclists from all over the world, especially from Holland, whose topography is similar to ours.

We have heard about the French visitors who will come to witness the great sight of the tour de France and we understand that the French police are coming to keep an eye on them, but cycling encourages tourism on many levels, especially in the rather flat part of the world—Suffolk—that I represent. The cycling leaflets that are being produced by tourist offices all over England will meet the inevitable increase of interest in cycling caused by the tour de France in the summer. The Bill sets out the parameters for safety and organisation by the local authorities, which will significantly boost the tour de France.

My own county council decided to appoint a cycling officer, who is encouraging cycling even at the primary school level. Young people have heroes in many different sports and they will take to cycling when they see the massive coverage on television. When I was a schoolboy, there were two varieties of bicycle. One was the drop-handled, racing variety and the other was the sit-up-and-beg variety. With the high-fashion consumer trends among young people today, there is a much greater variety. There are multi-coloured bicycles with matching gear. That is useful in making people feel that cycling is not only healthy exercise but that it is fun to get togged up in such gear, which is good for business as well.

Suffolk county council spends £50,000 on cycling generally, including improving cycle lanes and access for cyclists in particular to areas of the county. The figure has increased four times in the past year, reflecting the great interest in cycling, which will certainly increase after the tour de France this summer. The effect is also being felt more closely. In my constituency, St. Edmundsbury borough council has set out a strategy for cycling in Bury St. Edmunds, again in conjunction with the Cyclists Touring Club, to ensure that cycling is done in safety and is attractive to do.

The World Tourism Organisation has said that by 2000, tourism will be the world's biggest industry. It is sad that France and Spain receive more tourism revenue from us than we do from them. I note that many hon. Members go to France on holiday. I believe that when the French, who take such an enormous interest in the tour de France, see the verdant beauty of the counties of Kent, Sussex and Hampshire, they will be persuaded to come to England. I lived in Paris as a student. When I talked to people about the beauty of England, many had the impression that England was fog-bound and rainy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The tourism potential of the tour de France will be significant and the Bill will certainly help that process.

Hon. Members, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham, have touched on the tour de France. There have been allusions to other cycling events and to marathons. We are seeing a huge increase in cultural activities as well. We had Pavarotti in the park, for example, and yesterday, Pavarotti—almost—in the tunnel, which was a great media event. People increasingly like to go to such events, whether at Wembley or Hyde park, where they have a spectacular time. The Bill will give local authorities the ability to control such events more admirably.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of the Bill. It includes coherent provisions not only for the tour de France, but for a whole variety of other events. The spill-over in terms of benefits to the health and welfare of young people especially, to tourism and to our cultural life will be immense. I applaud my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham for introducing the Bill.

10.43 am

Mr. Gerald Malone (Winchester): I welcome the opportunity to support the Bill so ably introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) and to make a number of constituency points. My hon. Friend mentioned the tour de France, which will be known here as the tour en Angleterre—not the tour d'Angleterre as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) wrongly said. It will go through my city of Winchester where it is considered to be extremely important. The Bill has the backing of Winchester city council and Hampshire county council. It also has the backing of Winchester chamber of commerce, which has asked me to mention a number of points.

The Bill is important because it involves what is not only a sporting event, but an important commercial event for Hampshire. It builds on a series of initiatives that have taken place in Hampshire, such as twinning with towns in France, especially northern France. It builds on the efforts of Winchester chamber of commerce to form an alliance with specific chambers of commerce, especially in Normandy. Every year, a joint event is held in Winchester High street in which a town in Normandy is invited to sell its merchandise in the city. In return, Winchester chamber of commerce sells goods at a similar event in France. The Bill is necessary and will build not on one isolated aspect of commercial activity, but on something that has been happening in Hampshire generally and in my constituency in particular for some time.

I have one slight concern about the Bill. We talked about the rights of access for pedestrians. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will refer later to what will happen to emergency services. I hope that he can assure us that the controls will not affect access for the emergency services, whether the fire service, the ambulance service or the police, and that that point is covered by the Bill.

I also reinforce the point that it will be important for commerce that while the streets in any town or city are closed access to and from the shops is not impeded. It is important that when thousands of people are in cities and villages they should have access to shops. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister can give a view on that. Although the Bill is an enabling measure to allow proper policing of events, it must not be over-restrictive and it must not prevent commerce from going on. Those in the Winchester chamber of commerce who welcome the Bill might then say that it was not a good thing. Perhaps it is envisaged that when local authorities decide to invoke the measure, they will have some control over access to commercial premises. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would address that point.

Having the tour en Angleterre is a great initiative. Those who suggested that le tour should come to the south of England are to be congratulated. It is estimated by the tourist boards in the south that those who come to visit from France, along with all the cyclists and accompanying paraphernalia, will increase the demand for overnight accommodation in the area by 5 to 10 per cent.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham that the tour will not be a three-day wonder. Local authorities throughout the south are building on the initiative and will make the most of it over several months. This week a briefing meeting was held by Winchester chamber of commerce in the city—appropriately, at the Café Monet which I had not come across but which I shall now find.

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

The meeting illustrated to people in the city and those interested in commerce precisely what advantage they could take of the tour.

Winchester chamber of commerce and Winchester city council have set out a series of activities from next month, through July and into the autumn. There will be a variety of activities. Some are purely commercial and will highlight twinning arrangements that we already have with other cities. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) dwelt on the health and fitness aspect of cycling. Local authorities in Hampshire will build on that as well. There will be a series of events and programmes in schools throughout the county to encourage children to take up cycling or, if they already cycle, to do so more safely and to take a general interest in the sport. I very much welcome that.

I have not been able to discover whether there is an initiative for those in my constituency, including myself, who are of a somewhat more sedentary nature. I raise that in the hope that the event's organisers will cater for those who will certainly not be able to participate in the race. Will my hon. Friend the Minister, who might have a common interest with me in the matter, see whether such an initiative, of which he and I could take advantage, could be encouraged? He is almost a parliamentary neighbour and I invite him to attend on the day to see how the event goes. Perhaps he and I could get on a tandem and go around the streets of Winchester to amaze the public. Perhaps he will respond to that when he speaks.

The serious argument that I want to advance is that every effort is being made to use the Bill to promote an event that will have a wide appeal to members of the public of all ages and interests.

The Bill is also welcomed by Hampshire constabulary, who should not be responsible for closing roads and should not take on the burdensome bureaucratic work involved with events of this sort. Local authorities should take on those responsibilities, because they have a wider view of the public interest. The police welcome the lifting of that burden and the introduction of proper regulation to ensure that such events take place in a better ordered way.

I did not intend to detain the House for long. I merely wanted to raise those constituency points to highlight to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham why his Bill is important and why it should not go through on the nod. I am sure that many hon. Members will want to raise specific constituency points. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to raise mine. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reply to the arguments that I have advanced. I do not oppose the Bill, but further enlightenment would be extremely welcome.

10.52 am

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): As other hon. Members have said, there is great urgency to give the Bill a Second Reading today. The Bill is important for tourism, for Britain and, from what we have heard, for the profiterole industry.

I am grateful for the correction from my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) that the tour should be called the tour en Angleterre and not the tour d'Angleterre. My confusion arose because of the name tour de France as opposed to the tour en France.

The Bill is being debated at an important time because it is the 50th anniversary of the D-day landing, which no hon. Member has mentioned today. The event will command huge media coverage, which will not only benefit tourism and sport but will remind people of the sacrifice that people made 50 years ago in the liberation of France. Millions of pounds are at stake and the Bill should be passed without delay.

The Bill is not only important for the tour de France —or the tour en Angleterre; it will have enduring uses. Not long ago, the formula 3000 grand prix was held in Birmingham. I recall former Team Lotus cars screaming around spaghetti junction. I drive around that junction in my little red Lotus Elan, which I believe is well known to West Midlands police. I should like to put it on the record for the benefit of the police that I do not scream around spaghetti junction but drive sedately, and well within the speed limit.

Mr. Butler *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Phil Butler.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He spoke of commemorating the D-day landings. Is he aware that they were in the other direction? On the question of his Lotus kit car, those of us who intend to speak about using motor vehicles in road events would not include kit cars but only professionally produced vehicles.

Mr. Fabricant: I am horrified by my hon. Friend's latter point—I almost hesitate to use the word friend. I remind him that the Lotus Elan is manufactured in Norfolk; it is not a kit car and it has huge export potential. He will be aware that Lotus has recently been taken over by Bugatti.

Mr. Butler: With respect to my hon. Friend, there is no export potential for the Lotus Elan because it has been discontinued.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend claims to be an expert on car manufacture. Since its acquisition by Bugatti, the Elan has been reinstated and is available for export. I greatly regret that no Norfolk Members are present. I hope that my hon. Friend's argument will not damage Lotus's export potential.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am anxious that the debate should return to the subject of the Bill.

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for bringing my attention back to the Bill.

Birmingham became the Monte Carlo of Britain after the super prix was held there. It brought valuable revenue into the city. It is up to Birmingham whether to hold such an event again, but the Bill will make it easier for it to do so.

The Bill will encourage the tourist industry, which is in much need of a boost. We cannot and should not ignore an industry that is not only the second largest in the United Kingdom but employs 1.5 million people. As tourism amounts to 4 per cent. of our gross domestic product, and as £25 billion is spent on tourism every year, any measure that makes it easier for special events to be held by easing road traffic regulations and thus encouraging more visitors to attend events should be heartily welcomed. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on introducing the Bill.

The Bill's motives are admirable and practical. I welcome the support that it has been given by the police and local authorities, which my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham mentioned, and by the Department of Transport. The Bill aims to boost the cultural and social life of this country by making it easier for local authorities to control the flow of traffic around special events such as those that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham mentioned—marathons and bicycle races.

Having said that, however, I believe that a balance must be struck between enabling highway authorities to carry out their duties more effectively and ensuring that the rights of motorists and other road users rights are protected. Other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), have mentioned that aspect. We shall need adequate advance notices and clear signposting of diversions. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to reassure me on that.

I want to focus my remarks on maintaining that balance. The hard-pressed motorist is public enemy No. 1, but he or she also has rights. The famous novelist L.P. Hartley— not to be confused with J. R. Hartley, who wrote the respected treatise on fly fishing— complained that

> "Motorists are irresponsible in their dealings with each other and with the pedestrian public; for their benefit homicide was legalised. The basic principles of equality were flouted, while the opposing principle of envy was disastrously encouraged."

Mr. Butler *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bill Butler.

Mr. Butler: I am grateful for my ever-changing name, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to your alighting on a suitable one in due course. Is my hon. Friend concerned, as I am, about clause 1(1) of the Bill, which would insert proposed new section 16A in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984? It purports to make motoring events possible other than those involving a race or trial of speed—rallies, driving tests, and so on— but not unless the competition or trial is authorised by or under regulations in that section. It is exactly the same wording as that which makes possible the regulation of cycle racing, where, again, there is the requirement that that is not possible unless it is authorised by or under regulations made under the relevant section of the 1988 Act. Therefore, is it my hon. Friend's concern that in due course, when appropriate regulations are made—I am sure he shares my hope that it will not take too long —they will apply to motoring events as well, hence his interest in that subject in the debate?

Mr. Fabricant: I agree with my hon. Friend whole-heartedly. As I said earlier, Birmingham set a precedent some years ago—and with some difficulty—by organising the Formula 3000 grand prix. Clearly, if the great city of Birmingham decides to do that again, it will be far easier once the Bill is enacted.

It must be remembered that if there is a special event many motorists passing through the area need rights of access and proper traffic control, especially if other routes are not readily available. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has also suggested, it will undoubtedly have a number of revitalising effects on our social and cultural life. Moreover, the Bill will encourage sporting events and I suspect that if the Bill is passed a number of sporting events will flourish, and tourism will flourish with them. Clearly, at a time when Britain is having a little trouble attracting major sporting events into the country—the European football championship excepted—anything that goes some way to encourage and enable major sporting events to be held must be commended. If the Bill is passed, we shall have gone some way to convincing those abroad, yet again, that they will not face red tape and bureaucratic wrangling.

While I support the Bill in principle, I wonder how we can ensure that, while enabling authorities to restrict and regulate traffic temporarily, motorists' needs and rights will not be ridden over roughshod by local authorities. After all, do not motorists suffer enough traffic congestion? We have enough motorway cones on our roads to build a mountain that would be the envy of the common agricultural policy. However, I note that the Department of Transport's lane rental initiatives and cone phone lines are reducing that mountain to a mere foothill.

The previous Bill on temporary restrictions on road traffic was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and by Lord Brougham and Vaux in the other place in 1991. While the purpose of their Bill, like the one before us today, was to

> "ensure that traffic authorities could respond quickly and effectively to short term needs for traffic restriction"

by reducing the number of occasions when local authorities have to seek consent for temporary traffic orders, clear mention was made of the need to strike an appropriate balance between greater freedom for highway authorities and sufficient protection for road users. I maintain that that balance is a difficult one. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would give assurances that his Bill will have proper safeguards to ensure that, in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford in May 1991:

> "Limitations on the rights of free passage for road users cannot be unreasonably imposed."

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is making an important point. Does he agree that it may be sensible to try to incorporate some provision in the Bill, perhaps in Committee, allowing local people at some point to make reasonable representations to the local authorities before the regulations are framed? Would he care to comment on that suggestion?

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He makes a worthwhile point. Again, a difficult balance has to be struck, in that if local people are allowed to object or provide an input—and it is important that they be able to do so—this does not outweigh the effects of the Bill in slicing through red tape and enabling events to happen easily. It is important that the procedures are not long winded.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has said, there must be a clear need for local authorities to provide adequate warning to road users in advance of special regulations to provide adequate signposting, although I hope that that will not impose a great cost on local taxpayers. It is important to give clear guidance on alternative routes. There must be an obligation on the local authorities, with the organisers of the special events, to provide adequate information to road users. Perhaps that, too, may be discussed in Committee. Again, I seek reassurance from the Minister on that point.

Perhaps I may be especially helpful, given my background before I came to the House. I suggest that one way in which to keep motorists and the public informed of diversions and so on would be for the organisers of special and major events to set up temporary radio stations which

[Mr. Fabricant]

could broadcast information while a special event was being held. Those radios stations could provide relevant traffic information and police notices to passing motorists, who would be able to tune in on their car radios. Not only would the motorist be made well aware of the new road restrictions, but the organisers would be able to promote their events. The radio stations would also be able to give specialised information about ticket availability, where to queue, and so on. I am sure that the House would agree that "London Marathon 99.1 FM" or "Tour de France 102 FM stereo" have a resounding ring. It would be a great success for event organisers and motorists, and it would not need legislation.

Mr. Mackinlay: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been studying the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire for some time and it is quite clear that he is reading his speech continuously; indeed, he would be incapable of stringing words together without it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not take that view at all.

Mr. Fabricant: As I said, those radio stations would not need legislation. While the Luddite party opposite—I am thinking of one Member especially—opposed the introduction of ITV, Channel 4, independent television, independent radio and satellite television, we have been the deregulator of the airwaves. More recently, the Broadcasting Act 1990 has been a boon to restricted service broadcasting for special events—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already asked the hon. Gentleman to return to the subject of the Bill. He is straying from it.

Mr. Fabricant I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for bringing me back to the main point of the debate. It is important that where there are special events, road signs should be made available and that there is adequate communication to road users. By road users, I include not only people who travel from A to B, where that route takes them through the special event, but road users who wish to attend the event, which is tremendously important. Those licences are readily available. The Radio Authority says:

> "Restricted service licences are generally issued on demand"—

that is important—

> "subject only to frequency availability and adherence to various specified technical criteria".

In 1992, 241 such licences were issued and some were for such special events. It would improve traffic flow in the area of special events and would promote those events as well.

Mr. Malone: The point that my hon. Friend is making about how the regulations will apply is important, especially in my constituency of Winchester where the Minister knows that we have traffic problems aplenty. Will my hon. Friend consider the point—I am not saying that it should be in the body of the legislation, but perhaps in some of the regulations—that there could be some sort of telephone freephone number to call giving information about all such arrangements so that the wider public, and not only those in the locality, may avoid the area and be made aware of what roads would be closed? Would he consider that, rather than simply having a separate radio station for each event?

Mr. Fabricant: I am again grateful to my hon. Friend for his good suggestion. People may be deterred by the cost of using a phone line—unless it is an 0800 number—but they can tune in to a radio station free of charge. I am sure that I do not have to remind my hon. Friend that many of his constituents work for National Transcommunications Ltd., now known as NTL, which is the former engineering division of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. It has played an active role in helping to set up special event radio licences for events such as those that the Bill will allow to be held.

While I hope that the Bill will be passed, I trust that some of my concerns will be taken into account. I hope that we can look forward to special sporting and cultural events and that we can also make sure that the needs and freedoms of road users are not ignored or neglected. To paraphrase a recent editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*, motorists must not become a populace more ruled against than ruling. I commend the Bill to the House.

11.10 am

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this time, because I have to return to my constituency. It is unusual for me to be here on a Friday, but this is an important Bill in which I have a particular interest.

It appeared to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) that some brief points raised by some of my hon. Friends were not directly related to the Bill. I hope to relate my speech directly to the Bill and hope that it will not sound too much like an impassioned speech by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

The House should thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), who spoke so eloquently. It is no coincidence that he, of all my hon. Friends and other hon. Members who were fortunate to obtain a high place in the ballot, has presented a Bill that does not seek to introduce new, burdensome legislation, but seeks to regularise an important aspect of road traffic regulations. It seeks to put it beyond doubt that local traffic authorities will have powers to restrict or regulate traffic to allow major sporting or social events or entertainments to take place on public roads.

The Bill will be necessary to allow the staging here of the tour de France, but it is not just a question of that event. I note that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic agrees. I hope that he will take on board my concern that, all too often, the Department of Transport uses examples of events in southern England or in London, such as the Notting Hill carnival or the London marathon, to highlight why regulations or, in this instance, a Bill should become law.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham rightly said when he used the example of the great north run, many events—probably more events—take place outside London and the south-east. I represent a north-west constituency, a seaside resort at that, and I should like to highlight those events, which are extremely relevant. In my constituency, there are events such as the Southport flower show, which is second only to the one in London, and the major air show, which has taken place annually in recent years. Last year, some 350,000 people came to my constituency for that show.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham knows perfectly well that my constituency is not very big. There is congestion now and when 350,000 extra people arrive for an event such as the air show it causes considerable traffic difficulties. It is right and proper that the Department should come up with examples other than the Notting Hill carnival and the London marathon. As I have said, the Bill will address many other appropriate events.

At the moment, the police and local authorities have various powers to deal with the difficulties about which my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has spoken. He mentioned the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and I referred him to the Metropolitan Police Act 1839. It was patently obvious that, in the 1830s and 1840s, our predecessors addressed matters relating to public health. They had not envisaged the scourge of the wheel clamp and did not have the forethought or wit to believe that local authorities would introduce measures such as pay and display or create other problems.

I hope that I am allowed to mention the problems caused by my own local authority in Sefton where the Liberal Democrats ganged together with the Labour party in Southport to introduce a system of parking controls that are hampering traders and putting people out of work. I shall return to that, because it is directly relevant to consideration of the Bill.

In London, the police are not certain that legislation that is currently on the statute book can be used to override the parking bays and traffic regulation orders to which I referred my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham. Given the fact that the police are not certain whether they already have the powers to suspend parking bays and so on when special events take place, it is surprising that it has taken so long to produce a Bill such as that of my hon. Friend. I pay tribute to him.

The police probably feel that decisions are not necessarily a matter for them but for local authorities. I take the view that local authorities should be accountable to their electorates. The necessity to close roads or to divert traffic the wrong way down a one-way street are matters for local authorities, which are responsible for their areas. The police are more concerned with breaches of law and order that may occur as a result of special entertainment or sporting events and high concentrations of visitors. The police would probably feel far happier if the House legislated to put the matter right.

There is other legislation to cover specific events. My hon. Friends the Members for Hexham and for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) referred to the Road Traffic Act 1988. That Act bans bicycle racing, but allows it if special arrangements are made. However, it does not cover some of the events to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham referred.

When plans were being drawn up for the tour de France, it was realised that it could be better described as an event rather than as a bicycle race, as there is so much accompanying transport and festivity. While the tour de France will probably bring far more people to the south-east and southern England than perhaps some of the single events in my constituency to which I have referred, it is important for the Bill to proceed with all haste. I hope that none of my hon. Friends and no Opposition Members—not that I see many Opposition Members in the House—have great objections in principle to the Bill.

The Bill updates the powers to close roads temporarily for major events and transfers them to local authorities. As I have said, no existing powers are being repealed. I congratulate my hon. Friend on the fact that his Bill does not seek to create burdensome regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) drew attention to a matter that I wish to discuss. I refer to the process whereby local traders, business people and residents, as well as those who are to participate in an event, consider the proposals for road closures and traffic regulations. I trust that they will have an opportunity to comment, whether by a telephone hotline or in writing to the local authority. I hope also that when a decision is reached, those affected—particularly business men and women—will have an opportunity to appeal.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be detrimental if that mechanism took the form of something like a public inquiry? That might draw out the whole process, with the result that the special event could not go ahead—with all the disadvantages to the local economy that that would entail.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent and important point, which I hope to address in the few minutes available to me. He knows me well enough to be reassured that I shall not deal with that aspect hastily or seek to brush it aside.

No existing powers are being repealed, and the Bill does not provide for new, burdensome regulations.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that regulations would follow the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister will want to cover aspects such as proper consultation—so that the public will have an opportunity to make their views known about a particular decision. I support my hon. Friend's remarks concerning Sefton borough council. I frequently stay in Lord street in Southport. Almost two times out of three, I receive a parking ticket. Hotel guests and the business community are harassed by Southport's new traffic regulations.

Mr. Banks: I know of the event that my hon. Friend attends. Although it takes place just outside my constituency, it is important and popular with local hoteliers. When it is held, it is difficult to book a hotel room in Southport. I accept that not every right hon. and hon. Member agrees with the Waterloo cup, but it is popular with many, and valuable in attracting trade to Southport. Some of the events that I shall give as examples are similar to that to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Malone: It is envisaged that le tour en Angleterre will not be limited to the passage of the cyclists but will extend two to three hours before and after. Does not my hon. Friend agree that that reinforces the need for consultation? That event will set aside almost a whole day of the city's commerce, so it is important that it is properly organised.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend makes a particularly important point, which touches on one of my greatest concerns. It is entirely right that we should legislate, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) pointed out, it is not just a question of closing roads for a short period. Planning some events takes considerable time. The traffic division of Merseyside

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constabulary, which so ably looks after my constituency, has police officers working almost exclusively on matters associated with planning special events.

When hundreds of thousands of people visit one small geographical area, which is a good description of my constituency—where as soon as the houses stop, the fields begin and there is a high concentration of small roads that a high volume of vehicles would find difficult to use—roads will be closed some time before the event begins, during the event and afterwards. There will be consequences for businesses that abut the road and for their customers, or for businesses reached by the road in question. It is vital that proper consultation occurs before decisions are made and that those affected have an opportunity to appeal against any conclusion that the local traffic authority reaches.

Mr. Butler *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Peter Butler.

Mr. Butler: I am very grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Southport is the venue for famous motor cycle sand dune races that are held annually—although I have never participated in or spectated at them. How will they, and the road traffic preparations made for them, be affected by the Bill?

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is right. I am pleased that Mr. Phil King, my local authority's director of tourism and attractions, whose office is in Southport, is doing an excellent job—in so far as my hon. Friend is aware of many events held in Southport. The popular motor cycle endurance race is held on Southport beach and is attended by people from not just the north-west but the whole of the United Kingdom. Motor cycle enthusiasts travel to it by not only motor bike but car. That is why it is vital that those who are affected by road closures should have an opportunity to comment. I refer not just to residents but to those who attend events.

My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) is a keen triathlon participant—or used to be. That is another example. Triathlon participants do not just run to Southport, or whatever may be the location, but travel by car. In many parts of the United Kingdom, not least Southport, that creates a serious parking problem.

The more events we stage, the better it is for my constituents and the local economy. The way we are heading, tourism is not just in the top 10 of economic activity and employment in Britain but is fast approaching the number one spot.

Mr. Butler: I am not sure what is involved in a triathlon, but, to preserve my reputation, I invite my hon. Friend to repeat that outside the House, without the benefit of privilege.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps I should explain. A triathlon is a three-part event, in which an athlete swims, rides a bicycle and runs.

Mr. Butler: I cannot swim.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps my hon. Friend could manage one or two. I hope that that is sufficient explanation and now perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can make progress.

The Bill will not repeal any powers. Present legislation is considered adequate for small events and will continue to be used. The new powers contained in the Bill are for regulating major events, which will involve the closure of main routes and are likely to generate much traffic. More specific orders will, therefore, be required to cover surrounding streets; that was the heart of the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. It will not merely be a case of closing streets before, during or after an event. Obviously, I hope that the police will be able to open roads fairly quickly after an event.

As I said in an earlier intervention, certain roads in Kent and Sussex will have to be closed for several hours to allow cyclists to pass through. If those roads have to be closed for several hours, how long will roads in rural areas have to be closed—perhaps a large stretch of road, where the traffic cannot simply be stopped at both ends because of the many side roads? That will take a long time. It takes several hours to close roads for the tour de France and to open them again afterwards.

Mr. Malone: Substantial costs will be incurred when major events of that type take place and there have to be closures of that magnitude. Might it not be sensible for the people who benefit economically from such events to be obliged to contribute towards their cost? I know that there is likely to be a profiterole millionaire at the end of "le tour" and that sponsorship and merchandising contracts are involved. The new and complicated arrangements will cost money and those who benefit should contribute, so that that money does not have to come out of the public purse.

Mr. Banks: That is a valuable argument.

Town and county councils in the south of England will spend at least £500,000 for the two-day tour de France event in July, which is an awful lot of money. Let us not forget that the events will not be confined to the tour de France. As I said, the local authority spends money to promote some events in my constituency. It is important that local authorities in the south of England affected by the tour recognise the enormous economic benefits of special events, and their sheer attraction. The fact that local authorities want to promote them shows what they can do for the local economy. Those areas are also affected by tourism and, as each day passes, there are more and more tourists.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester is right to say that those who benefit should also contribute. However, although that is an important matter, I must make progress.

The Bill will insert section 16A in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, to allow traffic authorities—usually the local authority—to restrict or prohibit traffic for a major

"sporting event, social event or entertainment",

but not for motor racing, which my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East referred to, albeit obliquely. I think that another hon. Member mentioned the TT races in the Isle of Man.

What is most important is that the powers will facilitate the holding of a "relevant event", will enable members of the public to watch and will reduce the disruption to traffic that is likely to be caused. I am especially concerned about the latter, as road closures can cause widespread disruption in my constituency.

Section 16B allows an order under section 16A to be in force for only three days in one year, but the Secretary of State can extend that time by another three days. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham for mentioning that fact. I do not think that he would want major disruption for too long, and three days is a long time for roads to be closed.

As a result of the privatisation of the water companies, the necessary £85 million has finally been found—as it could not have been when North West Water was in the public sector—to build a new sewage treatment system in my constituency. The system will ensure that beaches pass European Community tests for bathing water standards. Ainsdale and Formby pass the tests, but Southport does not and Blackpool has some way to go. Major engineering work is required in a considerable part of my constituency and is already causing widespread disruption to road traffic. Some of the main streets in Southport have had to be closed and will continue to be closed for some time. Lord street is the Mecca for shoppers in the north-west of England and the closure will significantly affect the local economy.

Although there has been a steady decline in the number of people out of work in my constituency during recent months, between 100 and 200 people are now out of work in Southport because of the nonsensical pay-and-display parking system that has been imposed on us by the Liberal Democrat and Labour parties. If one starts messing around with traffic regulations and does not properly consult—as my local authority did not consult before it imposed the system—one ends up getting into difficulties. That is why it is important that we ensure that there is adequate consultation before we start closing roads.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: As I said earlier, I sympathise with my hon. Friend over the imposition of Sefton borough council's new parking regulations. They have been a complete disaster. When the sand races take place in Southport, I believe that the Bill, if it passes into law, will be a considerable help. As I recall, the sand races also affect the promenade; the shrimp fishermen therefore have enormous difficulty in crossing the promenade and getting down on to the sands to catch shrimps—Southport shrimps, of course, being famous. The Bill would enable the shrimp fishermen's needs and requirements to be properly taken into consideration.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend demonstrates considerable knowledge of my constituency and I am grateful to him for drawing attention to the difficulties of the shrimp industry in Southport.

The event to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has just referred is one example of many. I have mentioned the air show and I shall mention others before I have finished. Those events often take place on the coast road and the specific event to which my hon. Friend refers directly impinges on more than the promenade. If my hon. Friend recalls, the promenade is inland from the coast road and there is a large marine lake between the promenade and the coast road.

If one starts messing about with traffic regulations and does not adequately consult, one botches things up, as sometimes happens in my local authority, when the Liberal Democrats and the Labour members of the council get together and do not listen to what the Conservatives are saying. The Labour party of course does not have any councillors in Southport, yet it will insist on making a mess of our traffic regulation. That is why, as my hon. Friend rightly mentions, we get into problems.

If the traffic builds up in an area along the coast road, it makes access difficult for people going about their lawful business, whether it be shrimpers or people who want simply to go for a walk, or to attend the event that my hon. Friend mentioned or any other similar event. Difficulties are caused and they need to be tackled. The Bill goes to the heart of that problem.

I referred some moments ago to section 16A. I shall now discuss section 16C. Section 16C will allow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make regulations concerning those powers. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will give some more detail, when he replies to the debate, of what the regulations will contain, and say whether he might publish the regulations, if he can, at an appropriate stage, for consultation.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key) Yes.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can hear him answering me positively in that respect.

Consultation and local accountability are the keys to the Bill and I hope that the procedure that will be set out will be used by the traffic authorities—usually the local authorities, as I have mentioned—when making an order. I also hope that the traffic authorities will try to include a specific period of notice prior to the event during which consultation must take place. It might be eight or 12 weeks —I would not want to set a hard and fast number of weeks —prior to the making of an order, in which consultation can take place. However, it is important, as we proceed, that local authorities consider representations.

I know that most, if not all, local authorities, would want to consult, although, as I mentioned in answer to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham a moment ago, I should have thought that most local authorities would want to consult before they started changing a system of traffic regulation or imposing car parking charges; but, apparently, the Labour and Liberal Democrat members of Sefton borough council wanted to impose those regulations on my constituency last year. Frankly, the local economy of the town has not recovered yet.

Perhaps after May, when—contrary to what some Opposition Members might think—there are some Conservative gains in Southport at the forthcoming local elections, the scheme will be abandoned. Councillor Leslie Byrom, the leader of the Conservative group on the council, has said that if the Conservatives once again control the council they will scrap that scheme.

Mr. Butler: I have a worry, and I would appreciate my hon. Friend's comments. He has spoken about a number of events and activities that take place in what he loosely terms "the resort of Southport", and he refers to the ways in which they can be affected by the Bill.

The traffic authority under the Bill has to be satisfied that the traffic should be restricted or prohibited, but that can arise only if the relevant event is any sporting event, social event or entertainment that is held on a road. In other words, that does not permit traffic control regulation to be

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discarded or changed for an event held adjacent to, near to, or somewhere near a road, but only if the event is actually held on a road.

I am not a shrimper, but I find it hard to believe that they thrive in puddles, even on roads badly maintained by Sefton, in view of its political climate; nor can I believe that the sand dune racing to which I referred earlier takes place on roads, even after storms. I wonder whether my hon. Friend would tell us whether any of the events to which he refers—the flower show, for example—are held on a road.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Before I answer his question, I must take issue with his suggestion that there is anything wrong in describing my constituency as a resort. "Loosely" was the term that my hon. Friend used. It is not a question of loosely. My constituency is a delightful Victorian seaside resort. It is a great honour to represent it in this place. I know that some of my colleagues further up the coast in Blackpool think that Blackpool is rather good. It may well be the premier resort to them, but Southport has attractions of its own. I would not—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is all very interesting. I know Southport and Blackpool very well so the hon. Gentleman has no reason whatsoever to continue plying the virtues of both of those two towns. Will he stick rigidly to the Bill?

Mr. Banks: I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could see you moving in your seat. Indeed, I was just about to say that, before I trespassed any further on your goodwill, I would return to the particular and specific points with which I have been dealing and which directly relate to the Bill.

Before I go further, I should answer the pertinent argument made by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East. The Bill will relate to special events. That is why the term "special events" is in its title. It is not a question whether the event takes place only on the main road or off the road. The Bill seeks to deal with traffic regulations that need to be made for a short period to prevent vehicular access along a particular route.

However, my hon. Friend's argument is important, because, even though an event may not necessarily take place on a given stretch of road, with major events such as the tour de France, road closures often have to take place to effect what is necessary for that event to occur.

I assure my hon. Friend that the Bill covers many events such as air shows. For heaven's sake, Harrier jump jets do not come down on the marine road in Southport, but it is necessary to consider where visitors who wish to observe the event should park. Public safety is of paramount importance in considering the Bill. I mentioned earlier that 350,000 people came to my town to see the air show. At such an event, people concentrate not on how much traffic may go from A to B but on what is happening in the skies. That is yet another reason why it is important to regularise those powers and ensure that the police do not stamp around in the dark. It is, therefore, appropriate to seek to legislate to allow road closures to take place.

I have, rather unwillingly, been diverted from my speech in answering my hon. Friends' specific questions, although some of them have been directly related to the Bill. Section 16C is particularly important. I shall not press my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham too hard today, but will he try to ensure that the Bill includes an appropriate period for planning and consultation, perhaps eight to 12 weeks? Those who will participate in, observe or be affected by an event should have an opportunity to have a say during an appropriate period of consultation which roads will be closed or cease to be one-way.

The Bill is, I think, intended to make it easier to take the necessary steps to enable special events to take place. Nevertheless, those powers should be used only in exceptional circumstances. That issue goes to the heart of my concern, given that I represent a seaside resort. Many of my hon. Friends have the same concern. If roads are closed, trade and business will be affected, so I look to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham to assure us that those powers will be used only in exceptional circumstances.

One can almost set one's calendar by some events in the tourist industry. For example, the Chelsea flower show takes place on a particular weekend and we know well in advance when that will be. Given the average speed of traffic in London, which drops yearly, it is difficult to move about at the best of times. As there are no tube stations near the Chelsea flower show, the only means of public transport is the bus. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many gentlemen and ladies who regularly attend the event, as well as casual visitors, often try to go by car and must fight to find an available parking meter. If everybody tried to park as close to the Chelsea flower show as he or she would like, there would be chaos in and around the Royal hospital. That is just another example of where chaos can ensue.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: May I reassure my hon. Friend that the Bill will be used sparingly, but will have considerable advantage in certain difficult situations? He may not know Lewes, but I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) will know of the Lewes bonfire. It is a major celebration which has been growing in size in recent years, to the point where the police are considering stopping the whole event because of the danger of managing the traffic and crowds. If the Bill is passed, that event could continue because it would enable the police to divert the traffic and manage the crowds properly. But those are exceptional circumstances, whereas the majority of the events in Southport will continue to be dealt with under existing regulations.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reassurance. Those are important points.

I do not wish to detain the House for too long. Although I am only a tiny fraction of the way through the points that I had hoped to make, I realise that the House wants to make progress and other hon. Friends wish to speak, so I shall shortly draw my remarks to a close. In so doing, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham that I welcome the Bill, which provides an enormous boost to tourism and the local economy. I hope that it commands the total support of local authorities and the police, as well as local traders who will be directly affected.

It would be misleading to suggest that the tour de France will be the only event to gain from the Bill. It will not. My constituency will benefit considerably and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham and the

Minister will take on board what I hope have been my pertinent points. I have no hesitation in congratulating my hon. Friend and wishing the Bill best speed.

11.56 am

Mr. Peter Butler (Milton Keynes, North-East): This is my first attendance on a Friday and I have been enlivened by the quality and brevity of interventions and speeches made by my hon. Friends.

I welcome this pernicious little Bill, which is clearly drafted along lines that demonstrate a belief in original sin because it shows that it is capable of redemption. In due course, I shall table one or two appropriate, helpful and modest amendments to assist in that redemption. Like many Bills nowadays, it is almost enabling in that, until we see the regulations, we shall not know how effective or otherwise it may be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) declared a number of constituency interests before, no doubt, going off to find the Café Monet. I, too, have a number of constituency interests connected with the Bill—not with the tour en Angleterre because those taking part in it cannot get as far as Milton Keynes by bicycle —but with regard to cycling in general.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. Friend, who has attended the whole debate assiduously, will know that earlier we discussed how small flocks of sheep, which are covered by the Bill, will be restricted in crossing the road. As the hon. Member representing Milton Keynes, does he know whether the concrete cows will suffer from the same difficulty?

Mr. Butler: I am unique among Members of this House in that I always take my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) seriously. However, that stand is challenged this morning. I shall simply pass on, except to say that the politics of envy from those who do not represent constituencies with decent, environmentally-friendly cows is sad to behold.

The only connection with cows that we would claim is the milk race. Although it is not assisted by those cows, it has often come through the centre of Milton Keynes swiftly and successfully because the number of roundabouts and the absence of traffic lights mean that we never have traffic jams. So I am extremely sorry that the Milk Marketing Board—"Milk Co" or "Milk Crate", whatever it is now to be called—has decided not to continue to sponsor that event.

The other Milton Keynes interest is a general interest in cycling. I am sure that all of us here were impressed by the figures that were given earlier. If I remember correctly, there are about 15 million bicycles in Britain, of which 1 million are used every day. One can only contemplate whether it is the same million or a different million each day. Bicycles are a little like Bullworkers and exercise machines. They are purchased to be kept rather than to be used.

I own a bicycle. Part of my election material featured me and the whole family on a number of bicycles—the same number as there are members of the family. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) referred to drop-handlebar racing machines and sit-up-and-beg bicycles. I have what those with an interest in machinery call a safety bicycle, off which I have fallen on several occasions.

Originally, cycle racing took place on what were known as ordinary bicycles. They are now known in the quaint old English custom as penny-farthings. They followed the hobby horse, which was a bicycle without chain or other means of propulsion. I am not aware of what type of bicycle is used in the tour en Angleterre. I have always hankered after a Dursley-Pederson bicycle. You may have shared that desire in your not-so-distant youth, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will recall, it is the type of bicycle that has the saddle mounted on a cord or chain slung between the front and the rear on the top, on which one sits in great comfort. One cannot sit in great comfort on my safety bicycle, which appears to have a saddle designed by Wilkinson Sword.

In addition to owning bicycles, I occasionally use a bicycle. Sometimes I use it to stand on to reach a high shelf in the garage, but occasionally I go out on a bicycle for exercise and fun. That brings me on to Milton Keynes's main claim to fame connected with bicycles. We have what are called the red ways. That is not a political comment, before my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) leaps to his feet.

Milton Keynes has more cycle paths and bridleways than any town or city in the kingdom can boast. It is possible, and frequently done, to get from one side of Milton Keynes to the other on the red way without having to cross a public highway. We do not have to leap across. We do not have to avoid flocks of sheep, hooligan shrimpers or any of the other obstacles that my hon. Friends seem to suffer in their resorts. We can cycle from one side of the city to the other in comfort—depending on the saddle—in safety and healthily.

Milton Keynes has always been proud of its involvement with cycling and its encouragement of bicycles. It is not the sort of encouragement that we see in Cambridge, where bicycles are given away free by the Labour city council, painted in a particularly garish colour, as one might expect from that institution.

Mr. Quentin Davies: My hon. Friend has touched on what I hope that he will agree is an important part of the Bill—the power that will be given to local councils. Unfortunately, some councils are Labour controlled. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no abuse of local authority power of which the Labour party is not capable? We have had systematic corruption, nepotism, job-rigging in Monklands and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What has corruption in Monklands or anywhere else to do with the Bill? I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman did not reply to that intervention.

Mr. Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise if I have misread the Bill. As I see it, it places considerable responsibility on local authorities, defined in the Bill as traffic authorities, to decide when roads should be closed for the purpose of an event within the meaning of the Bill. That means that crucial consideration—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill does not refer to the constitution of local authorities.

Mr. Butler: Turning from Milton Keynes's proud boast—

Mr. Clappison: Will my hon. Friend give way on the point about local authorities exercising their power?

Mr. Butler: Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to conclude my proud boast. I remind the House again—one has to remind again because otherwise it is not a reminder—that Milton Keynes has more cycle paths than any other city or town. If only, as they say in the slogan, all towns were like Milton Keynes.

Mr. Clappison: My hon. Friend has touched on an important point which relates to the scheme of the Bill and the policy with regard to decisions by local authorities. As my hon. Friend will know, much of the Bill is based on the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The Bill follows closely the scheme of that Act. Unlike the Act, which is fairly clear about the tests that local authorities must apply in deciding whether roads are to be closed, the Bill does not set out any test. Can my hon. Friend assist me by giving some thoughts about consistency between decisions taken by different local authorities about what constitutes a special event and about when a road should be closed for such an event? That is an important point, which needs some explanation.

Mr. Butler: It is traditional to say that I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, but I am not sure that I am grateful on this occasion. I am not answering for the Bill. I am merely here to welcome this pernicious little thing.

The test is that the traffic authority has to be satisfied. My hon. Friend is a lawyer. Indeed, he is more than a lawyer. He is a barrister. Therefore, he will know the test that is to be discharged on being satisfied. Whether consultation is required has already been debated. I share the concern that has been expressed that one should not get into anything analogous to a public inquiry on each occasion on which the French want to come over with bicycles.

Mr. Quentin Davies: As my hon. Friend says, the traffic authority has to be satisfied in accordance with the Bill. Does he agree that some of the more irresponsible Labour authorities will be satisfied that a purely political event should displace the normal traffic from the roads? Will not we have all sorts of exotic forms of humanity—socialist revolutionaries, militants, militant homosexuals—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is testing my patience and overcooking the argument altogether. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor did not answer that intervention.

Mr. Butler: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Matthew Banks: I have the advantage that, unlike my hon. Friends the Members for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) and for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler), I am not a lawyer. Surely my hon. Friend must be worried that there could be some inconsistency of approach from one local authority to another.

Mr. Butler: Yes, of course one is concerned about inconsistency between local authorities. My hon. Friends will have to concede that that is not such a great concern to me because I have the great fortune not only to represent but to live in my constituency, which happens to be within the county of Buckinghamshire, which remains uniquely under Conservative control. Therefore, the traffic authority for my home village and constituency would be a Conservative authority.

Inconsistency is not the monopoly of the Opposition parties. It is possible to have inconsistency between decisions made by Conservative councils or between views held within them. However, if I may answer the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), despite your suggestion to the contrary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the relevant event has to be—according to the new section 16A(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, with which I am sure that hon. Members will be familiar—any sporting event, social event or entertainment.

Although hon. Members may sometimes find political activity entertaining, it is doubtful whether many of our citizens would agree with us. It is doubtful whether the description of an event as "entertainment" could be used to permit a political rally of the sort that hon. Members are worried about. Whether a political event can ever be a social event is debatable, as we all know from our experience. It certainly cannot be described as a sporting event. So the particular anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) is outwith the Bill.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that a demonstration by Greenham Common women would probably be very entertaining?

Mr. Butler: No.

Perhaps I might now deal with the Bill in more detail. I am attending this morning, not just through natural enthusiasm and at the suggestion of a senior colleague, but because it seems to me that the Bill appears to offer the opportunity for motor sport to be authorised on closed roads. Indeed, specifically in the Bill, new section 16A (3)(b) envisages that motor events other than road racing or,

> "A race or trial of speed"

to use the words of the 1988 Act, could be permitted under regulation. Therefore, the whole question of the use of roads for motorised sporting events is relevant to the debate.

In Britain, we live with an archaic system of obtaining road closure orders, which is why I welcome the Bill. The system is archaic in that it is inefficient and largely ineffectual in comparison with those of all our European Community partners, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man, which have different regulations. To obtain a road closure for motor sport entails the suspension of the Road Traffic Act. That is the important part of Bill. What is important is not the closing of the road for the purpose of public order, or any other purpose, but the subsequent suspension of the effect of the Road Traffic Acts. Very few motorised road races would be much use if they were subject to a speed limit of 30 mph.

Currently, to suspend the Road Traffic Act requires a separate Bill on each occasion. I believe that my hon. Friend's Bill provides an opportunity for us to come into line with legislation that will have more than adequate local control and safeguards, which was the subject of comments from my hon. Friends. It will substantially reduce the cost of applying for such events and put the decision making where it should be, with local authorities and the local police, particularly after the changes in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill on the control of police and the effectiveness of a local plan for the police go through.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment that, under clause 1(3)(a) motor racing on public ways is specifically excluded from the Bill? Will he —as I will if I have the privilege of serving on the Committee that will consider the Bill—aim to have that subsection deleted so that the formula 3000 road race in Birmingham could more easily be possible under the terms of the Bill?

Mr. Butler: I share many of my hon. Friend's disappointments in life. That is one of them. I shall not address myself too strongly to that point, because I am eager that it be picked up along the way. I am grateful, and I am sure that the authorities will be, for my hon. Friend's offer to serve on that Committee. I wish that I were not already serving on another Committee.

I shall make the case, if I may, for motor sport events being held on closed roads in Britain. The present situation is that local authorities and the police working together enjoy the right to close roads for fetes, parades, road works and other entertainments when they feel it appropriate. Those closure orders, however, do not necessitate suspending the Road Traffic Act, which, as I have said, is the crux of the matter. To allow a motor sport event to take place on closed roads in Britain, private Members' Bills sometimes come before the House on a case-by-case basis.

I shall give some examples of that—regrettably, briefly. The Birmingham super prix required the Birmingham City Council Act 1985, which was fought and dragged screaming through this place against great resistance just to enable Birmingham to do what Monaco does most successfully every year at great benefit to that city, its local traders and the local economy. Before this speech, I had not been invited there—I might now be.

Strathclyde regional council had to secure authority in November 1988 for the tour of Mull rally. The Borders regional council—I think that they are both in Scotland —had to obtain approval in November 1993 for the Jim Clark memorial rally. Hon. Members will recall that he was the greatest British racing driver that we have produced so far. Sadly, he is dead. I can find no detail on the Hull city kart race of 1990, but it is a well-established rumour. The north-eastern consortium race is under consideration.

Bringing those applications before Parliament one by one imposes a huge burden of costs on the instigators of such events—usually local authorities backed by local business people. Exceptionally, however, there are no restrictions on the Isle of Man, and in Northern Ireland, 10 road closure orders per year are allowed for motor sports events. None is allowed in Wales, Scotland and, worst of all, England. That is a most peculiar quirk of our law.

Under the terms of those closures, the Road Traffic Act is suspended. In Northern Ireland, on 10 events per year, one can secure an order to achieve precisely for motor race events what the Bill suggests should be allowed for the tour en Angleterre. Additionally in Northern Ireland, unlimited road closures are available, with the Road Traffic Act suspension attached, for kart racing. As it is in Northern Ireland, I should be more specific. The definition of a kart in Northern Ireland—my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, who has a Lotus Elan, might like to consider this—for the purpose of those closure orders is a vehicle of less than 4 ft 6 in. wheel base and less than 5 cwt in total weight. I own an Austin 7 trials car which comes within that definition, and I am tempted to take it to Northern Ireland to try it.

The Road Traffic Act 1991 allows for temporary venues such as supermarket car parks, which would otherwise be a public place, although not a highway, to be used for motor sport by being designated public places under regulations for the purpose. Such events must then be authorised by one of a limited list of bodies maintained by the Department of Transport.

That authorisation is allowed under the Motor Vehicles (Off Road Events) Regulations 1992, which came into force on 1 July 1992. They say:

> "The following bodies are authorising bodies under these Regulations".

The list then given is of interest not just in the present situation but because we are told that regulations will need to be made under the Bill once it has gone through. That list includes the Amateur Motor Cycle Association, something quaintly called the Association of Rover Clubs Ltd., which I assume will shortly have to change its name, the Auto-Club Union, British Schoolboy Motorcycle Association, the International Organisation of Professional Drivers Ltd., the National Autograss Sport Association Ltd., NORA 92 Ltd., the National Traction Engine Trust, the Royal Automobile Club—naturally—the Scottish Auto Cycle Union Ltd. and the Youth Motorcycle Sport Association Ltd. Even when we have inserted a new section 13A in the Road Traffic Act of 1988, under which the regulations will be made, only a restricted and limited number of bodies has any power or authority whatever. We are not seeking here, nor is the Bill, so far as it goes— which is just off the start line of what is needed—to achieve an open house.

Cycle racing traditionally enjoys a special freedom to use closed roads. Notwithstanding the fact that the accompanying entourage of support vehicles and, we are told today, the French desserts that will be following—I hope that in replying to the debate the Minister will reassure us that the traditional chocolate sauce will not be poured over the top of the profiteroles before they travel along Brighton seafront or wherever it was—are often required to be driven in a manner that would be considered in contravention of the Road Traffic Act. I have never watched a cycle race, but the glimpses that I see on television before the excellent Anglia local news comes on suggest that they have vans following within a matter of a few inches—I suppose that they would say a few centimetres—of the back of the racing bikes. One sees motor cycle outriders, presumably gendarmerie, weaving in and out around traffic bollards and so on.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Butler: I should be pleased to give way.

Mr. Atkinson: I understand my hon. Friend's concerns about road racing—I thought that I explained this earlier. I ask my hon. Friend not to continue with this sort of chauvinistic attack on the French. By coming here and allowing us two days of the tour de France, the French are doing this country a considerable favour and sniping about profiteroles and the gendarmes is totally out of place.

Mr. Butler: I have changed my mind; I said that I was pleased to give way. That is an outrageous attack. I have never sniped at a profiterole, I have never insulted one and I have never even stamped on one.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Has my hon. Friend eaten one?

Mr. Butler: Unlike the Minister, who may express a different view, I rarely eat profiteroles. I resent the use of the word "chauvinist", especially in this context because it suggests a dislike of the French. The reason that I particularly object to it is that it is a French word. Indeed, it is named after Nicolas Chauvin who was a Napoleonic veteran. Professionally, he was used to losing battles with the British and was celebrated by the freres Cogniard. I hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my French accent is not as good as yours. Therefore I especially resent the suggestion that I dislike the French who, given any opportunity, I would embrace wholeheartedly. I especially resent having a French word used to insult me in that context.

I know why the tour de France is coming here next year. Every year for many years, the Vintage Sports Car Club has taken a bicycle rally to Boulogne. Several hundred people go over by ferry with their bicycles. They have no other transport. They are not required to take fish and chips or anything like that, or vehicles dressed up as such. They take over several hundred bicycles and cycle on one of two routes. They cycle either around the old Boulogne motor race circuit or as far as the first French inn, depending on their enthusiasm and the comfort of their bicycles. I believe that the French intend to come here this year in retaliation for that.

Closed road motor sport events, by agreement with local authorities and the police—that is built into the Bill—are permitted in the following European countries: France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Greece, Belgium, Eire, the Netherlands, Denmark and Luxembourg. My memory of geography suggests that only the United Kingdom in the European Community, or the European Union as it is quaintly termed, remains the odd man out.

Of the French closed road events, the Le Mans 24-hour event is the predominant one. No one suggests that the Le Mans race should be cancelled because it substantially uses public roads. Indeed, many of us have driven the public road section of the race. In doing so in a vintage Bentley a few years ago, I managed to try the catch area with the loose gravel, and it took seven very amused Frenchmen to lift me out of it afterwards.

The Le Mans race is a closed road race. No one objects to it. There is no public order dissatisfaction in France because of it. There are no deaths because of it. People do not storm off after it in their cars, crash into each other or kill each other, as has been suggested might be the case. No such problems occur. That race takes place every year. We should be inordinately grateful to Le Mans because it was there that the great W.O. Bentley cars came to their pre-eminent position in the history of motor racing on the road—exactly the sort of event that the Bill would permit.

It was not only Bentley motor cars. The Austin 7 also has a valuable history at Le Mans. Indeed, I am fortunate enough to own the one which finished 27th in 1935.

Mr. Fabricant: Was my hon. Friend in it?

Mr. Butler: Certainly not. I shall give way to my hon. Friend after reminding him that the first Lotus was built by Colin Chapman. It was an Austin 7 special.

Mr. Fabricant: Was my hon. Friend driving this car at the time?

Mr. Butler: It was not just an Austin 7 special—it was considerably better structured than my hon. Friend's motor car. We are talking about not only the first Lotus but the first BMW—perhaps that is ironic in view of recent events regarding what used to be called Austin Rover—and the first Datsun, but we will not go into that.

For many years, motor racing on the road has taken place in other parts of the world and, indeed, in our partner nations. It is a great pity that it does not take place in this country. The first competition on public roads was held in Wisconsin in July 1878 with six entries from various steam-propelled vehicles, of which only two started, and was won at 6 mph for a prize of $5,000.

The first road competition held in Europe, again apparently without any problems, was in 1887. It was sponsored by *Velocipede* and organised by the editor. It was held over a short course near Paris. To great surprise, it received only one entry—of a steam quadracycle driven by the Comte de Dion. Not surprisingly, he won. Shortly after that, road events were held in this country. Indeed, they are still held in this country.

Reference has been made to the possibility of a few dozen people watching this race. I hope that many thousands of people will watch it. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham that the number of people who watch existing events is enormous. Indeed, compared to the number of people who watch minor interest sports such as football, it is staggering. The RAC rally attracts 2 million spectators each year—I do not mean sitting at home and watching on television, I mean present. Up to 1 million people attend to watch the London to Brighton run. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister has had the good fortune to do so. I hope that he is there regularly and has, as most of us have, a treasured copy of the film "Genevieve" featuring prominently the mother of one of his ministerial colleagues.

The case for bringing Great Britain into line—we seek no more than that—with other countries is that, first, motor sport has been governed by the Royal Automobile Club since 1897. Under the Bill, closed road events would remain subject to the tight controls and associated safety standards of that body. This is not about authority to go racing past people's front doors but about allowing controlled use where infrastructure routes exist. Frequently, that is industrial areas or unpopulated locations.

Secondly, motor clubs throughout Britain continue to report a loss of venues in traditional areas as a result of the introduction of sites of special scientific interest and more managed recreational access to forest national parks and other traditional venues. Motor racing is a vast sport. It is not the hobby of a few people at the weekend. Many thousands of people compete every weekend. Thirdly, as host to a round of the world rally championship, the RAC is under pressure to produce routes that compare in competition terms with our European partners, as well as non-European world rally nations such as Australia, Argentina and New Zealand where closed road events are permitted.

Fourthly, the proposed legislation change envisages authorisation of events by local authorities with the agreement of the police. All events would be under the auspices of responsible governing bodies such as the RAC and the question of how those decisions should be made has already been raised by my hon. Friends.

Fifthly, Britain is currently the world leader in the motor sport industry. We are at the forefront of any motor sport that one can name. The industry provides 50,000 full-time jobs and 75 per cent. of the world's rally teams are based in Britain. If we are to retain that position, it is vital that we retain our breadth and depth of experience in motor sport—we cannot do so without access to venues and there will no access to suitable venues without the Bill and some amendment to it.

I shall outline briefly what type of events would be run on closed roads. Some sections of stage rallies would be run on them and, in that context, I should like to mention that Milton Keynes was going to hold a stages rally in October last year. The RAC Motor Sports Association, the local police, the local authority and the local highway authority all approved and wished the rally to proceed. It would have been held in a part of central Milton Keynes called Campbell park where the roads have been laid out and dedicated as public highways but around which nothing has yet been built. I hasten to reassure the House that it is only a small section of Milton Keynes. It has superb quality roads and would have been eminently suitable for the rally, but we could not go ahead because of the archaic laws, which put us out of step with our European partners and which should be changed by the Bill.

Secondly, a limited number of motor races would be held on closed roads, generally in city centres, such as happened in Birmingham. There would not be a large demand for such races, but there are some suitable sites.

The third type of event would be hill climbs and sprints, which require a very limited amount of road. A closed road possibility would allow Britain to participate in the European hill climb championship which, astonishingly, we are not able to do at present because of the limitation of private venues. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds spoke of leisure, sport and recreation. An enormous proportion of such activities is done by and with motor vehicles, including vintage vehicles. I am thinking specially of the little French town of Angoulême and its annual rallye des ramparts. It is a splendid event for which the roads—indeed, almost the whole town centre—are closed. People race around wildly in old motor cars; no one is killed or injured and they all have a tremendous time and the local economy is boosted by tourists. It is an extremely important event for the town and is enjoyed by many British people who, unfortunately, cannot enjoy such events in England.

The question of safety is sometimes raised in the context of motor sport because people consider motor cars to be dangerous. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys fatality statistics for 1992 show that in the league table of dangerous sports—I am not sure how they are rated, but the most dangerous rating is 26—cycling is rated as being more dangerous than motor racing. I think that I have that the right way round. They are very close together, but cycling is more dangerous than motor racing. Analysis of RAC Motor Sports Association organised events for the past 32 years reveal a death toll of nil in rallying for the past five years and an average of less than 0.5 per year overall. The figure for racing is slightly higher at 1.5 per year. In other words, we are not talking about wildly dangerous events.

I shall now deal with some of the regulations that may be made under the Bill, and especially to the Motor Vehicles (Competition and Trials) Regulations 1969 made under section 260(2) of the Road Traffic Act 1960. Those regulations give a taste of the control that is imposed, and would be imposed under the Bill, on closed road events. Some have a political ring in the context of present difficulties. For example, a

"'performance test' means a test in which merit is attached to a competitor's skill in manoeuvring or controlling the vehicle"

— we now come to the political point—

"including maintaining the forward motion of the vehicle in adverse conditions".

In this Parliament, we have what might be described as a "problem-solving event", which is

"an event in which the competitors are required by the rules of the event to travel the route by a fixed time"—

the next election—

"and are given before that time the task of setting and solving a number of set problems."

I am pleased to say that we are approaching what could be described as a "rest halt" which is

"a place specified in the rules of the event as a place where competitors are required to stop during the course of the event"—

or debate—

"or may stop . . . without incurring a penalty".

Also in a political context, I found a definition of "night event" which means

"an event part or whole of which is intended to take place between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m."

A brief glimpse at one of the many statutory instruments shows, conclusively I hope, that the regulation of motor events on closed roads to produce safe, enjoyable and economically productive activity is possible. I welcome the Bill and subsection (3)(b) of the proposed section 16A and look forward to new regulations. I see the Bill as being enabling rather than preventive legislation, in the spirit of this Government. I look forward to it enabling trials, driving tests and other such events.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to consider, either today or on a subsequent occasion during the passage of the Bill, whether the wording of subsection (3)(a) might not be amended to add the words, "unless the motor race is authorised by or under regulations under that section", which would bring it into line with subsections (3)(b) and (3)(c). On that point, with the greatest possible relief, I conclude my comments.

12.34 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson), who is not in his place at the moment; I am sure that he has some business to attend to. Getting a private Member's Bill through is one of the few really important things that any hon. Member can do. Bearing that in mind, it is unfortunate that we had some filibustering earlier in the debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "No we did not."] I think that we did—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Lady will know that if there had been filibustering, Mr. Deputy Speaker would have immediately brought the House to order. There may have been some extensive speeches, but they were not filibustering.

Ms Walley: In view of the comments that we have heard from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), including his comments about various aspects of radio licences, I wonder whether he was speaking with a constituency interest or with interests from other parts of the country.

I am sure that the Minister will be enormously grateful to his hon. Friend the Member for Hexham for the Bill

[Ms Walley]

because the tour de France will arrive in this country just as the channel tunnel and the services through the tunnel are intended to arrive. We may not have the services, legislation or regulations in place to enable a smooth handover, so it is important that the Bill gets on to the statute book. I should have thought that the Government would not want any wasteful interventions which could prejudice the Bill.

We have already heard a lot about the importance of the Bill. Let us consider why we need it. The tour de France took place in this country some years ago to publicise the new Plymouth-Roscoff ferry service. The event was badly received in 1974 because it had to be staged on one piece of road. It did not have the impact on tourism that the Bill intends to have and, as a result—and not least because of the rain—it was not a success.

The organisers hope that the much-heralded channel tunnel will be an opportunity to bring the tour de France back to this country. The promoters and everyone else involved, not least hon. Members who have a constituency interest in the route that the race will take, want to ensure that the event will be successful. The Bill is, therefore, required. I hope that the endless delays in the opening of the channel tunnel will not jeopardise the event as it was jeopardised in 1974 when it was intended to promote the Plymouth-Roscoff ferry service.

The Opposition are concerned that transport proposals are repeatedly being introduced through private Members' Bills. Although we welcome the Bill, it is not a substitute for the transport policy that we want. We want a policy that would give all hon. Members who have spoken about the importance of cycling, for example, an opportunity to integrate cycling into transport policy.

Such a policy would provide an opportunity to deal with British Rail's transport arrangements, which are unsatisfactory and will lead to a ludicrous spectacle when many people come to this country to take part in cycle races. Let us suppose that they want to travel further afield than Dover or Portsmouth to visit tourist regions in the rest of the country. How will they reach them with their bicycles? What sort of an obstacle race will they face if the policies of British Rail and regional railways make it impossible for them to take their bikes to places as far afield as Aberdeen, Edinburgh or anywhere else in the British Isles? How will they find out whether the service will allow them to take their cycles by train? How will they find out, following the privatisation of British Rail, whether they will be able to use the through-ticketing procedure whereby bikes can be taken to wherever people wish? I see that the Minister is becoming slightly irritated, but it is high time that cycling was at the heart of transport policy.

The promotion of the health interests that will arise from such a cycling event should be extended to the local level as well as to towns on the route of the event.

It is interesting that we are debating the Bill because of the inadequacy of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, which have been mentioned by hon. Members. They were passed at a time when cars, let alone parking arrangements, had not been thought of and were not on our streets. That archaic legislation is supposed to deal with the organised events.

The legislation is no more archaic than our rail infrastructure, which will transport cyclists who arrive from France. The highly technical railway channel tunnel service from Lille has already been built and is up and ready to run. We have heard so many times in this place what will happen when trains reach the United Kingdom. They will limp along at perhaps 49 or 53 mph. Our railway service has the same Victorian infrastructure as the legislation that the Bill seeks to update.

Our transport policy is driven not by the Secretary of State for Transport and other transport Ministers and not even by people responsible for tourism, but by the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill is being considered in Committee. It has been introduced not to help our transport infrastructure but because the President of the Board of Trade and the Department of Trade and Industry wish to repeal regulations in order to save industry money. It lifts the lorry ban in London, and deregulates provisions on heavy goods vehicle operator licences and public service vehicle operator licences. There are a whole four pages in the DTI working party review that promise all kinds of other deregulation of which we have not yet dreamt. That has nothing to do with transport policy.

If only the Government and the Secretary of State for Transport could take a leaf out of this private Member's Bill. If only the Minister could give an undertaking to the House that he would be prepared to promote an integrated transport system which we are all crying out for and that, at the same time, he could recognise that the right sort of balance is one between central Government and local authorities. Perhaps he could use more discretion and take the opportunities presented in the Bill to hand over some powers from the police to local authorities better to enable the assessment of local situations and to deal with traffic measures accordingly. If only we had had that kind of Bill and the Government had used the opportunity to give an off-the-peg Bill to someone fortunate who finished high in the ballot for a private Member's Bill, we could have brought forward a much more coherent transport Bill which we would have been happier to support.

It is important to comment on the regulations. Local authorities across the country, not only in the areas where we have heard that the tour de France will be staged, welcome the Bill, want to see it on the statute book and, as we have heard, have made widespread representations.

I heard what was said about the Ramblers Association and I hope that the Minister will give those comments due consideration, because, contrary to what was said earlier, my experience has always been that the Ramblers Association always speaks with genuine concern for its members. I hope that the Minister will give attention in his winding-up speech to the safeguards and assurances that it seeks.

The Bill is a wasted opportunity because it could go much further in bringing up to date the two pieces of legislation of 1847 and 1839 to which I referred earlier. Although there is much to be said for arrangements for special events, such as Remembrance day services, which we know take place annually, we should take account of what local authorities say and consider the many requests that they receive about which they wish to be able to use discretion. Local authorities and the police feel that it is often not a matter for the police to decide whether a particular local event should go ahead, but that local authorities, in consultation with the police, should decide whether to allow closure of roads for events such as carnivals, street parties and perhaps filming.

The Bill covers only special events; the same powers are not given to deal with more local events. That issue should be addressed by the Minister in the regulations, which I understand will be issued hand in hand with the Bill, assuming that it passes all its stages.

The Bill concerns other issues in relation to the role of local authorities. As I always expect, we heard a lot of abuse of local authorities from Conservative Members. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that the Conservative party controls so few county councils, highways authorities and people with responsibility for transport and it is still shellshocked by what happened at the last local council county elections. Local authorities have paid officers, they have the advice and they know what is needed locally. Repeatedly, local authorities ask why a whole stream of other issues that relate to traffic regulations cannot be handed to them in the way in which we are handing over responsibility in the Bill.

There are many issues relating, for example, to approval for traffic-calming schemes. I do not know about the postbags of Conservative Members, but I am always inundated with requests from constituents for more money to be spent on such schemes. However, it is a question not just of money but of local authorities having the discretion within a national regulatory framework to know what kind of traffic-calming schemes are needed.

It is also of concern that there is a requirement to seek Department of Transport approval for 20 mph zones. I do not see why we could not legislate or introduce regulations that would make it easier for local authorities to take that kind of decision.

The Minister shakes his head, but these issues relate to road safety, and local authorities request more discretion over them. An example is a requirement under section 23 of the Road Traffic Act 1984 to inform the Secretary of State of an authority's proposal for pedestrian crossings. The Minister may say that that has nothing to do with the Bill, but if there were a coherent approach to transport policy we would not treat one aspect of transport in isolation from another. We would have a Government Bill and would not need to rely on a private Member's Bill to bring up to date this archaic legislation which local authorities and the police currently have to use to deal with all the requests that come to them. These are important issues.

We wish the Bill good progress. Sunday is International Women's Day and an important debate will follow this one. I hope that it will help to balance the chauvinism and all the comments to which we have had to listen in this debate. We support the Bill and ask the Minister to pay particular attention to the matters relating to regulations which he could introduce and which could extend the principle of the Bill to major events and more localised events, if the Government chose to do so.

12.51 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) on his Bill, which the Government support. It seeks to clarify the circumstances in which highways can be closed to allow sporting and social events and other entertainments. It meets a need that has developed over recent years and is particularly timely in the light of the proposed visit by the tour de France to Kent, Sussex and Hampshire in July.

About this time last year while I had the honour to serve in the Department of National Heritage, I hosted the launch in Trafalgar square of the tour de France en Angleterre. I was always enthusiastic about it, but, within a few weeks, I had been shuffled and was Minister for Roads and Traffic. Already, we had decided that we would need to ensure that there were appropriate and adequate powers to enable the tour and similar events to take place around the country.

The Bill has all-party support. It is significant that hon. Members supporting it come not only from all parties but from the length and breadth of the land. The Bill was presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham and is supported by, among others, my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Falmouth and Cambourne (Mr. Coe). The Cornish, as ever, know a good thing when they see it.We are grateful to the Societe de tour de France and to the British company Sport for Television which has been co-ordinating the event in this country.

A number of my hon. Friends have made supportive and helpful speeches and probed in some depth—perhaps to an unusual depth for a Second Reading—the intentions of my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) was right to speak about the importance of cycling to the health of the nation. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) spoke about the importance of emergency vehicles having access even when roads are closed to normal use, and he also spoke about the importance to retailers of any restrictions. I shall seek to answer those points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) stressed the importance of balance, and my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) was right to draw attention to the fact that London is but a region of the United Kingdom, as is the south east, and that much goes on elsewhere. He mentioned his local air show and flower show, and the importance of tourism to Southport. My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) made a telling contribution, and I shall reply to many of his points later.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) made a forthright speech, in which she addressed a number of issues that she would prefer us to be debating instead of the Bill. That will prolong my response, as I must pay her the courtesy of answering. I welcome the hon. Lady's constructive approach and I am glad that she and her hon. Friends will support the Bill today.

The hon. Lady was right to draw attention to the importance of an integrated transport policy, which we seek to achieve. It is true that the Department of Transport is not the Ministry for Roads—which is why, although 90 per cent. of journeys are by road, 40 per cent. of the money goes on public transport subsidy. And quite right, too. The development of the package approach gives local authorities the discretion that they seek to spend money on pedestrianisation and cycling projects, as well as on road schemes and subsidising public transport.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) would have something to say about bicycles, through tickets and trains. In fact, he is often heard saying it. The hon. Lady will have to wait a little while to see what emerges, but I have no doubt that privatisation of the rail network will prove a boon in encouraging the public to use trains. That is the whole purpose. It is odd for the Labour

[Mr. Robert Key]

party to argue that because a service is bad at present, it will get worse if one changes the system. It will not—it will get better. I am sure of that.

I hope that the trains in service at the French end of the channel tunnel whose virtues the hon. Lady trumpeted so loudly will not continue to come off the rails as frequently as they appear to do now. I am sure that they will not. When those trains come to this country, and despite the fact that they will have to wend their way slowly and carefully through the suburbs of London, the journey from the tunnel to central London will be achieved at an average 80 mph, which is not too bad.

The Department of Trade and Industry has an extremely important part to play in ensuring an adequate transport policy. A prime motive for a road and rail system is to support the prosperity of British industry. If the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North had her way, industry would be inconvenienced and disadvantaged vis-à-vis industry throughout the rest of Europe. The deregulation initiative is excellent. It is not about saving money but stopping money being wasted on bureaucracy and paper being shuffled about. That is something that Labour will never learn.

The regulations mentioned by the hon. Lady, such as traffic calming, exist to ensure that local and highway authorities have discretion. Many regulations are laid for an experimental period, and when it ends and if it proved a success, the requirement to return the scheme to the Department of Transport is waived. That happens regularly, as with the majority of traffic-calming schemes —which were relaxed last August. I am sure that the 20 mph zone experiment has been a huge success. There have been masses of applications, and I hope that that scheme, too, can be relaxed.

Although the hon. Lady's remarks about the film industry were a little wide of the mark, I am happy to respond because I was the Minister with responsibility for that industry last year. She is right to stress the need to give film companies access to our roads. The problems created for the industry in this country prompted a number of film makers to go abroad—for example, to Paris. It is comparatively easy to shut off large areas of central Paris, whereas London takes a different view. However, great progress has been made with the London Film Commission and in many other cities throughout the country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is untiring in his desire to ensure that the film industry remains as good as it is and becomes better.

Conservative Members often mention local authorities because they have intimate knowledge of them, as I do. I maintain direct and regular contact with a wide range of other local authorities because of my ministerial responsibilities, including Manchester and Salford and, because of my city challenge responsibilities, with Wigan, Blackburn and Bolton. Scarcely a week goes by without my talking to local authorities and political parties of all shapes, sizes and persuasions.

Although highways are primarily used to get from one place to another, there are long-standing rights to use them for pleasure. It is difficult to know how those rights arose or where to start, but I suspect that they can be traced back to Chaucer's time. I shall not entertain the House with a travelogue or a Chaucer's tale, but we know from the "Canterbury Tales", written more than 500 years ago, that pilgrimages were made as much for the pleasure of the journey as for the spiritual benefits of achieving the goal. One might even view them as early outward-bound courses, especially if one had to read them at school, as I did—albeit in translation, which the purists might think a weak and wimpish thing to do.

For many years, social events have been held on highways. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham mentioned a good example—the Lewes bonfire party, where each year thousands of people celebrate Guy Fawkes' failure to blow up this House. Originally, it was a small local occasion, but as individual mobility has increased so has the number of people attending. Nowadays, there are approximately 80,000 spectators. The large volume of cars means that extensive traffic management measures need to be taken to minimise the danger and inconvenience that would otherwise result. Other long-standing events could also benefit from the proposed provisions. Many of them are a long way from London and the south-east, which may reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Southport.

One cannot, however, ignore the London to Brighton veteran car run or the many road races and marathons which are held throughout the country. At present, they do not cause too many difficulties, but if the number of participants or spectators increased, as it has done for some other events, considerable disruption would result. The Bill ensures that those events can continue.

World-famous events such as the London marathon depend on the good will of the various authorities and the tolerance of the people of London. The marathon is a good example of the fact that one must provide not merely for the participants, but for the support teams and spectators.

As long ago as 1839, the House recognised that special measures were needed when it gave the Metropolitan police Commissioner powers to help control events in London. In 1956, it was agreed that events such as cycle races need to be controlled and in the Road Traffic Act 1956, cycle racing was made illegal unless held in accordance with regulations. That Act also gave chief constables powers to close roads for authorised cycle races. Those powers were perfectly adequate then and remain adequate for the overwhelming majority of cycle races, but they are not sufficient for the really big events, such as the tour de France or the Kellogg's tour of Britain. Those and other events need powers that will make it possible to control the huge number of spectators, so as to minimise the disruption to local communities.

The razzmatazz of the supporting cavalcades is integral to many of those spectacles. If we are to allow events of that scale—I am sure that we all want to—some people will inevitably be inconvenienced. For example, parking may have to be banned in some residential streets, vehicular access to some properties will not be possible, some footpaths may be severed for the duration of the event and, in the case of very large events, considerable disruption to traffic can be expected.

That inconvenience to some people for a short time must be measured against the great pleasure that such events give to so many millions of people and against the economic benefits that they bring. Regulations will impose requirements that adequate notice is given to people and businesses who might be affected so that they can make plans to minimise the effects. I shall return to that subject.

The present powers are old and in some cases are given to the police. They, understandably, would prefer the decisions to be taken by democratically elected councils, who will consider the benefits to their constituents and the costs.

I should like to put on the record my thanks to the police forces, the county constabularies, who have worked so hard on the tour de France, and to the Association of Chief Police Officers, which has been so supportive and helpful to us and to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham.

I should also like to put on record my admiration for the Gendarmerie Nationale. I have never known them to be anything but courteous and efficient whenever I have travelled in France, and the speed and effectiveness with which they unclog traffic is exemplary. We look forward to seeing them here and I am sure that they will be an important part of the tour de France en Angleterre and that they will be welcome.

Several powers exist to control road traffic on special occasions, but none is quite suitable for large-scale events on the highway. Some were made many years ago—most before the invention of the motor car or even the pedal cycless. When they came into force, no one could have envisaged the type of events that take place today. Especially, it could not be foreseen that huge numbers of spectators would be able to attend the events or that they would be travelling by motor car.

In general, the existing powers allow only a limited closure and do not provide for associated traffic management. For example, it may be necessary to introduce temporary one-way systems or to allow traffic movements, such as right turns, that are normally banned.

The oldest power that is still in use is, as has been mentioned, section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, which allows the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to

> "make regulations for the route to be observed by all Carts, Carriages, Horses and persons, and for preventing the obstruction of the streets and thoroughfares . . . in all times of public processions, public rejoicings or illuminations . . . "

It is doubtful whether that power can override existing traffic regulation orders—for example, to allow an event to go the wrong way down a one-way street or to allow an event involving vehicles to pass through a pedestrianised area. It is that doubt which my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham seeks to remove.

Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 grants similar powers outside London to "the commisioners"—nowadays their successors, the district councils. That power has the same difficulties as the Metropolitan Police Act. The Town Police Clauses Act:

> "among other things prohibits one from wantonly disturbing any inhabitant by pulling or ringing on a doorbell"

as my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham pointed out, and

> "Beating or shaking any carpet rug or mat in the street (except doormats beaten or shaken before the hour of eight in the morning); and keeping any swine in or near any street so as to be a common nuisance".

Section 31 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, first introduced in the Road Traffic Act 1956, gives chief constables powers to close roads to allow an authorised cycle race to take place. Cycle races are authorised under the Cycle Racing on the Highways Regulations 1960. The regulations impose conditions as to the number of participants, the length of any race through a built-up area and the length of route that must be covered before a race repasses a point. That power may be adequate to deal with the tour de France itself. However, it suffers the same defects as the Metropolitan Police Act and the Town Police Clauses Act in respect of existing traffic regulation orders, and will almost certainly not cover the advertising caravan of about 1,500 vehicles that precedes the race.

When the legislation was passed in 1956, there was considerable cross-party concern that it gave the Government far too much power and was a precursor to banning cycle racing altogether. It was, according to Mr. Charles Pannell, the Member for Leeds, West, a

> "vicious form of Clause designed to strike against the handsomest vehicle on the road".—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1956; Vol. 557, c. 1039.]

Mr. W.R. Rees-Davies, the Member for the Isle of Wight, said

> "The fact of the matter is that one day we might reach the horror of the Labour Party being returned to power. If that terrible day comes . . . what a situation we should find then as regards cycle racing on the roads."—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1956; Vol. 557, c. 1040-41.]

I am delighted that we have all-party support for the Bill now, even if it was feared that we did not then. The fears of both the hon. Members that I have quoted have proved unfounded. I have a great deal more sympathy with the comments of Sir Frank Medlicott, the Member for Norfolk, Central, who said that

> "the tour de France is a wonderful event, and . . . we should be proud if we should achieve something like it in this country."—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1956; Vol. 557, c. 1037.]

The most modern legislation is section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, amended in 1991, which allows a traffic authority—a county, a metropolitan district or the Secretary of State to make an order restricting or prohibiting the use of a road in certain circumstances. Those powers were designed to be used where, for example, maintenance is to take place or where there is an immediate danger—such as a bridge falling down. Those are circumstances in which an authority has little choice but to close a road if the road network is to be restored to good condition. Closures for sporting or social events are different. No authority is obliged to close a road or redirect traffic to allow an event to happen. There is some doubt, therefore, about whether this power is appropriate.

For all those reasons, new primary legislation is needed to allow proper traffic regulation for such events and thus ensure that people's rights to enjoy the highway are not jeopardised. I was, therefore, delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham approached the Government when he won his position in the ballot and that we had that measure available. I am grateful to him for carrying it forward.

There is a long-standing right to use highways for pleasure. The Highways Act 1980 refers to the duty of a highway authority to

> "assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the highway authority".

That can be traced back in previous legislation to the Highways Act 1835, but there is considerable evidence that the right is much older than that. Legislation such as the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which this Bill is seeks to amend, aims to ensure that lawful use of the highway does not create an unsafe environment and that nuisance is minimised. A balance must be drawn between the conflicting interests of different road users.

Mr. Fabricant: I have listened with great interest to the long catalogue of Acts that apply, some of which contain

[Mr. Fabricant]

sections that are wildly out of date. Once the Bill becomes law, will it not be high time to introduce a consolidating Bill to take account of all the Acts that apply to road traffic and at the same time to knife the many sections that are irrelevant in this day and age?

Mr. Key: What an excellent idea. I shall consider that, although it will not be for me but for the Government as a whole. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

I am second to none in my admiration for British motor sport and I therefore listened with great attention to my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East. He and I know that not one decent formula 1 car in the world is not British. What may not be appreciated more widely is the fact that the technological research and development that go into sports cars have a direct spin-off to the sort of cars that we drive, although my hon. Friend seems to have rather more exotic taste. He is right to draw attention to road racing and I shall seek to deal with it. I have not been to the rallye des ramparts in Angoulême, but my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) is a great lover of that city and probably has been, so perhaps I should ask him about it.

Motor races and trials of speed may not be held on public ways unless specifically allowed for in private legislation. In principle, I agree with that policy. One example of the latter is the Birmingham super prix, which is permitted under the Birmingham City Council Act of 1985. I well remember the debates that we had when that legislation was going through. It is good to see the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) here this morning. I am sure that she remembers it well.

The organisation of such a race may be appropriate in these limited and closely specified circumstances, but few hon. Members would wish to see widespread racing on the roads with the attendant danger that it will lead to imitative behaviour, such as has been referred to on the Isle of Man.

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): For the information of the House, the Birmingham super prix was unprofitable and wasted money. It was enormously unpopular with my constituents who lived in houses that were being whizzed around. And it is no more.

Mr. Key: But did they want it at the time and did not the House respond and give it to them? Should another city seek to hold such an event, it would approach the House, and we would debate the matter and perhaps pass the necessary legislation.

Imitative behaviour is a problem and a danger to passengers or innocent bystanders. Nothing in the Bill permits motor racing and new section 16A(3)(c) specifically excludes the possibility.

An entirely different issue is that of navigational rallies and treasure hunts on the public highway, which are legal if they are authorised under the Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) Regulations 1969. Those regulations require that any such event involving more than 12 vehicles must be authorised. The RAC Motor Sports Association issues those authorisations and endeavours to ensure that inconvenience and noise are minimised. Participants must abide by road traffic law at all times. The Act provides that no traffic regulation orders may be made to facilitate the holding of such an event unless it has been properly organised.

Cycle races or time trials on the public highway are illegal unless they have been authorised by the Cycle Racing on Highways Regulations 1960, as amended. I propose to consult on an amendment to those regulations which would make the tour de France an authorised event.

The tour de France is the largest sporting event in the world in terms of spectators. It will attract considerable public support in Britain. The organisers consider that there will be up to 1 million spectators over the two days in England and the television pictures of the event will be transmitted to about 1 billion people throughout the world. It will be a major opportunity for international publicity for the United Kingdom and should provide a massive boost to tourism. It is strongly supported by the local authorities concerned.

It is particularly apposite that the tour de France will come to England this year. It will be run within a few weeks of the official opening of the channel tunnel and close to the 50th anniversary of D-day. It will go through many of the areas where the troops who took part in that assault were encamped in the run-up to the landings. The participants will come through the tunnel, by train of course, to start the event below Dover castle. I am sure that we shall all be grateful to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother who, as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, is also governor of Dover castle. I think that Her Majesty will find the event not only great fun but highly symbolic. Frenchmen are always finding new ways of exploring Britain and this peaceful invasion is in stark contrast to previous attempts by certain others in the second world war.

The cavalcade will ride through Kent, Sussex and Hampshire on 6 and 7 July 1994 to end on the seafront at Portsmouth, having passed Nelson's flagship HMS Victory en route. On the first day, the tour will cover 128 miles from Dover, through Folkestone to Canterbury and thence to Ashford. From there, it will cross the Weald of Kent to Tunbridge Wells and through East Sussex to Brighton. For that day's race it will be necessary for the A20 trunk road in Folkestone to be closed temporarily. Under the Bill, that will be possible with the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is the highway authority for trunk roads.

The participants will travel from Brighton to Portsmouth overnight for the start of day 2. The race will go from the seafront at Southsea, to Winchester, Andover and Basingstoke before returning to the finish at Portsmouth via Petersfield. That day, the race will cover 113 miles.

The tour is a unique international sporting event with 200 competitors, an entourage of 3,500 people and 1,500 vehicles. A huge advertising cavalcade precedes the race by an hour or so. Indeed, we are looking into the possibility of taking the opportunity to promote safer cycling. This will be only the second visit of the tour to Britain. As several hon. Members pointed out, there was a short visit by the tour in 1974 to celebrate the opening of the new ferry route between Plymouth and Brittany, but it was on nothing like the scale of this year's visit.

Some of the main benefits of allowing events such as the tour will be for tourism. Tourism already contributes a great deal to our national prosperity and employs 1.5 million people. "Le Tour" will make a considerable contribution to our tourism revenue. I know that many people are working hard to encourage our European neighbours to visit Britain for the race. For example, half a million leaflets called "Channel 94" are being issued abroad giving details of the route.

Ms Walley: The Minister seems more sure of the route for the tour de France than the Secretary of State is of the route from the channel tunnel to London.

Mr. Key: Very droll, I am sure.

The English tourist board has contributed £100,000 to the east Kent tourism development action plan, which focuses on sport, including the tour de France. The rewards could be high. It is estimated that there could be up to a 10 per cent. increase in short breaks alone. That means a great deal to me as a former Minister with responsibility for tourism, but for those who do not know what the phrase means, short breaks are weekends or a few days, as opposed to a long holiday.

Many British sports fans will also make a significant contribution to tourist revenues. If the organisers are correct in their estimate that up to 1 million people will watch the race over the two days, the tourism industry in the affected counties will receive a considerable boost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to local radio and restricted service radio and pointed out that 241 such licences were issued in 1992. As a former Minister in the Department for National Heritage with responsibility for broadcasting I, too, am enthusiastic about this and, as digital broadcasting becomes a reality in future years, I am sure that the service that he is requesting will expand dramatically, as will my Department's provisions for local radio information for drivers. It is already quite a sophisticated service provided at specific and local events, but no doubt it will grow. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will ensure that local radio and restricted service radio plays its full part in the tour de France.

I am also interested in the future of sport in this country. I think that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds who pointed out that we had not done too well in some sporting events, but lately we have done brilliantly in many others, and cycling is one. In 1992, I had the honour to be Minister with responsibility for tourism, the year of the Olympics in Barcelona. The excitement when Chris Boardman won gold for Britain was tremendous. It did an enormous amount to boost the popularity of cycling in this country. In the Manchester 2000 Olympic bid, it played a central part. That is why the Government have provided the money for the velodrome, which is now—as I know from a visit only this week—taking shape in Manchester. It will become the national cycling centre. Cycling is the fastest growing sport in this country. Not only are sales of bicycles made in this country going up, but exports of bicycles are going up fast, and more and more people are taking to their cycles. One has only to look at one's own constituency —I am sure that we can all give glowing accounts of what our constituencies are up to, and my constituency of Salisbury is no exception—with racing events, leisurely holidays, cycle routes and so on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southport reminded me that we should think of events outside the south-east. Manchester will be hosting the world cycle championship later this year. Each of the host towns that the tour passes through will have an opportunity to promote cycling, both as a participatory and a spectator event. To help them in that, the British Cycling Federation is arranging "come and try" sessions in conjunction with towns on the route. I hope that that will encourage people to take up cycling so that we return to the health of the nation and the importance of cycling in that.

Cycling is a sport for all ages. It is also a sport which can be properly described as an amateur as well as a professional sport. That is important, too. I know from the 16 years that I spent as a teacher—umpiring, refereeing and coaching—that sport is of crucial importance to the development of the balanced individual in our community: mens sana in corpore sano, even if it grows a little in girth with middle age.

The event will act as a tremendous catalyst for further development of the sport, involving the full range of cycling organisations and individuals. I hope that the growth of top-quality cycling events will cultivate greater awareness of cycling and cyclists. Cycling is also—this is music to the ears of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North—a useful means of public transport. I am committed to improving the safety and convenience of cycling, to create confidence in that mode of transport. It is a versatile activity, providing gentle relaxing recreation for some; for others, it is a way of keeping fit. It is a clean, quiet and inexpensive means of travel, or a vigorous competitive sport. There is huge scope therefore for increasing cycling in this country. If people rode bikes on short journeys instead of driving their cars, it would help to reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

A quiet revolution has been going on. People have been rediscovering the bike. In York, as I saw for myself last year, up to 30 per cent. daily of people going to work do so on a bicycle. Substantial amounts of taxpayers' money are involved in York—some £400,000—in making that possible, because the Government believe in cycling. We believe that it is a basic and legitimate form of transport which cannot be ignored, and should be encouraged. I said that at the Velo City conference in Nottingham last autumn. I hope shortly to be able to announce that the Government have a new, if modest, cycling policy. The response of the Government and local authorities to a real demand from the electors is represented by this sea change in our attitude. We are also convinced by our constituents.

Ninety-six per cent. of cycling takes place on local roads. The provision of special facilities is the responsibility of the relevant local highway authority. My Department provides authorities with advice on the design and construction of cycle lanes on highway and cycle tracks, and altering junctions to enhance cycle safety. Employers also have a responsibility to provide proper changing facilities and safe and secure places to park bikes.

One of the reasons why people do not take up cycling is that they are concerned about their safety. I am committed to publicity campaigns that will help to make cycling safer. Over recent years, they have been run on such themes as "think bike", wear a helmet, use lights and "be seen, be safe". If cycling is widely seen to be a safe, reliable, healthy and inexpensive means of transport, I am sure that many people will take it up.

I turn now to the details of the Bill. The main purpose is to confer new powers on traffic authorities to make orders imposing temporary restrictions on traffic to allow the holding of sporting and social events and entertainments on a road. The powers are intended to deal with major events which will inevitably cause substantial disruption to traffic and, therefore, specific provision is made to limit the duration and frequency of orders made

[Mr. Key]

under the new powers. It follows that existing powers will continue to be used for smaller events that are unlikely to cause large traffic control problems. Therefore, the Bill will not repeal any existing provisions.

The Bill consists of three clauses and a schedule. Clause 1 inserts three new sections into the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984—sections 16A, 16B and 16C.

Section 16A(1) defines the expression "relevant event" as any sporting event, social event or entertainment which is held on a road. My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, North-East was concerned about what is meant by a road. The word "road" is defined in the 1984 Act as

"any length of highway or of any other road to which the public has access, and includes bridges over which a road passes".

Section 16A(2) enables a traffic authority to make orders restricting or prohibiting the use of a road or any part of it by vehicles of any class or pedestrians to the extent that they consider necessary or expedient. The power to make orders arises only when authorities are satisfied that traffic should be restricted or prohibited for three specific purposes—facilitating the holding of a relevant event, enabling the public to watch a relevant event or reducing the disruption to traffic that is likely to be caused by a relevant event.

Section 16A(3) prevents the making of orders to allow motor races on the highway, which are illegal under section 12 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. It also requires that other motoring events and cycle races are authorised in accordance with the 1988 Act. If they are not authorised, they are also illegal.

Section 16A(4) allows orders to be made both for the road on which the event is to take place and for any other road. This is the problem of associated traffic management.

Sections 16A(5) and (6) are designed to simplify the making of orders that affect two or more traffic authorities, for example, where an event crosses a county boundary. In such cases, one authority may make all the orders for an event with the consent of the other affected authorities. These provisions mean that a local authority can also make an order affecting a trunk road if the Secretary of State consents.

Section 16A(7) requires authorities to have regard to whether there are suitable alternative routes for traffic that is affected by such orders. Clearly, it is desirable that disruption to traffic be kept to a minimum while these events are taking place. I hope that that will satisfy my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire.

Section 16A(8) lists the type of restrictions that can be imposed, which are essentially the same as in other parts of the Act—for example, the power to close roads, make streets one way, ban parking and impose speed limits. In addition, it adds powers to restrict the riding of horses and the leading or driving of animals on roads. That is particularly important for an event such as a cycle race on rural roads where one does not want the competitors to come face to face with a herd of cows or, indeed, a flock of sheep. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester drew my attention to the importance that his shopkeepers attach to this measure. The subsection also prohibits the making of any order preventing pedestrian access at any time to premises situated on or adjacent to a road affected by an order or to premises which are accessible only to pedestrians from an affected road.

Sections 16A(9) and (10) enable orders to suspend existing orders so, for example, it will be possible to allow an event go the wrong way down a one-way street or to go through a pedestrianised area.

New section 16B limits the frequency with which traffic regulation orders can be made and the length of time that they may be in effect. They may not last more than three days, and they can affect a stretch of road only once in any calendar year, thus striving to reach the balance that my hon. Friend the Mid-Staffordshire sought. There are provisions allowing these restrictions to be overridden with the consent of the Secretary of State. For example, the Secretary of State can extend an order for more than three days, but only at the request of the local authority. That might be necessary if, owing to an unexpected event such as freak weather conditions, an event does not finish when originally planned.

New section 16C contains supplementary provisions dealing with contraventions of orders made under section 16A and the making of regulations. Subsection (1) makes it an offence to contravene an order, with a maximum penalty set at level 3 on the standard scale—currently £1,000. Subsection (2) empowers the Secretary of State to make regulations covering the procedures for making orders. I shall deal with matters to be considered under regulations shortly.

Clause 2 is the standard financial clause which is present in this case for largely technical reasons. Although the Bill is unlikely to result in any overall increase in public expenditure, it will result in local authorities incurring charges that were in the past incurred by the police. Clause 3 covers the consequential amendments arising from the Bill in a schedule, the short title, and the extent of the Bill, which will apply to England, Wales and Scotland. As there is no provision to the contrary, the Act will come into force immediately on the Royal Assent being given, so that the provisions may be available for the tour de France in July.

The schedule makes several consequential changes to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Paragraph 1 empowers local authorities to set up traffic signs in connection with orders made under section 16A. Paragraph 2 provides that orders made by the Secretary of State must be made by statutory instrument. Paragraph 3 applies the provisions in sections 16A to 16C to vehicles and persons in the public service of the Crown as they apply to anyone else. Paragraph 4 allows the Secretary of State to amend, by regulation, the provisions of the Act as they apply to tramcars or trolley vehicles. Paragraph 5 applies other provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act to these orders. They relate to the variation and modification of orders and the right of challenge to the High Court. Paragraph 6 amends the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

As I said, the Bill includes a provision that gives the Secretary of State the power to make regulations on the procedure to be followed in making orders. The requirements for notification and consultation must be looked at carefully. A number of my hon. Friends said that it was extremely important that we get the consultation right. All the events that have been described today may be desirable, but they are discretionary. We must allow proper representation by those who may be adversely affected by an event. We shall, of course, consult widely on the contents of the regulations, but, as they will be of considerable importance in controlling the way that local authorities exercise the powers, I have already considered some of the possibilities.

The main aspect to be covered in the regulations will be indeed be consultation, which will be fairly lengthy. As we are concerned with large-scale events, which will be planned well in advance, early consultation seems appropriate.

There are a number of ways in which traffic authorities may be required to give notice of events including publication in the *London Gazette*; publication in local papers; the posting of notices, and, possibly, individual notices to affected properties. There may, however, be legal difficulties in proving that notification had been properly made if an aggrieved resident claimed not to have received a notice. I therefore need to take local authorities' views on the practicalities of the suggestion.Traffic authorities will have to consider representations and they may then wish to amend the orders or not allow the event to go ahead.

It is possible that the traffic authority will be required to select an alternative route that has been suggested in representations. However, there may be good reasons for maintaining the original choice.

The general public must be notified. Where roads are to be closed and parking suspended, notices will have to be displayed along the affected road not less than 14 days before the order comes into effect. Where vehicular access to properties will be limited, there may be a requirement to deliver notices to all such properties. As I said before, the Bill will not permit orders preventing pedestrian access to properties. In addition to warning the public that parking is to be suspended, it is important that they know that if they disobey the order, vehicles will be removed. Advance notices will be required to give clear warning of the intention to remove parked vehicles and other obstructions while events are in force, and to state where the vehicles will be removed to.

As the tour de France is due to take place this July, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient time for the local authorities to take all the formal steps that might be required in regulations. However, I assure the House that the authorities concerned are already taking measures to inform the public what will happen. Their programme of consultation and dissemination of information is well in excess of anything that might be required in regulations. In Hampshire, for example, several districts have already published leaflets that are to be delivered to all affected residents and a series of meetings have been held with the emergency services and hospital managers. All schools have been told about the event. In Portsmouth, businesses have been told about the event through the chamber of commerce seminars and through meetings with traders' associations.

It is most important that no authority will be able to make any order that stops the emergency services or statutory undertakers using any road in the event of an emergency. There are powers for the removal of vehicles and for charging for making the orders. The police, in carrying out their duties on the highway, do not charge. That is different from any action that they may take on private land.

In conclusion, we are proposing to grant local authorities the powers to take such measures as may be necessary to ensure safety and to minimise inconvenience when large events take place on the highway. The Bill does not permit events to take place; it provides the traffic authority with the proper powers, after due consultation, to take the steps necessary to regulate traffic so as to minimise danger and inconvenience.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham has done the nation a service. Any hon. Member who has the good fortune to draw a high position in the ballot for private Members' Bills is inundated with good causes seeking special legislation. Cyclists everywhere, and for a very long time to come, will have good cause to be thankful for what I hope will soon become the Atkinson Act. My hon. Friend's constituents will benefit because they will be able to see live coverage on television of the tour de France this summer. I hope that we may see a tour de Tyne Valley or a Hadrian's wall challenge as a result of the boost to cycling given by this popular Bill. I thank my hon. Friend and I commend his Bill to the House.

1.37 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. Despite its modest-sounding title, this is a welcome and extremely important Bill, which has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson). I add my congratulations to those that have already been given to him. My hon. Friend is now back in his seat, but he may not be aware that he was congratulated fulsomely by our hon. Friend the Minister, who has been in the Chamber for most of the debate. I add my congratulations to his.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham deserves congratulations on three grounds. First, he has introduced a Bill which has many worthy objectives; we have touched on many of those this morning. Secondly, he has introduced a Bill which is enabling rather than regulatory. I sometimes wonder whether hon. Members do not go a little too far in introducing legislation that reflects their personal views, beliefs or even prejudices and does not sufficiently permit our fellow citizens to do what they want to do. I am pleased that my hon. Friend has introduced a Bill which is in the spirit of enabling legislation. Thirdly, I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the Bill so cogently and comprehensively.

We have had a debate which has gone down a number of roads. I should like to take the House briefly down a few more that are of particular interest to my constituents. I have many constituents who are interested in cycling. The debate went down one or two roads that I did not entirely foresee when it began which are of great interest to my constituents. One of those was the complaint about the lack of an integrated transport policy made by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley). That would come as a great surprise to many of my constituents who have seen a considerable improvement in the integrated transport system over the past 15 years. That includes improvements to the Thameslink line, the major line running through my constituency which has replaced the notorious bedpan line and has improved commuting into London. The great northern line and three motorway routes run through my constituency: the A1M, the M25 and the M1.

I did not expect the debate to address the film industry. That subject is of particular interest to my constituents in Elstree and Borehamwood, who are concerned about the future of the famous Elstree studios. The present owners say that the studios do not have a viable future in British

[Mr. James Clappison]

film making. One of them said that Elstree suffers from the lack of an integrated transport policy. That is palpable nonsense in view of the many great advantages that the transport structure which I have described offers Elstree.

I join hon. Members in unreservedly welcoming the objectives of the Bill. Those objectives are more wide ranging than one would have thought from listening to the debate, much of which has dealt with cycling. As my hon. Friend the Minister rightly said, the Bill deals not only with cycling; it covers a wide range of relevant social, entertainment and sporting events.

Cycling, however, has taken centre stage in the debate. I join other hon. Members in welcoming the admission of the tour de France to this country and the fact that the Bill will play a major part in facilitating that event.

The Bill is necessary because it improves current legislation. I do not want to repeat the cogent analysis of the Minister, but it is doubtful whether the existing regulatory framework would cover an event on the scale and of the nature of the tour de France. That is another reason why my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham should be congratulated on introducing the Bill. Hon. Members' comments about the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 were correct. That legislation is too old. It has played an important role in, and has had many desirable consequences for, transport, not least in its regulation of taxis. Section 21 of the Act, which is based on the Metropolitan Police Act 1839, is out of date, as is the Road Traffic Act 1988.

The Bill is necessary. I welcome it, as do many of my constituents who are interested in cycling and the promotion of tourism, sport, good health and other worthy objectives.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Peter Atkinson.]*

Committee on Friday 11 March.

Women into Parliament Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.43 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is a lovely surprise that we have time to debate the Bill. As they did not know that I would be so fortunate, many of my women colleagues, who would have liked to be here today, have engagements that they were unable to break in their constituencies. That does not mean that they do not welcome the opportunity for a debate on this subject.

It is fortuitous that we have this opportunity today because Sunday, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) said, is International Women's Day for the status and advancement of women. I am sure that no hon. Member will suggest that that is a slightly ridiculous concept, but we should remind ourselves that the great majority of women around the world are still treated as chattel, and in some cases as slaves, without human rights.

Whatever we say in the House about the advancement of women in our Parliament has to be seen, to some extent, against that background. We have made great strides in Britain, partly as a result of the battles of previous women who fought to get the vote and have the right to stand for Parliament. The debate is largely about how we can improve and build on their work. The status accorded to women is surely a mark of the degree of civilisation of any society, which is why my Bill is so important.

The Bill would amend the Representation of the People Act 1989 to make it easier for women to enter Parliament. I have chosen that route because it is non-party political. There are two pieces of legislation that largely concern the election of people to Parliament, and I have dealt on two previous occasions with the parliamentary boundaries legislation. We should change the boundaries so that each constituency elects both a man and a woman, which would remove all the party political anguish. However, I am not dealing with that today.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute) *rose*—

Mrs. Gorman: I shall describe my Bill and then I shall give way. The Bill deals with aspects of the Representation of the People Act that could be modified to make the processes easier. It would enable people to understand that, when they enter a voting booth, a woman's name will be on the ballot paper and if they want to be represented by a woman, of whatever party, they will at least have the opportunity to put their cross by her name. The gender of the candidate should be shown. Names such as Hilary and Robin could be male or female, so it would be rather nice if Mr., Miss, or Mrs. were on the ballot paper—or Ms, if one happens to prefer it.

When people are nominated for Parliament, there should be a requirement that an equal number of women and men sign the nomination paper. There have to be 10 such people—a proposer, a seconder and eight others—as a minimum and we should require that at least half of those are women so that we can be sure that women have been brought in at some point of the selection process.

I considered the deposit that must be paid before we can stand as candidates for Parliament, which was recently raised from £150 to £500. Given the difficulty that many women have in being selected, why not ask women candidates to pay £150 and therefore allow more to stand as independents? It is a well-known and well-acknowledged fact that it is often difficult for women to raise funds to campaign to get themselves considered as parliamentary candidates. Although some people may say that that is a form of reverse discrimination, we should at least consider it.

The final change that I should like is that, when there is a tie at a count between a man and woman, the casting vote should be for the woman. That would automatically bring another woman into the House, which, as we know, sadly lacks strong representation by women at the moment.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I agree with the general thrust of the Bill and understand that my hon. Friend would like to see more lady Members of Parliament. I believe that I am right in saying that there are only 59 female Members at present out of 651, which virtually all of us would agree is a disgrace. Is that not because of the ridiculous hours of work in this place, the fact that there are no crèche facilities and that constituencies are prejudiced in the way in which they select candidates? Those issues are not addressed in the Bill.

Mrs. Gorman: Those issues have been discussed on many occasions and I have lots of sympathy for those views, but today I am talking of how we may change existing legislation to make it easier for women to get into Parliament. The issues that my hon. Friend has raised are valid, but should be debated at another time.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Before the hon. Lady leaves the subject of changing boundaries and the electoral system, may I ask whether she agrees that it would be better to introduce a fair electoral system, such as proportional representation, for electing people to the House? I think that the hon. Lady will acknowledge that all the countries that use proportional representation have far more women in their legislatures than we have in ours.

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Lady is, of course, quite right. On the other hand, every party has its own way of trying to increase the number of women in Parliament, and the party that the hon. Lady represents has chosen that route. Other parties have different methods.

Getting into Parliament is sometimes seen as a kind of competition, a race, as if we are all engaged in some kind of rugby match where men, usually because of their strength and their ability to use their elbows more fiercely, will win. If those who watch the proceedings of Parliament on television have nothing else to go by, they probably think that that is precisely what it is—two sides battling across the space in the centre of the Chamber for the domination of the debate.

However, Parliament is not supposed to be that: it is supposed to be the jury of the nation, a mixture of people representing all sections of our society who are here to debate issues in our democracy. It is not just Labour versus Conservative: it should be men accompanied by women. If it were, we would get all the perspectives on the issues that we debate. At the moment, by definition, the predominance of men in the House means that our debates are skewed to the masculine point of view.

Juries used to be dominated by men because of the property qualification, and the rules had to be changed to get more women jurors. In the same way, we have to change the rules to get more women into the House. That will enable us to get more women on this jury of the nation which keeps an eye on the Executive, of whatever party, to see that they do not get too big for their boots and overstep their powers.

That is why we are here and why we do not just want women with outstanding talents or great women, although we are delighted when we get them. We want ordinary women who will have opportunities similar to those enjoyed by the average, ordinary male Back Bencher who does not have much to contribute and is not a great orator, or perhaps even a great clown, but is nevertheless imbued with the sort of common sense that goes with living an ordinary, everyday life. We want women with those qualities in the House so that we have the voting power to ensure that our debates are at least shifted towards a feminine perspective.

The Bill is not just about baby care and rape sentencing, although those issues are extremely important. It is about democracy and human rights. I do not believe in women's issues, which are a myth. There are only human rights, human issues, and a society that gives equal balance to the views of women and men is a more humane society. The more that we enhance the status of women in our society, the more the lives of men will be enhanced. Their natural instincts and their tendency to a more aggressive way of life are tempered by women's compassionate nature, wisdom and general care for others. That is an important aspect of our society which we should seek to enhance.

Sometimes, trying to get more women into Parliament is perceived by men as a threat. I hope that none of my male colleagues who have chosen to be here for the debate see me or any of our women colleagues in that light. A society in which the rights and potential of women are constrained is not one in which anyone, including men, are truly free. We must emphasise that.

If we had more women in the House, how would things change; how would priorities be altered? What is it about a woman's perspective on life that makes me think that politics here would be different if there were more women Members? Women's status is much influenced by the House, in its education policies. As many young women as young men now go to university, and they train for the professions in increasingly large numbers. All that is to be welcomed. However, we need to raise the sights of young women of ordinary ability who will not be lawyers or doctors but who may become mothers, and perhaps do fairly menial jobs that involve simple and repetitive work. Nevertheless, they have an expectation of achievement within those parameters.

Our teaching of history is all about wars and battles, men fighting each other, rape and pillage—at least, that was the content of my history lessons. I was never taught about the history of women or how much they contributed. I was never taught about women's suffrage, which was a marvellous and often extremely violent battle. I am not sure that the children of today are taught about it. Nor are they taught about abuses of women around the world. They learn about the needs of other countries, but not about how badly and cruelly women are treated. If they were, perhaps our approach to overseas aid would radically change. We might make very different demands on those societies from those that we sometimes make.

The way in which we teach our young men and women could be radically altered if women Members of Parliament were more conscious of that failing. It would be

[Mrs. Gorman]

helpful also if there were not necessarily more women Education Ministers but more women civil servants to exert influence education and say, "What about this curriculum? How does it relate to women? I don't see anything in it to interest me." I am sure that the men involved would be agreeably startled to know that there was another way of looking at life.

Of course, there are women role models, such as Catherine Thornton, who recently went into space as a member of the team that repaired the Hubble telescope. It is nice to remind ourselves of that. We sometimes think that inside those appalling space suits, there always dwells a masculine heart. In that case, it was a woman. There is also our own Speaker, and Mary Robinson, President of Eire. They have both made remarkable strides for women in a male-dominated society and contributed enormously to the way that it behaves towards women. More women Members of Parliament could alter our status.

A major priority for women is violence. They are terribly concerned about not only the apparent rise in street crime but the way in which the law treats women who experience violence—nearly always at the hands of men—and dismisses that violence as something that the woman brought on herself. This country's legal system is also almost totally male dominated. It must be one of the most patriarchal elements in the establishment. There are hardly any women High Court or other judges. Of the 1,000 judges in this country, only 61 are women.

Many magistrates are women, and they dispense excellent judgments in respect of small claims and other litigation heard in magistrates courts. However, at the level at which law is interpreted, there is a total absence of women. I have raised that issue with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. He said, "Teresa, you must serve 10 years as a stipendiary magistrate, then 10 years in a higher office. It takes 30 years to be a senior judge." How can a woman meet those criteria when she often has to fit in a marriage, children and all the rest?

Why do we have to play the game by men's rules? Are not some of those splendid women magistrates, who have given their time freely for many years, experienced enough to make the sort of character judgments that a judge's work is largely about? Of course they are. We must change the rules, but who will change the rules in this place? Will it be all the lawyers and barristers, with their vested interests, who line the Benches around me? Of course not. Who do we need? We need more women in this place, who will insist that we debate the matter. We also need the influence of the Lord Chancellor—heavens, perhaps even of the Lord Chancellor, herself, which would make an enormous difference to the way in which the law administers justice to women. It matters.

I am sorry to have to say that the judgments of male judges are peppered with prejudices against women of the "Well, she asked for it" variety—shocking judges and shocking judgments. Yet I do not think for one minute that the poor old things understand how shocked women are by soft sentences for violence against, and the abuse of, women and children. That is another good reason for having more women in this place to change the law. The law underlines so much of a woman's sense of worth and security and her feeling that society understands her needs. That change would be an enormous improvement.

Affordable child care has to be a priority. It is not a sexist issue, but a taxation issue. It is profoundly important because, if we changed our legislation to make child care more affordable for women, we could get two women working for the price of one. We could mop up unemployment for many unskilled women, who could happily and successfully contribute to child care. One does not need a tremendous amount of training; one needs loving care and sympathy towards children, which are natural parts of a woman's make-up. We could also employ many women who need jobs and release women with professional and other qualifications, who have been trained and want to get out to work to earn some money, but cannot afford to do so. That would be a marvellous improvement in our society.

I have introduced several ten-minute Bills to call for tax relief on the cost of child care and home help. Women who are at home, looking after elderly relatives and saving the country an absolute fortune in social care costs, are sometimes desperate to get away from that very intense relationship, perhaps to work in a shop one day a week. However, they cannot afford to do so because they cannot afford to pay for the type of person whom they need to leave to keep an eye on the relative. We should seriously reconsider giving such tax relief.

Before the second world war, 20 per cent. of jobs were in what we would now call domestic work—I call them home jobs. From a tax point of view, they should be treated like any other job. For those people who can afford it, the family income should be treated as income against which costs could be offset, and those who cannot should be given other forms of care. That would enhance the lives of women and of their partners and husbands and encourage them to have a broader perspective on life.

The need to encourage older women to go back to work is even more important. If one divorces oneself from the work force for 20-odd years, it is difficult to get back into it. The Government have many excellent schemes for retraining women. I asked the Library to produce a list and I was astonished that there were five closely typed pages of facts. There are many avenues back, but there is no substitute for having kept one's foot in the door throughout the years when one is raising children. I am not saying that every woman wants to do that—each to her own choice.

Mr. Fabricant *rose*—

Mrs. Gorman: I will not give way for the moment. I want to make a little progress so that other colleagues can speak.

It is terribly important that those older women can make a contribution for the second half of their working life when they have finished raising their children. A woman at 45 to 50 has as many potential years ahead of her in work, which is an enhancing part of her life, as she did in her earlier working years. I am sure that if we consider it that way we shall, as a society, press for a more liberal attitude to what I would briefly call affordable child care.

Let me mention the social issues that we discuss so often in the House and which occupy so much of our time. They are quintessentially in areas in which women have an enormous contribution to make. Who else has the hands-on experience of caring? It is the primary role assigned by society to women and we should use that experience in the House to influence legislation, to make it possible for women to contribute more, in the form of jobs and work opportunities—developing nurseries, or whatever it is. We should also make it possible for women's views to influence the way in which legislation is structured, to make it more practical and sensible.

I do not attribute all virtues to women or all vices to men, but I think that women have the balance on common sense. I think that they see life in terms of their practical experiences and they build their legislation from there. Men tend, because of their nature, to see broad perspectives and perhaps international horizons, and they tend to go in for grandiose views of things which sometimes turn out to be not very practical. As we know in the operation of legislation, all parties at all times often screw it up. If more women contributed, we might get better legislation.

I am really speaking about the way in which we achieve an equality of men and women in this Parliament. That would mean that our discussions would come from the two perspectives of society, which is the real world outside. Half of humanity is female. No beings coming from outer space would notice that, if they happened to land on this building and to peep down into the Chambers to see the type of people who are guiding the way in which our country is run.

There are two perspectives—not necessarily adversarial—between the different political parties. Perhaps the co-operation of men with women in making decisions would enhance our political system. The quality of our democracy would be improved. If half of our population continues to be denied a voice in the Chamber, how can it be said to be representative?

With the best will in the world, how can a man be like a woman? How can a man really know the way in which women balance their priorities? We all know, in the domestic situation, that men often say, "I cannot understand the way you think", and women say, "I really do not know how the devil you can think the way that you do." That balance of viewpoints produces an harmonious outcome—not always, but often—and I beg my colleagues not to regard this attempt to bring legislation around to a more female-friendly perspective as a threat to their own advancement. It certainly is not meant that way, and I hope very much that it will not be interpreted that way.

2.8 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I applaud the commitment of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) to the advancement of the rights of women. I am amazed by the views that she holds of the way in which we ought to organise our economic and social policy, because I think that they constrict the needs of women, but in the other aspects of her work, I applaud all that she says and does. I agree with her profoundly, as does the Labour party, that the quality of our democracy and the quality of this institution, which is currently held in little respect up and down the land, would be massively enhanced if we had more women Members of Parliament. Men and women should work in Parliament in equal numbers and as equals, just as they should work as equals in the workplace and in caring for children in the family.

If we can introduce those changes, we shall have a more just society that will use people's talents better. It will then be a happier society for men and women, because the role that confines men to appearing as powerful strangers who never come home and have no part in parenting their children is not good for children and does not make men happy. The Bill does not seek to advance the position of women at the price of the position of men, but to build a far more civilised society and more civilised politics.

Previously, the hon. Member for Billericay introduced a Bill suggesting that there should be one man and one woman Member for each constituency. I first heard such a proposal put by women in the Labour movement in Scotland, who were thinking about a new Scottish Parliament. It is easy when creating a new institution to ensure from the beginning that half the Members are women. I believe that that proposal is still being considered for the Scottish Parliament.

In practice, however, it is unlikely that we shall achieve that. The monumental troubles brought about by the small changes introduced by the Boundary Commission show that Members of this House will not easily pass a Bill that transforms all the boundaries and gets rid of nearly half the membership. So in practice, the hon. Lady's proposals are unlikely to become real.

The Labour party is committed and determined, through its party's structures, massively to increase the number of women represented on this side of the House. We have already voted to change the party constitution to say that, in half the winnable seats, all the candidates short listed will be women. Next time round, therefore, half our candidates in all winnable seats will be women. In the next Parliament, we shall have some 80 women Labour Members and in the subsequent Parliament there will be another big increase. Eventually, we shall no longer have just a few women who form the exception but a critical mass of women. Whether old, young, small, large, grey-haired or fair, women will be a normal part of the political culture of our society. That will be an enormous breakthrough.

I agree with the hon. Member for Billericay that it will improve the culture and practice of this institution, which will be a more civilised and more comfortable place. According to the experience of other countries, changes in hours and the provision of nurseries are required once there are more women. We should change the hours and create the nurseries now, but, in an institution dominated by men, those matters are not looked after. Once the rules are changed and more women are brought in, many more civilised practices will follow. I agree with what the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) suggested, but, in practice, by having more women we shall progress towards more civilised hours.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and bring her greetings from some of my hon. Friends who, regrettably, cannot be here.

If we simply take the example of this House to endorse my hon. Friend's point, it is perceived that the only women who work here are the handful—as we are often deemed—of women Members. Ever since I came through the doors, I have intended to do a trawl to see the breakdown of genders working in the Palace of Westminster. I believe that the majority of people who work in this place are women if we include office, domestic, security and ancillary staff, but the facilities for women workers in this place are atrocious. Is it not a disgrace that we cannot provide a creche but that there is a shooting gallery?

Ms Short: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a great insult to the thousands of people who work in this institution—feeding us, cleaning, doing secretarial or research work, or running the superb Library—most of whom are women. When men say that there are not enough women with dependent children to open a creche, does it mean that all those women are invisible to them? Many of those women must work the funny hours that we work. The cafeterias are open because we are here. What about their children and their need for nursery provision? My hon. Friend is right to say that the Palace of Westminster has a rifle range but no nursery facility. It says a lot about the values of this place, historically and now, and those who run it.

So the hon. Lady and I agree on the matter, and the Labour party will make progress. We will produce 80 women next time. I should say to the hon. Member for Billericay that I believe that her party will make progress because we do. It will become an embarrassment to other political parties as Labour moves forward and has more women Members of Parliament. Other parties will then take measures to increase the number of women.

Mrs. Gorman: I deliberately tried not to make the debate too party political. I assure the hon. Lady that the Conservative party is equally dedicated to getting more women in. We have almost as many women as men offering themselves as splendid candidates. I am sure that the selection procedure will ensure that our numbers are also advanced.

Ms Short: I am delighted to hear that from the hon. Lady. We shall observe with great interest as the two parties select. If progress is made at equal speed in all parties, that will be good, too.

I do not want to take much longer because I want to give the Minister an opportunity to make his speech. I am proud that the British Labour party and our sister parties throughout the world have said to themselves, "Enough of these promises that there should be more women, enough of calling for more women's representation but failure to make progress or making slow progress." Progress is being made so slowly in the United Kingdom that on current trends it would take 200 years to have equal numbers of men and women in the House of Commons.

All over the world, our sister parties are taking the type of measures that the British Labour party is taking to increase the representation of women. I am proud to say that there will be 80 Labour women Members in the next Parliament and that in 10 years or so the Labour party will have 50 per cent. representation. I hope that the hon. Member for Billericay is right in saying that her party will achieve the same.

2.15 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): As usual, I listened with pleasure and admiration to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). I am glad that her Bill has had a useful airing and, much more important, provided her with an opportunity to give her views and aspirations a vigorous run. I wanted to make several points. As the hour is late and several colleagues wish to speak, I shall endeavour to make them rapidly.

Like my hon. Friend—as I understood her really to say—I do not believe that the Bill would do much to resolve the problems that women face in getting elected. However, I realise that its long title probably prevented her from putting in the more full-blooded measures that she might have preferred to present to the House. Therefore, I hope that she will not be surprised or particularly put out if I say that the Government cannot advise the House to support her interesting measure.

It would surely not be right to require a lower deposit from women than from men in parliamentary elections, as the Bill seeks to do. That would be a blatant discrimination and it would not even help more women to be elected. A woman who does not have enough support to raise £500 is not likely to come top of the poll anyway. I suppose that to change the law to oblige the returning officer in the extremely rare circumstances of a tied vote between a male and a female candidate to declare the woman elected might one day produce an extra woman Member of Parliament, but it would be considerably less fair than a toss of the coin.

I am not against the Bill's requirement for the gender of candidates to be shown on the ballot paper, but I would expect a successful candidate to be well enough known for his or her sex to be apparent to the electorate. If it were not, I would regret it if the gender of the candidate shown on the ballot paper became the single deciding factor in the choice that an elector made for or against.

I know that I am in danger of taking the particular parts of my hon. Friend's Bill more seriously than I suspect she does. Her laudable aim is not to put the Bill on the statute book, but to use the occasion to draw attention to the paucity of women in the House. She was right to remark that since women obtained the vote in 1918 and Lady Astor took her seat in 1919, not many women have sat in the House compared with men. Few have become Ministers. If my memory serves me correctly, only nine have reached the Cabinet. The good news is, as both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) remarked, that the number of women in the Commons rose sharply after the last general election from 41 to 60. We have a woman Speaker and two women Cabinet Ministers.

It is plain that Parliament is still grossly undersupplied with the talents, experiences and insights available from the female half of the population. How far that is due to women's preferences, the demands in terms of time and the unsocial hours that the House imposes on its Members or the reluctance of selection committees to adopt women candidates is not known. Where there is no reluctance in principle to adopting women, too few women applicants with family commitments in their early adult life have been able to build up the career record that many selection committees want, and that the Lord Chancellor may want for the appointment of judges.

How far all those factors are responsible for the dearth of women Members is a subject of debate which requires more time than I can reasonably claim now. It is clear that few of those factors are amenable to legislation, and most depend on attitudes, especially on selection committees, unless the law is to be used to ride rough shod over democratic process and oblige local parties, in which, ironically, women play a powerful role, to select candidates whom they would not have chosen freely.

I understand my hon. Friend's impatience, but I am against such compulsion as is contained in her dual-seat proposal. I do not believe that it does the cause of women much good to operate rules and systems that enable men and other women to say of the women elected at the end of it that they were chosen only because they were women. Nor do I go all the way with the belief set out in my hon. Friend's speech that more women would transform this place and bring a whole new approach to a range of policies and procedures.

I believe that women have a special experience and perspective that should be represented here, but I have not noticed women Members or women Ministers take a collective or individual view that I regard as distinctively feminine. I look, for example, at Barbara Castle, Margaret Thatcher, my two female Cabinet colleagues and, of course, the hon. Member for Ladywood on the Opposition Front Bench, and many other women on both sides of the House. I see strong women who know their own minds and whose minds and characters are very different, and whose opinions, I suspect, on most policy issues, would be similar if they were men.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay who is, alas, not yet a Minister, has original and provocative views on a range of subjects, which she puts trenchantly. I believe that those views owe more to her intelligence, imagination and business experience than they do to her sex. Indeed, what most strikingly distinguishes women from men in the House is not the cast of their intellects, the range and diversity of their views or their capacity to be effective, but, as I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay—in vivid lime green—will agree, the brightness and variety of their dress, which I think all women and most men would argue is totally irrelevant to their role here.

I completely agree with my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Ladywood on the unfairness to women, in that for so long, for a variety of reasons, it has been harder for women to become elected. That means that Parliament, Government and the country are denied the full benefit of the talent and ability that women can and do bring when they get here. I hope that my hon. Friend's Bill, while not making progress today, nevertheless gives a further fillip to the cause of women in Parliament, which the results of the recent general election suggest is now at last beginning to make some progress.

2.23 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I shall be brief, as other hon. Members wish to speak. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on being able to secure the debate today. I had fears at one point that we would not be able to raise the matter in the House. It is a matter which is increasingly important.

I speak as one of those women who came in to the House in 1992 and helped to raise the number of women in Parliament quite considerably. My hon. Friends and fellow sisters have been most supportive to us as new Members by helping us to find our feet, discussing issues with us and so on. I believe that if we had more women Members on both sides of the House, one would see much more such support and cross-fertilisation.

I do not support the hon. Lady's view about having one male and one female candidate in each constituency. I say that as someone who perhaps more closely represents that arrangement, given that my partner is also a Member of Parliament. Unfortunately, our constituencies are 200 miles apart, so it is not quite what the hon. Lady had envisaged. Nevertheless, I do not think that that is necessarily the way to go to increase women's representation here.

In endorsing the Labour party's proposals, I tell the Minister and Tory Members generally that the women in marginal seats had the biggest swing in their favour at the last general election. That shows that there is a sea change among the electorate. People do not say that they will not vote for women. If they have the opportunity to vote for women, they will do so. Therefore, it is the role of the political parties to take that on board and do something about it. That is why I totally endorse my party's policy on this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) was modest in saying that we will have more than 80 women not on this side but on the other side of the House after the next election. There will be more than 80 of us sitting on the other side of the House, who will then be able to make the many changes that are necessary within this building to ensure that women's views are expressed emphatically in the House in a way that perhaps they have not been expressed before.

I shall conclude on this note. The hon. Member for Billericay talked about the effect of this measure on employment. As a London Member, I have a great deal of sympathy for that objective, because the level of unemployment in London is one of the highest in the country; it is particularly high among women. If we can discuss such matters in the House, and if we can make changes to women's lives both in the House, in London and in the country generally, we will be doing no bad thing. I welcome the opportunity to have this debate today. I support the hon. Lady's endeavours in principle, although perhaps not in detail.

2.25 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I also welcome the opportunity briefly to take part in this debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on the Bill and on the way in which she introduced it. If I may say so, she introduced it in a most attractive way and one which certainly did justice to the cause that she represents. I have considerable sympathy for the general propositions that she advanced and, certainly, the spirit that animates the Bill.

Like my right hon. Friend the Minister, I cannot agree with the methods with which my hon. Friend seeks to achieve her objectives in the Bill, because they are wrong and would impose unnecessary discrimination. On the spirit of her proposals, I have much sympathy for her.

I welcome the opportunity for more women to enter the House and make their distinctive contributions. I sympathise with what my hon. Friend said about the plight of women in other countries and the general cause of women throughout the world. We would do well to keep all those matters in mind.

During my hon. Friend's speech, I felt a little under threat at times because I must confess that I am one of those male barristers who were referred to as sitting all around her and who often figure in the demonology of the political correctness brigade on the Opposition Benches.

I listened with great interest to what my hon. Friend said about the Bar and the justice system in this country. She may be surprised, but I agree with what she said about the need for more women to become judges and to take part in

[Mr. James Clappison]

the legal profession. She may not agree with me quite so much when I tell her that the explanation that she was given by the Lord Chancellor's Department, about which she told the House, is correct. The reason why there are relatively few women judges—there are a few and, fortunately, the number is increasing—is the attitudes in the legal system in the past.

There are few woman judges today because there were few lady barristers 20 or so years ago who would have fulfilled the necessary qualifications and experience to be judges now. That was a bad reflection on the attitudes throughout the legal system 20 or so years ago. At that time, in some quarters there was prejudice against women. I hasten to add that there was prejudice not only in the legal profession but among those whom the legal profession serves. I welcome my hon. Friend's call for more women judges, but there must be women judges of the right calibre with the right experience, as there are now, and I welcome the fact that an increasing number of women judges are being appointed.

Turning from the legal profession to politics and Parliament, we do not want any lectures from Labour Members about how to get women into Parliament or, indeed, into public life. A large number of women play an active part in the Conservative party throughout the country on councils and at the grass roots. We take great credit for the fact that we were the first major party in this country to select a female party leader—something for which we get precious little credit from Labour Members, who have probably forgotten about her.

Ms Short: What a mess she made.

Mr. Clappison: The hon. Lady says "What a mess she made". I must point out that she won three consecutive elections. She made more of a contribution to this country's public life than many other party leaders; but I would go still further. When she was elected as party leader in 1975, it would not have been possible—indeed, it would not be possible even now—for the Labour party to choose as its leader a member of the female sex. The reason we were able to have a woman as leader of our party was our commitment to opportunity, freedom and choice. They have traditionally been part of the Conservative party's philosophy, but were absent from Labour party culture—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 11 March.

Remaining Private Members' Bills

ABOLITION OF SERVICE CHARGES IN RESTAURANTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 June.

PROFESSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Second Reading what day?

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Despite the objection of the hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay), Friday 13 May.

REGISTRATION OF SMALL CHILDREN'S HOMES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Keith Hill (Streatham): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 11 March.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONG KONG) BILL [*LORDS*]

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 March.

HORSES (PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR FOR YOUNG RIDERS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PENSIONS REFORM BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

WATER (DOMESTIC DISCONNECTIONS) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [25 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate to be resumed what day?

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On behalf of the hon. Member concerned, Friday 11 March.

NURSERY EDUCATION (ASSESSMENT OF NEED) BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [18 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 11 March.

PROTECTION OF DOGS BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [4 February].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate to be resumed Friday 11 March.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 11 March.

House of Commons Members' Fund

2.32 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move,

That, in pursuance of the provisions of section 3 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948 and of section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981, the maximum annual amounts of the periodical payments which may be made out of the House of Commons Members' Fund under the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, as amended, and the annual rate of any payments made under section 1 of the said Act of 1981 shall be varied as from 1st April 1994, as follows:

(a) for paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the said Act of 1939, as amended, there shall be substituted the following paragraph:

> '1. The annual amount of any periodical payment made to any person by virtue of his past membership of the House of Commons shall not exceed £3,554 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £6,561 per annum, whichever is the less:
>
> Provided that if, having regard to length of service and need, the Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £6,842 or such sum as, in their opinion, will bring his income up to £9,849 per annum, whichever is the less';

(b) for paragraph 2 of that Schedule there shall be substituted the following paragraph:

> '2. The annual amount of any periodical payment to any person by virtue of her being a widow of a past Member of the House of Commons shall not exceed £2,221 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring her income up to £5,228 per annum, whichever is the less:
>
> Provided that if, having regard to her husband's length of service or to her need, the Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £4,277 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring her income up to £7,284 per annum, whichever is the less';

(c) in paragraph 2A of that Schedule for the words 'the annual amount of any periodical payment' to the end of the paragraph, there shall be substituted the words:

> 'the annual amount of any periodical payment made to any such widower shall not exceed £2,221 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £5,228 per annum, whichever is the less:
>
> Provided that if, having regard to his wife's length of service or to his need, the Trustees think fit, they may make a larger payment not exceeding £4,277 or such sum as, in the opinion of the Trustees, will bring his income up to £7,284 per annum, whichever is the less';

(d) in section 2(1) of the said Act of 1981, for the words from the beginning to the end of the paragraph (b) there shall be substituted the words:

> 'the annual rate of any payments under section 1 shall be—
>
> (a) £2,070 if the payments are made to a past Member; and
>
> (b) £1,294 if the payments are made to the widow or widower of a past Member'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I understand that with this, it will be convenient to discuss the following motion:

That the whole or any part of the sums deducted or set aside in the current year from the salaries of Members of Parliament under section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, and the whole or any part of the contribution determined by the Treasury for the current year under section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1957, as amended by the House of Commons Members' Fund and the Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981, be appropriated for the purposes of section 4 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948, as amended by section 12 of the Parliamentary Pensions etc. Act 1984, and section 7 of the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

Mr. Morris: The motions on the Order Paper are tabled in the names of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides

[Mr. Morris]

of the Chamber who share with me the responsibility, as Managing Trustees, of administering the House of Commons Members' Fund.

There are two motions to consider. The first provides for an increase in the present levels of all grants and payments which may be made under the Members' Fund legislation. These were last revised by approval of the motions I brought to the House in April 1993. We now propose to increase the grants and payments with effect from 1 April 1994 by 1.8 per cent., which is in line with the increases approved for public service and state retirement pensions.

The main beneficiaries of the first motion are elderly former Members or their surviving spouses, the majority of whom, unlike present Members of the House, are not entitled to the benefits available from the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund. Many of them are now over 80 years of age and some are in their nineties.

The changes for which we seek approval can be briefly stated. Subparagraph (a) deals with the provisions for grants to ex-Members who served in the House for 10 years and whose income is below defined limits. It is proposed to increase the basic annual grant to £3,554, subject to an income limit including the grant of £6,561. In the case of ex-Members with longer service, the grant may be increased to a maximum of £6,842, subject to an income limit of £9,849 per annum.

The widows and widowers of these ex-Members are covered by subparagraphs (b) and (c) of the motion. It is proposed to increase their basic annual grant to £2,221, subject to an income limit including the grant of £5,228. Similarly in the case of widows and widowers of ex-Members who had longer service, the grant may be increased to a maximum of £4,277, subject to an income limit of £7,284.

Subparagraph (d) refers to the "as of right" payments from the Members' Fund to ex-Members who had 10 years service before October 1964, and to their widows and widowers. Their awards are not subject to any income limits and we propose to increase these annual payments to £2,070 for ex-Members and £1,294 for widows and widowers.

Under the terms of the governing legislation, the House of Commons may by resolution direct that, in any year, the whole or any part of the amount contributed by Members from their salaries shall be appropriated, together with the whole or any part of the Treasury contribution, currently £215,000, for the purpose of providing funds for the trustees to make discretionary awards to ex-Members and their dependants, having regard to their individual circumstances. The second motion gives effect to this appropriation and will enable the trustees to continue discretionary awards to ex-Members and their dependants.

I am most appreciative of the help of right hon. and hon. Members who have brought, and continue to bring, to the attention of the Managing Trustees information on the needs of former Members and their dependants. I hope very much that this will continue. The cause of helping elderly former colleagues now living in straitened circumstances is worth while and the help we receive about their needs is invaluable to the Managing Trustees in making best use of the resources available to us.

I am sure the motions will have the support of all right hon. and hon. Members, and commend them to the House.

Finally, I wish again most warmly to thank Tony Lewis, Alan Marskell, Michael Fletcher, Neil Crawley and their colleagues in the Fees Office for all the skill and humane concern with which they help those whom the fund exists to serve. As Chairman of the Managing Trustees, I see at first hand the commitment with which they work, week by week, in the service of former parliamentarians, their widows and other dependants, who now need the support we can provide. They deserve the gratitude of the whole House.

2.37 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and other parliamentary colleagues whose names are listed on the Order Paper for the hours of work that they put into acting as trustees of the House of Commons Members' fund. I fully agree with my right hon. Friend's comments and I am sure that his proposals will be supported unanimously. I join him in his thanks to and appreciation of members of the Fees Office. I am sure that all of us are aware that when we have problems, the Fees Office is always extremely helpful. It has certainly been helpful for many years in seeking to help ex-Members who, sadly, have run into difficult times. It is only right on an occasion such as this to pay the warmest tribute to those who work in the Fees Office and especially to Mr. Lewis who, I understand, will shortly be retiring. Knowing him, I am sure that it will be an active retirement. He has been most helpful to all of us.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and I are members of the parliamentary Labour party benevolent fund. We know from the cases with which we deal of ex-Members, many of them very elderly—80 or 90 as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe said—who were Members of Parliament when salaries were very low. Many of them have passed on and their elderly widows receive very little. The small amounts that the parliamentary Labour party pays in grants makes an enormous difference.

Some months ago, I had a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe who, as always, was extremely helpful and who took the matter up. This is not a party political issue. I pay the warmest tribute to the Leader of the House, who has always been as helpful as any Minister can be and I hope that the Minister will pass my comments on to him.

I should like to put two specific questions to my right hon. Friend and I shall do so because sometimes it is extremely helpful when matters are put on the record. First, how many discretionary awards are made under the House of Commons Members Fund Act 1939 and the House of Commons Members Fund Act 1948 and how many as-of-right payments are being made under the House of Commons Members Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981?

I join my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe in expressing our warmest and deepest thanks to hon. Members and our friends in the Fees Office for all their time and effort on this important issue.

2.41 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I think it right that a Conservative Member should compliment the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on the way in which he has chaired the Committee, the work of which is conducted on an all-party basis. Conservative Members wish to support the measure as keenly as anybody. We are grateful to the Fees Office, on which much of the work falls. I pay a special tribute to the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe for the work that he does as Chairman, in which he gives the lead.

2.42 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and to the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), both of whom take a deep and abiding interest in the welfare of their former colleagues. That was made very clear in their interventions.

The right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), among other Conservative Members, is one of the Managing Trustees of the House of Commons Members' Fund. He plays, as do his colleagues, a very important part in our work.

To answer my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting, the number of recipients of grants at the present time under the 1939 Act, as amended—I refer to discretionary grants—is nine. Two of those go to ex-Members and seven to widows. Under the 1948 Act, to which my hon. Friend also referred, there are 140 discretionary awards, so that gives a total of 149. He also asked me about the number of recipients of payments as-of-right at the present time under the 1981 Act. The answer is 76.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the whole of any part of the sums deducted or set aside in the current year from the salaries of Members of Parliament under section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939, and the whole or any part of the contribution determined by the Treasury for the current year under section 1 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1957, as amended by the House of Commons Members' Fund and the Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981, be appropriated for the purposes of section 4 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948, as amended by section 12 of the Parliamentary Pensions etc. Act 1984, and section 7 of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.—*[Mr. Alfred Morris.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 9th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism not later than three hours after their commencement; and

(2) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Select Committees relating to government departments and Northern Ireland Grand Committee, including the Questions on any amendments thereto which she may have selected, not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion;

and the said proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 31st March at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock the Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in her opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock the Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until the Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That for the remainder of this Session the Order [24th November] shall have effect as if paragraph (4) was as follows:

"Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 18th March, 29th April, 17th and 24th June and 1st, 8th and 22nd July, and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on 2nd March, 13th April, 18th and 25th May, 15th and 22nd June and 6th July."—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Ordered,

That for the remainder of this Session the Order [24th November] shall have effect as if paragraph (4) was as follows:

"Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 18th March, 29th April, 17th and 24th June and 1st, 8th and 22nd July, and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on 2nd March, 13th April, 18th and 25th May, 15th and 22nd June and 6th July."

Education (Essex)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

2.44 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I am most grateful for the opportunity to raise a matter which is of the greatest concern, not only to my constituents, but to many parents and staff of schools throughout Essex. I am delighted to see my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess), for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) and for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), all of whom share my concern, as do all my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Essex. I especially mention my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), who cannot be here, but have asked to be associated with my remarks.

Essex is fortunate to have some of the best schools in the country. The four grammar schools—two at Colchester and two at Chelmsford—regularly appear in the list of the top 10 best schools in the United Kingdom. There are also many other schools in Essex that regularly produce outstanding results. It is no coincidence that Essex also has more grant-maintained schools than any other county in England. In my constituency, at secondary level, the Plume school in Maldon, the Thurstable school in Tiptree and the Philip Morant school in Colchester have GM status. The Alderman Blaxhill school will shortly become grant maintained on 1 April. At primary level, the Great Totham primary school is grant maintained and the application from the West Mersea county primary school is currently before the Secretary of State. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will not be able to comment on that today, but I urge him to look most favourably on that application.

In every one of those grant-maintained schools that I have visited I have found that the unanimous view of staff, parents and pupils is that grant-maintained status has given them the freedom to improve facilities, to recruit more teachers and to obtain better results. The headmaster of the Plume school, Alan Bilby, said recently:

> "What we can now do is act on what parents, teachers and pupils are saying. Before we would listen but know there was little we could do because of how the money was spent. Now we know what is important to the pupils and we can act on that."

Before May 1993, the attitude of the Conservative-controlled Essex county council was one of neutrality towards grant-maintained status. I suspect that the authority may have been a little sad to see its chicks leave the nest to become grant-maintained schools, but it did nothing to stand in their way. All that changed in May 1993 when a Labour and Liberal Democrat administration took control. Despite the views of parents in successive ballots, the new Labour and Liberal-run education committee passed a motion after a few days of taking control which stated:

> "We are opposed to the principle of grant-maintained status believing that the system is not appropriate, fair or democratically accountable."

The new Liberal chairman said:

> "we regard GMS as educationally divisive, unjust and unfair and the education committee will do everything in its power within the law to persuade schools to remain with the Essex Local Education Authority".

Since that time, the county council has waged a relentless campaign of hostility towards those schools that have become grant maintained and towards those that are considering doing so. Under a new policy, passed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, schools that consider becoming grant maintained immediately have all future building work stopped. As soon as a school governing body takes a first vote to consult parents through a ballot on whether it should become grant maintained, any capital programme in the pipeline is put on hold and it is reinstated only if the governors decide not to proceed with the ballot or if the parents reject that ballot. The intention is to intimidate governing bodies from even considering grant-maintained status.

If it is decided to hold a ballot, a leaflet is circulated to parents which puts the county's case against GMS. I am not saying that the arguments should not be put, but the leaflet is biased, misleading and threatening. One of my constituents who is a governor of the West Mersea county primary school wrote to me as follows:

> "In my view, this document is highly selective in its use of the facts. It presents those facts in a manner designed to prevent true comparison and qualifies them with emotive phraseology. The result is a document which fails to inform and has clear political intentions."

I know that that is also the view of the Department for Education which I understand has written formally to the county education officer about this.

Not only parents have been subjected to this propoganda from Essex county council. A brochure has been delivered to every house in the county at a cost of £76,000 to council tax payers. That brochure repeats the same misinformation in an attempt to mislead parents about the true nature of grant-maintained schools. I am glad to say that in most cases parents have not been taken in and have voted in large numbers for grant-maintained status. Even then, the county council has done all in its power to punish those schools and to discriminate against them.

At the Hockerill school in Bishops Stortford the county has always given special funding to support boarders, usually because their parents are handicapped or ill or working abroad. That support represents almost a quarter of the school's income. Two months ago, parents at the school voted to apply for grant-maintained status. At almost the same time, the county council issued proposals to change the system so that a grant is paid to parents of existing boarders rather than to the school and to withdraw the grant altogether for new entrants from September. In a letter to parents, the county council stated:

> "the reason for proposing this change is to reflect the changed relationships between the LEA and schools, particularly those that have grant-maintained status."

One of the governors of Hockerill school who lives in my constituency wrote to me:

> "The new arrangements have been hastily conceived, are ill thought out, and appear to have been made not from a strict fiscal plan and such heed, but rather as a policy of the new political strategy than the LEA at County seems to be pursuing for their own objectives."

This move will not only be financially crippling to Hockerill school but will hit Colchester Royal grammar school which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North and which also has one boarding house. The House will not be surprised to learn that Colchester Royal grammar school is also grant maintained.

The county council has also published proposals to withdraw concessionary transport from pupils attending the Anglo-European school in Ingatestone and the Davenant Foundation school in Loughton. Both those schools draw pupils from all over Essex, both produce excellent results and both are grant maintained. The chairman of the education committee has said that concessionary transport for the Anglo-European school is a "privilege" which should be removed. In a letter to me, the headmaster of the Anglo-European school stated:

> "I am shocked to learn that shortly after our having become grant maintained, the new administration at Essex County Council now intends to reverse a policy that it has supported for more than 20 years. In essence the new policy will mean that only the children of people rich enough to afford the travel costs will continue to enjoy the excellent education available from the school."

I welcome the fact that Essex has been chosen as one of the pilot areas for the new common funding formula. As the Minister knows, even now that is being resisted by the county council which has sought counsel's opinion as to whether it can challenge that in the courts.

The Labour and Liberal Democrat administration of Essex county council has demonstrated its total disregard for the wishes of parents in Essex who have overwhelmingly shown their support for grant-maintained status. The separate measures that I have described, each one petty-minded and spiteful, add up to a politically motivated campaign intended to intimidate schools that are contemplating grant-maintained status and to punish those schools that already have it. The result will be restricted parental choice and diminished opportunity for children in Essex. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to do everything in his power to prevent that from happening.

2.54 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) on his powerful and persuasive speech. I agreed with every word, and other hon. Friends listened with disgust at the details he gave of the vicious campaign waged by socialist-controlled Essex county council.

No one knows better than I the viciousness of socialists against grant-maintained schools. I was proud to have the first grant-maintained school in Essex established in my constituency. I am prouder still that this week it was declared a city technology college, in the first wave of 12 new schools.

My hon. Friend was generous in his remarks about Essex county council. He omitted to mention that its first batch of leaflets were misspelt. Essex education committee authorised misspelt leaflets. They cost money, and then more rubbish was printed and distributed, further to mislead our constituents.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): That committee's members are educationally sub-normal.

Mr. Amess: They certainly are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon mentioned Hockerill school. Sometimes, the chattering classes like to take the mickey out of Basildon, but 40 children in my constituency are boarders at Hockerill school and are much affected by the council's vicious proposals. I had a long conversation with the headmaster, who is right in thinking that the county council proposes to phase out the existing boarding subsidy without providing transitional support—for which there is a precedent—if the school's application for grant-maintained status is successful. That is pure viciousness against a grant-maintained school.

Barstable is another grant-maintained school in my constituency. Essex education committee discovered that that excellent school has certain liabilities that are clearly the county council's responsibility. They have been dumped back on the school with the knowledge, presumably, of the Education Assets Board. That is absolutely disgraceful. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will comment.

My children are educated in Basildon. Three of them attend St. Anne Line, which is a wonderful school. Another, Chowdhary, is known as a small school and is an excellent educational establishment. In the past few months, the rumour started that Essex county council would close that school. The chairman of the board of governors protested. He was the Liberal candidate in last year's county council elections, yet he led a campaign against Liberal-controlled Essex county council's education committee. That is the sort of duplicity with which we are having to cope in Essex, and it is a disgraceful example of double standards.

We are told that both Labour and the alliance want to save that school, but when it comes to vote, they do not. We are reliably informed that the leader of Essex county council is against the school being allowed to remain open. Chowdhary is a wonderful school which, to my personal knowledge, provides quality education with a little bit extra. Its track record and the solid support that it receives from parents deserve better than the finality and shame of closure or threat of closure.

In practice, the threat of closure will lead to closure because people will be worried about continuity of education. No wonder parents with infants at Chowdhary school are losing faith in the parents charter and the policies of Essex county council, under the control of the Liberal Democrats and Labour.

One of my children attends the Rupert Bear playgroup at Lee Chapel South school. Recently, the lollipop lady was removed from outside the school, although she had worked there for some years. It is no good Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors joining protest marches. It is a matter for the police and for Essex county council. The road by the school is dangerous for the young children who have to cross it, but, despite endless correspondence between parents, the school and Essex county council, there is no lollipop lady. I congratulate the school and the parents on their campaign and I intend to join them.

Essex county council is an example of Labour and the alliance having an affair. They share the same bed. They say that they are not socialist parties, but they are. They are only too pleased to seize control, when given the opportunity. Essex county council is awash with money —far more than it had under the Conservatives. Last May, the two parties deceived people and got themselves elected by saying that the lights would shine, the pavements would be clear and we would no longer have dog mess on our streets. What has happened? They have let us down badly on every count, but on none more than education. They have misled the public and I totally endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who is also the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), will be able to give Essex Members some good news and say how we can cope with that vicious and vindictive campaign.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): If it is a point of order for the Chair, I shall listen attentively.

Mr. Mackinlay: Can you confirm that, under the rules of the House, it is not possible for me, as the only Opposition Member representing Essex, to participate in the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman clearly knows the rules and did not need to ask me the question, did he?

3.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): With such a trial of Essex strength around me, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) on a powerful and excellent speech. He found a good echo in the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess)

As my hon. Friends know, I am not quite an Essex man in the context in which they represent the county, but the postal address of my constituency is also Essex, and I am well aware of the issues that have rightly and properly been brought to the House and of the serious concern that they share.

The tremendous gains that grant-maintained status has brought to schools throughout the country and the determination of the Conservative Government and Conservative Members that those gains should be enjoyed by as many schools as possible underpin my hon. Friends' argument. Attempts to downgrade, criticise unfairly and spread false rumours about grant-maintained schools should be condemned and resisted whenever they occur.

I fully share the enthusiasm for grant-maintained schools that my hon. Friends expressed so well. Yesterday, I visited two self-governing schools in Wolverhampton and found precisely the same enthusiasm, drive, improved results and improved teacher morale. As my hon. Friends know, those are a feature of such schools.

The centrepieces of the debate are local education authority leaflets and the spreading of misleading information about grant-maintained schools. It is of the utmost importance for parents to have access to factual and objective information about grant-maintained status, that they can make informed decisions about the future of their childrens' schools and education. That is why we view very seriously the circulation of material that may mislead parents and cause anxiety.

My Department has, therefore, adopted a policy of challenging local education authorities whose literature may do just that. Regrettably, Essex local education authority has produced a leaflet about GM status which my Department considers could mislead parents on a number of issues, especially accountability, GM autonomy and LEA trading powers. There have been various exchanges of correspondence between officials of the department and the chief education officer, Mr. Sharp, since the leaflet was brought to the Department's attention by a number of complainants in October last year.

Our correspondence with Mr. Sharp also reminded him of the code of practice that the Department recently negotiated with the Society of Education Officers to govern the provision of information about GM status. The code states that information produced by LEA officials, civil servants and employees of the Grant Maintained Schools Centre should be objective, factual, explanatory and non-political. Those are most important provisions and, as I have made clear, they are provisions which the Government themselves abide by. We are, I judge, therefore fully entitled to expect local education authorities to behave in a similar manner.

Moreover, I shall take the opportunity to highlight the extended powers that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State now enjoys as a result of the Education Act 1993. Where ballots are initiated under the 1993 Act, the Secretary of State's powers have been widened to bite on interference by third parties. He can now consider voiding ballots whose outcome is likely to have been influenced to a significant extent by false or misleading information. Any complaints will be considered carefully and I assure my hon. Friends who are present this afternoon, and others who may read this in weeks to come, that we take the matter seriously and that those powers will be exercised as and when opportunities arise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon went on to speak about Hockerill school. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon mentioned Hockerill school's application for self-governing status and its natural anxiety to know how it might be funded if its application is approved. Of course, I cannot comment on the proposal at this stage, but future funding, if the application is successful, is very much part of its consideration. One factor that bears on funding is the fact that although Hockerill school is situated in Hertfordshire, it is maintained by Essex.

Against the background of a proposal still under consideration, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon will appreciate that it is hard for me to give any definitive assurances about the level of budget that the school could expect if it were grant maintained. Officials are exploring a range of options and are consulting the local authorities affected. Probably the most that I can say at this stage is that the aim of the GM funding regime is to provide additional resources to GM schools to reflect their additional responsibilities as self-governing schools. We are also concerned to avoid undue turbulence as schools switch from one funding basis to another. With that in mind, I am confident that the Funding Agency for Schools will seek, if Hockerill becomes grant maintained, to ensure that the school is not disadvantaged.

Quite apart from the questions about the future status of Hockerill, there is the issue of boarding subsidy, which is payable under the authority's scheme for the local management of schools. Once again, I regret that I am unable to comment substantively, since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in the consideration of such proposals. The subsidy is intended to meet the additional costs that arise in trying to provide boarding places—residential buildings, care staff, and so on—and is receivable by two schools. Those schools are Hockerill, which is maintained by the LEA, and—by replication through the annual maintenance grant paid to GM schools—the Royal grammar school in Colchester, which has a small boarding house.

After carrying out a consultation process, the authority recently submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a proposal to make a variation to that part of its LMS scheme. The proposal is to cease paying subsidy through the delegated school budget shares from the financial year 1994-95, and instead pay the subsidy direct to parents from the pupil support budget, which is a centrally retained discretionary exception in the LMS scheme. The schools will henceforth have to recover the cost directly from parents. Continued payment of the subsidy would be a matter for the authority if the proposed variation is approved.

Proposals are being considered in the light of statutory guidance issued for LMS schemes. I assure my hon. Friend that, as always, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will carefully consider all the relevant factors before reaching decisions on those matters, and we shall seek to take those decisions as soon as we reasonably can.

I should like to say a few words about the Anglo-European school, Ingatestone, and also cover the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon. Should I run out of time, I shall communicate to him on those important issues. The question of the Anglo-European school was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon. As he said, it concerns the LEA's review of transport arrangements that it now makes for pupils attending that self-governing school.

I recently visited that excellent school and saw its achievements for myself. It is unique in Essex in that it is a comprehensive school with a strong European emphasis and offers the international baccalaureate. Because it serves a wide area of Essex, the LEA has always provided subsidised transport for its pupils over and above legal requirements. Pupils in other Essex comprehensive schools do not get such treatment, which has no doubt led Essex to begin consultations about the possibility of phasing it out from September 1995. My hon. Friend suggests that that move shows a bias against GM schools by the authority. Given some of the other concerns that he so ably expressed, I understand why he could reach that conclusion. It is not, however, necessarily the case in this instance.

It would be wrong for Essex to let any of its actions be governed by bias against GM schools, but, under law, it is entitled to review those arrangements. It might be helpful if I explain a little of the legal context. The law requires free transport for a pupil of compulsory school age who attends his or her nearest suitable school and who, to reach it, must travel beyond the statutory walking distance, which is three miles for a pupil aged eight to 16. The courts have held that LEAs are not normally obliged to provide free transport for pupils whose parents have preferred a school other than the nearest suitable school, even if the preferred school is beyond walking distance.

If an Ingatestone pupil could have attended an ordinary comprehensive school nearer home, Ingatestone would not be considered his or her nearest suitable school and he or she would not be entitled to free transport to it, even if it were more than three miles from home. However, the law also enables local education authorities to assist those for whom they do not consider free transport is necessary. That is the direction that Essex has been using to assist children whose parents have chosen to send them to Ingatestone rather than to the nearest suitable school.

In making that provision available, the authority has gone beyond what is required by law. Provided that the LEA has acted reasonably and treated GM school pupils as favourably as comparable pupils at LEA schools, whether and how it assists pupils who do not qualify for free transport on grounds of necessity is a matter for the authority and my Department would not normally intervene.

Home-to-school transport is expensive, especially for shire authorities. In 1991-92, which is the latest year for which I have figures, Essex spent almost £7·5 million on it. Most of the expenditure will be necessary to ensure that no Essex pupil is denied a suitable education through inability to reach a suitable school. But some of that is at the discretion of Essex.

Finally, on the basis on which schools compete to attract pupils, the Government believe that schools should compete not through the availability of transport inducements but by raising educational standards and widening choice. That is the whole thrust of the Government's reforms. I am happy to acknowledge that Ingatestone Anglo-European school already sets high standards. Last summer, 68 per cent. of its 15-year-olds passed five or more GCSEs at grades A to C, compared with the Essex average of 39 per cent. I am also happy to acknowledge that the school's European emphasis has contributed to choice and diversity in Essex for more than 20 years.

Ultimately, the most powerful arguments for self-governing schools—I return to the theme of this debate—are what they do, their consequences and how the schools are seen. I urge parents, anywhere in the country, who have not taken the opportunity to visit a self-governing school, to do so. They will see the benefits and gains and, I hope, return to their school, if it is still run by an LEA, determined to change it to a self-governing——

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fourteen minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 21 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 27 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have now done so.

Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to limit legal aid to those charged with fraud to 1 per cent. of the sum involved or a sum of £10,000 whichever is the lower.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am examining the provision of criminal lega aid as a whole as part of the fundamental review of my Department's expenditure currently underway, but any changes that may be made will need to take account of the presumption of innocence.

Magistrates

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what is the political balance of magistrates in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster, *(c)* Rotherham, *(d)* Sheffield, *(e)* Humberside, *(f)* north Yorkshire and *(g)* west Yorkshire.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political balance of magistrates in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield, Humberside, north Yorkshire and west Yorkshire on the latest information available is as follows:

	Con	*Lab*	*Lib/Dem*	*Independent/ Not known*
Barnsley	46	50	15	3
Doncaster	101	62	23	6
Rotherham	46	52	62	38
Sheffield	101	112	52	84
Humberside	153	73	37	49
North Yorkshire	233	62	93	29
West Yorkshire	572	397	220	163

NATIONAL FINANCE

Recession and Recovery

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his technical definitions of recession and recovery.

Mr. Nelson: There is no universally accepted definition of either recession or recovery. Although there are widely used conventions, an element of judgment is always necessary.

ECOFIN

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent Council meeting of European Economic and Finance Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Economic and Finance Council of the European Union, ECOFIN, met in Brussels on 14 February. I represented the United Kingdom.

There was a general discussion in open session of the work programme of the Greek Presidency. The main topics were the follow-up to the Commission's recent White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment; implementation of stage 2 of economic and monetary union; and I and others raised the need for the Commission and member states to step up their efforts to tackle fraud against the Community budget.

The Council examined the revised Portuguese convergence programme covering the period to 1997. It welcomed the determination of the Portuguese Government to pursue convergence according to the treaty on European Union. The Council noted that to achieve the programme's target of a budget deficit below 3 per cent. of GDP by 1997 would require a thorough and vigorous implementation of all aspects of the fiscal consolidation strategy. In this regard, the Council welcomed the commitment of the Portuguese Government to adopt additional measures if necessary to compensate for any adverse budgetary developments which put at risk achievement of the programme's targets. On inflation, the Council recognised the substantial progress already made but noted that wage settlements would need to be restrained, both to maintain external competitiveness and to maintain downward pressure on inflation. This would also help to reduce nominal interest rates.

The Council discussed the follow-up to the Commission's White Paper. It agreed that ECOFIN should have, in addition to its work on the trans-European networks, a wider role in other areas where it has an interest. While the proposed networks were an important part of the White Paper, there was a need to give equal emphasis to other parts of the paper, especially those referring to structural unemployment problems and the need for all national Governments to take measures to increase the flexibility of labour markets.

The Council discussed ways to improve procedures for monitoring economic developments in stage 2 of EMU.

The Commission briefly outlined its intention to produce further proposals to combat fraud in the Community budget. There were outstanding remits and resolutions from the June 1993 ECOFIN, the Copenhagen European Council and the November 1993 Interior/Justice Council. Moreover article 209A of the Maastricht treaty now places an obligation on member states to take the same measures to combat fraud against the Community's financial interests as they did to protect their own. The Commission attached great priority to this dossier, and would be presenting its overall strategy to the March ECOFIN in the context of the annual report on fraud.

There were no formal votes on issues discussed in the Council.

Taxation

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide estimates for 1994-95, or the latest year for which they are available, for the number of *(a)* lower rate taxpayers, *(b)* basic rate taxpayers and *(c)* higher rate taxpayers in each county of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The table provides estimates of numbers of taxpayers liable only to basic rate tax and to higher rate tax for each English and Welsh county and Scottish region for 1991-92, the latest available year for which information can be provided below United Kingdom level. It is only possible to give numbers for the whole of Northern Ireland. There was no lower rate of tax in 1991-92.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1991-92

(thousands)

County/region	*Taxpayers liable at only basic rate*	*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*
English/Welsh county		
Cleveland	171	7
Cumbria	256	10
Durham	221	11
Northumberland	141	7
Tyne and Wear	429	16
Humberside	327	18
North Yorkshire	359	24
South Yorkshire	505	14
West Yorkshire	862	37
Cheshire	413	29
Greater Manchester	1,040	42
Lancashire	601	30
Merseyside	561	21
Derbyshire	395	17
Leicestershire	384	21
Lincolnshire	257	11
Northamptonshire	288	17
Nottinghamshire	431	16
Hereford & Worcester	317	15
Shropshire	169	7
Staffordshire	426	18
Warwickshire	210	16
West Midlands	1,040	37
Cambridgeshire	326	20
Norfolk	355	17
Suffolk	294	15
Bedfordshire	230	18
Berkshire	313	43
Buckinghamshire	259	43
East Sussex	312	20
Essex	709	61
Greater London	3,020	331
Hampshire	707	63
Hertfordshire	441	57
Kent	656	52
Oxfordshire	240	25
Surrey	477	83
West Sussex	354	35
Isle of Wight	54	1
Avon	423	25
Cornwall	202	6
Devon	503	24
Dorset	304	16
Gloucestershire	250	18
Somerset	211	10
Wiltshire	266	15
Clwyd	188	5
Dyfed	189	4
Gwent	155	6
Gwynedd	70	3
Mid Glamorgan	220	5
Powys	70	4
South Glamorgan	171	6
West Glamorgan	144	5
Scottish region		
Borders	68	5
Central	116	6
Dumfries and Galloway	75	1
Fife	144	6
Grampian	207	24
Highlands	112	3
Lothian	349	18
Strathclyde	916	39
Tayside	196	6
Island Authorities	25	1
Northern Ireland	491	22

Insurance Premium Tax

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide estimates for the cost of £30,000 home contents insurance and the resulting amount that will be paid under the new 3 per cent. tax in the constituencies of *(a)* Peckham, *(b)* Liverpool, Riverside, *(c)* Manchester Central, *(d)* Congleton, *(e)* Mid Norfolk and *(f)* Devizes.

Sir John Cope: The average household with home contents insurance would expect to pay a premium of £2.40 per week in 1994-95 which represents an insurance premium tax of 6p per week. The costs facing individuals will depend on the sum insured, the area in which they live and the precautions taken. Figures for insurance costs by individual parliamentary constituencies are not available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Maxwell the Musical"

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Attorney-General when he was first aware that "Maxwell—the Musical" was to be produced.

The Attorney-General: Solicitors acting for Mr. Evan Steadman first informed my office in June 1993 of their client's intention to produce a musical provisionally entitled "Maxwell—the Musical". Officials explained that the Attorney-General cannot give legal advice to individuals or companies and that the producer should look to his own legal advisers for advice as to how the law of contempt might affect his intentions. A letter was also received on 17 June from solicitors acting for one of the defendants in the criminal proceedings.

In August and September 1993 solicitors representing one of the defendants drew attention to a proposed private preview scheduled for 12 September. They were not in a position to detail the contents of the production.

The solicitors acting for the producer subsequently wrote to my office on 30 December to say that the musical was intended to open in February 1994 and offering sight of the script. Having received a complaint on 11 January 1994 that the musical would prejudice the forthcoming trial, I asked on 18 January for a copy of the script which was received the following day. After taking advice from counsel specialising in the law relating to contempt, I concluded that the interests of justice required that I make an application to the High Court for an order restraining production of the musical. The solicitors acting for the producer were informed of my decision on Wednesday 2 February.

ENVIRONMENT

Mersey Estuary

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department intends to comply with the European urban waste water directive, in respect of the Mersey estuary; whether it is intended that additional costs will have to be met by consumers of water in the region; what is the timetable for the clean-up of the Mersey estuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom is committed to fulfilling the objectives of the urban waste water treatment directive. The directive sets various implementation dates depending on the size of the discharge and the nature of the receiving water. In England and Wales the Director General of the Office of Water Services will be setting price limits for the water companies which will take into account their legal obligations including the urban waste water treatment directive.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the workings of section 54 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Atkins: I have received a number of representations, from various quarters and at various times, about the provisions in section 54 of the 1981 Act requiring the reclassification of roads used as public paths.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend section 54 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 so that historic vehicular use does not necessitate the reclassification of roads used as public paths as byways open to all traffic.

Mr. Atkins: I am considering the operation of these procedures. Highway authorities already have, however, powers to regulate or restrict vehicular use, where necessary, on byways open to all traffic.

Parish and Town Councils

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of the 1992 consultation exercise on the future role of parish and town councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We are considering the responses to the consultation paper on the future role of parish and town councils in the context of the recommendations we have so far received from the Local Government Commission in relation to its review of the structure of local government in England.

Part II Housing Sales

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many special consents for the sale of part II housing were given to *(a)* Sheffield city council and *(b)* the London borough of Islington in each year since 1988.

Sir George Young: The number of special consents for the sale of council houses and flats given to each authority are as follows:

	Sheffield	*Islington*
1988	2	5
1989	1	4
1990	5	nil
1991	9	3
1992	13	6
1993	11	3

Air Pollution

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the monitoring of transport-related air pollution.

Mr. Atkins: The Government fund a number of air quality monitoring stations which measure levels of transport-related air pollutants. This includes 43 continuous automatic sites of which:

—29 monitor ozone,
—24 monitor nitrogen dioxide,
—19 monitor carbon monoxide,
—12 monitor fine particles (PM_{10})
—and 7 monitor 26 hydrocarbons including benzene, 1, 3, butadiene and ozone precursors.

Nitrogen dioxide is also monitored at over 1,100 sites in the United Kingdom in collaboration with local authorities using non-automatic techniques.

In the second anniversary report of the 1990 Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" the Government made a commitment to extend their urban air quality monitoring network to cover all major cities by 1997 where transport-derived pollutants are expected to be at their highest. In addition, the Government are currently considering responses to the recently published consultation paper on "The Future of Air Quality Monitoring Networks in the United Kingdom", in which proposals were made to develop a framework which draws local and national air quality monitoring together into a coherent quality assured network.

Rent Increases

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average percentage increase in rents for private unfurnished lettings set by rent officers in each year since 1979 in *(a)* inner London and *(b)* the rest of the country.

Sir George Young: The information requested is given in the table.

Average yearly percentage increase in registered fair rents—private unfurnished lettings

Year	*Inner London*	*Rest of England*
1979	5·7	12·3
1980	21·1	15·6
1981	14·9	11·0
1982	4·7	18·4
1983	3·7	6·3
1984	13·1	11·6
1985	1·9	6·2
1986	14·4	12·3
1987	1·3	5·8
1988	18·8	14·2
1989	1·9	2·6
1990	16·2	16·9
1991	3·7	11·9
1992	12·2	13·2

Local Government Finance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account has been taken in standard spending assessment calculations for 1994-95 of income from charging for personal social services other than residential care; and what income was assumed from these charges for each local authority.

Mr. Baldry: The method by which the standard spending assessment, SSA, for residential care services for the elderly is calculated includes an explicit element relating to income from charges. The methods by which the other personal social services SSAs are calculated do not include such an element.

Wildlife Sales Controls

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current position on his Department's review of wildlife sales controls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the then Minister for the Environment and Countryside announced on 1 December 1992 that we would be reviewing the operation of wildlife sales controls in Great Britain to see how they could be made more effective.

During the course of the review, we have consulted a wide range of interested individuals and organisations and have received a substantial volume of comments and suggestions. Some of these are still being considered, and we will announce our conclusions in full later in the spring. As a first stage, we have concluded that the existing bird ringing and registration system should be modified to reduce unnecessary regulation and to ensure that the controls are targeted and implemented more effectively. We have decided to announce our proposals now, with a view to completing the changes in time for the main breeding season for birds.

Since the introduciotn of registration in 1982, there have been significant changes affecting the position of British birds of prey, which have always been the main focus of the registration scheme. The wild populations of many species are back to the levels of the mid-1950s, following the introduction of strict controls on the use of pesticides. Captive breeding has proved more successful than expected. As a result, some 16,000 individual birds are now registered, as compared with an estimate of 1,500 when the scheme was set up. We do not believe it is justified to require captive birds to be registered unless there is evidence to suggest that removal of specimens from the wild for aviculture or falconry is adversely affecting wild populations to a significant degree or is likely to do so in the foreaseeable future. In the light of these considerations, we propose to reduce substantially the scope of the existing scheme by removing the requirement to register the common buzzard, the sparrowhawk and the kestrel, all non-native birds of prey, except the Barbary Falcon, certain birds of prey which occur very infrequently in Britain, and certain birds which are unlikely to be kept in captivity in significant numbers.

We see no need to continue registering birds which have been temporarily imported for falconry purposes, and which pose no threat to native species. Accordingly, we propose to issue a general licence to exempt them from the registration requirements.

At the same time, we propose to tighten up inspection and monitoring of the more less-common species which will continue to be subject to the ringing and registration requirements. We are also considering carrying out a small number of DNA tests to check captive-breeding claims.

We also propose to improve the monitoring of the existing scheme by inviting our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, to develop criteria for reviewing the species subject to registration, and to undertake such a review in 1995 and at five-yearly intervals thereafter. This will bring the arrangements for bird registration into line with those which already exist for other animals and plants.

We are consulting widely on these proposals in accordance with section 26 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A copy of the Department's letter setting out the details has been placed in the Library.

Green Belt Policy

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's response to the research report on "The Effectiveness of Green Belt Policy", commissioned by his Department and published by HMSO in July 1993.

Mr. Curry: The aim of the research was to assess the effectiveness of green belt policy and investigate how it might be improved. The report concluded that the policy was working well and achieving its main purposes of preventing urban sprawl and the merging of towns. Alterations to boundaries in development plans had affected less than 0·3 per cent. of green belts in the last eight years. Most planning approvals had been for small-scale changes which did not significantly affect the rural appearance of green belts. Planning appeal decisions strongly upheld green belt policy. This illustrates the strength of the Government's continuing commitment to green belts.

We have considered the report's recommendations for increasing still further the effectiveness of green belt policy. We have today published for public consultation a draft revision of Planning Policy Guidance Note 2, "Green Belts". This includes limited amendments designed to reinforce policy by making greater allowances for environmental and economic factors and addressing some practical difficulties in operating it. I hope these will make our green belts even more highly valued in the future.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is considering the research report's recommendations for Scotland's green belts separately. The draft planning policy guidance note is for England only.

Revision of PPG2 will complete the comprehensive review of planning guidance which we have carried out since publication of the environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" in 1990.

Regional Offices (Employees)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of employees employed by each of the regional offices of the single regeneration budget; how many are *(a)* black or *(b)* Asian; and if he will publish a breakdown of the positions held by and the responsibilities of black and Asian employees.

Mr. Baldry: The figures in the table should be read taking into account the following points:

(i) They are estimates of the likely numbers. The integrated regional offices, IROs, come into being in April 1994. There could be minor changes in the numbers brought about by postings, retirements, resignations etc which take place before then;

(ii) From April a Merseyside office will be set up. Separate information is not yet available for this office;

(iii) The DTI currently has an office covering London and the south-east regions with a headcount of 143 which will be split into an office for London and an office for the south-east. In the table DTI staff are all shown in the south-east figures. After April there will be an approximately 50:50 split;

(iv) The table shows the combined staff totals of the regional offices of the Departments of the Environment, of Employment and of Trade and Industry who are expected to be in the IROs;

(v) Figures for the Department of Transport are not included. The majority of DOT staff who currently deal with highways matters will transfer to the Highways Agency; a relatively small number will be in the IROs. The Department is currently in the process of identifying which individuals will be in the IROS and is not yet in a position to provide a breakdown of the ethnic origin of these staff;

(vi) The figures for Asian and black staff are drawn from voluntary ethnic origin surveys conducted by the three Departments;

(vii) The figures are provided on a combined grade level basis to avoid personal disclosure.

Estimated future breakdown of integrated regional office staff showing staff of Asian and black ethnic background

Region	Total staff	Grades	Asian staff	Black staff
North East	381	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	—	—
		AO-AO	2	—
		Total	2	0
North West	457	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	2	—
		AO-AA	2	7
		Total	4	7
Yorkshire and Humberside	302	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	1	1
		AO-AA	5	2
		Total	6	3
West Midlands	347	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	—	2
		AO-AA	5	20
		Total	5	22
East Midlands	239	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	3	—
		AO-AA	2	2
		Total	5	2
Eastern	186	G7 and Over	1	—
		SEO-EO	—	2
		AO-AA	1	2
		Total	2	4
South East	295	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	6	6
		AO-AA	9	9
		Total	15	15
South West	216	G7 and Over	—	—
		SEO-EO	1	1
		AO-AA	2	1
		Total	3	2
London	166	G7 and Over	2	1
		SEO-EO	10	5
		AO-AA	3	11
		Total	15	17
Overall Total	2,589		58	72

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the total surface area of waterways covered by the southern region of the National Rivers Authority is located in the county of Hampshire.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer Thursday 17 February]*: I am advised by the National Rivers Authority that information on surface area is not available but that the total length of main river in the NRA's southern region is 2,649 km, of which 25 per cent. is located in Hampshire.

Petrol Stations (Pollution)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has held with petrol retailers, the EC and environmental campaigners regarding proposed directives to compel garages to install forecourt pollution control measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 18 February 1994]*: There is currently no proposal to require garages to install forecourt pollution control measures. We have been expecting proposals from the European Commission for some time. If such a proposal emerges then we will, of course, discuss it with the EC, industry, retailers and other interests.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Race Relations

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are employed in his Department dealing with race relations issues; what is the total cost of their employment; and if he will list the main categories of staff and work involved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Thirty-five full-time equivalent staff are employed in the community relations division, dealing principally with race relations legislation and policy; grants under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 and other smaller programmes, the Commission for Racial Equality and international interests. The total staff costs in 1993-94, including accommodation and other non-pay costs, is expected to be £904,000.

Race relations issues are relevant to the work of staff in most Home Office departments, including police, criminal policy, immigration and the Prison Service, but disaggregation of the numbers and costs involved could not be achieved except at disproportionate cost.

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in reviewing the operation of the law relating to wheel-clamping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are still considering what action it might be appropriate to take. Our aim is to ensure that any measure introduced to prevent or deter irresponsible and heavy-handed wheel clamping on private land does not prevent sensible measures being taken to control genuine parking problems. We will make our conclusions known as soon as possible.

Women's Refuges

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Seccretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider allowing women's refuges to be classified as places of fixed abode for bail purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Decisions as to whether or not bail should be granted are matters for the courts under the Bail Act 1976. Among the factors which the courts take into consideration in deciding whether the statutory right to bail is overtaken by any of the exceptions allowed for in that Act are the character, antecedents and community ties of the person seeking bail. But it must be for the court to decide, in the circumstances of the case before it, the relevance of residence at a particular type of accommodation when considering the defendant's community ties.

Prisoner Transportation

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the specially designed cellular vans to be used by Securicor Custodial Services Ltd. for the transportation of prisoners in the Metropolitan police district from June have been designed to accommodate the needs of *(a)* pregnant women and *(b)* women with babies and toddlers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 21 February 1994:

COURT ESCORT AND CUSTODY SERVICE

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the transportation by Securicor of female prisoners in the Metropolitan Police district.

The contract with Securicor requires female prisoners who are pregnant or whose babies or young children are with them in prison to be transported to and from court by saloon car. They must also be accompanied by a female prisoner custody officer and a trained nurse.

New Prisons

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many companies have expressed an interest in the financing, building and operation of the planned six new prisons; and how many are non-United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. J. Butler to Mr. Stephen Byers dated 21 February 1994:

DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

The Home Secretary has asked me, in Derek Lewis' absence from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the design, construction, management and finance of the new prisons.

Detailed work has started on only two of the planned six new prisons. These will be at Fazakerley in Merseyside and Bridgend in South Wales. 52 companies expressed an interest in the design, construction, management and finance of these two proposed prisons and attended a bidders meeting in December. We have since received 10 proposals from companies and consortia. Each of these involves, to a varying extent, a number of other companies: in total 27 separate companies have a major interest. Of these, three were non-United Kingdom registered and three had non-United Kingdom registered parent companies. The remaining companies were registered in the United Kingdom.

Secure Training Centres

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many companies have expressed an interest in financing, designing, building-refurbishing, operating and maintaining secure training centres; how many are non United Kingdom companies; and how many of the proposed sites are on existing Home Office land or on alternative sites.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 25 companies, all United Kingdom registered, have expressed an interest in tendering for the financing, designing, building-refurbishing, operating and maintaining of five secure training centres. The notice placed in the Official Journal of the European Communities invited interested parties to confirm the ability to provide alternative sites on which to build STCs should the Home Office decide not to use its own sites. One site was specified by an interested party at this stage of the tendering cycle.

Pre-sentence Reports

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes are proposed to the requirement in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 relating to pre-sentence reports.

Mr. Howard: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 placed on the courts a requirement to obtain and consider a pre-sentence report in all cases involving an offence triable either way before passing a custodial or major community sentence. This requirement has yielded a number of benefits in terms of consistency and availability of relevant information, but I have concluded that it is too inflexible and imposes unnecessary fetters on the courts and costs for the criminal justice system as a whole in its present form. My conclusion takes account both of the views of judges and magistrates and of the results of a review of the way in which the present arrangements work in practice undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of probation. Although all probation services were asked last year to guarantee a same-day service for reports where a custodial remand would otherwise be needed, despite good work in some areas it is clear that such remands are taking place in circumstances where the courts are satisfied that the delay adds little of value to the sentencing process or outcome.

I have therefore decided to bring foreward an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which will give the courts a discretion to dispense with the requirement to obtain a report where they are satisfied that they can properly sentence without one. This is the same discretion as now applies in the case of offences triable only on indictment, which has not proved problematic. I am sure that the courts will wish to exercise an enlarged discretion with care, bearing in mind the potential value of good pre-sentence reports in bringing out relevant information about the offender and offence, including aggravating as well as mitigating circumstances.

The Government recognise that special considerations apply in the case of juvenile offenders, to whose welfare requirements the courts must have proper regard. We therefore propose that in their case the discretion to dispense with a report will be subject to the court concerned concluding, having had regard to a previous report on the offender concerned, that a further report is unnecessary.

I believe that the change in the law which I propose will retain the benefits of the 1991 Act changes while avoiding unnecessary delays and costs, but I shall naturally want to keep the operation of new arrangements under review.

Prison Staff (Assault)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison staff were on long-term sick leave due to assault for each year since 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 February 1994]*: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. J. Butler to Mr. Doug Hoyle dated 21 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in Derek Lewis' absence from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many prison staff were on long term sick leave due to assault for each year since 1988.

As at 10 February 1994, 36 members of staff had been on sick leave for periods of at least two months as a result of assault by prisoners. I regret that information relating to earlier years is not available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Consultants

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the *(a)* accountancy firms and *(b)* merchant banks to which the Office of Public Service and Science awarded private consultancy work in 1992 and 1993, together with a list of consultancies concerned and the amount paid.

Mr. Waldegrave: The full details and the total cost of consultancy contracts awarded by the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies to accountancy firms in 1992-93 are available only at disproportionate cost. The identified cost for 1992-93 is £475,000, which does not include full details of the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which does not hold the information centrally in the form requested for that year.

The costs of individual contracts have been aggregated to maintain commercial confidentiality. On this basis the figure for consultancy contracts awarded by the Office of Public Service and Science to accountancy firms in 1993-94 to date is £660,000 and includes full CCTA information. No merchant banks were employed by the Office of Public Service and Science.

The Central Office of Information awarded no consultancy contracts to accountancy firms in 1992-93 and none have been awarded in 1993-94 to date. No merchant banks were employed.

HMSO awarded no consultancy contracts to accountancy firms in 1992-93 and the aggregated cost in 1993-94 to date is £205,625. No merchant banks were employed.

The firms and assignments for the Office of Public Service and Science for 1992-93 and the Office of Public Service and Science and HMSO for 1993-94 to date are as follows:

1992-93

Accountancy firm	*Assignment title*
Baker Tilly	Advice on setting up commercial accounting systems.
Coopers and Lybrand	Supercomputing management study, charging regimes.
Coopers and Lybrand	Consultancy extension for strategic assignments consultancy service.
Ernst and Young	Relationship between agencies and businesses.
KPMG	VAT services.
KPMG	Speaker for managing change workshop.
KPMG	Study of fees and charges used by research councils for contracts.
KPMG	Trading fund asset management.
KPMG	Developing personal review systems.
Price Waterhouse	Core performance profiles for grades 5-7 repeat consortium project.
Price Waterhouse	Objective setting in personal review.
Price Waterhouse	Charterline (project planning, management and evaluation.
Touche Ross	Review of financial information systems.

1993-1994 to date

Accountancy firm	*Assignment title*
Andersen Consulting	Charter Mark Assessment
Baker Tilly	Advice on commercial accounting systems
Coopers and Lybrand	Supercomputing Management Study—Structural Options
Elaine Brandt	Product Costing and Profitability Reporting
Elaine Brandt	Trading Fund Status
Ernst and Young	Internal Audit Market Test
Ernst and Young	Development Study to plan the production of Version II of Information Technology Infrastructure Library
Ernst and Young	Consultancy support for production of guidelines on business process redesign in the public sector
Ernst and Young	Study on the future of Government Telecommunications Network/Metropolitan Service
Ernst and Young	Case studies on Programme Management
KPMG	Welfare Market Test
KPMG	Training Market Test
KPMG	GIS Market Test
KPMG	Charging Model Study
KPMG	Navy Support Command Study (undertaken by CCTA on behalf of the Ministry of Defence)
KPMG	Financial Strategy for CCTA
KPMG	Financial Systems Replacement
KPMG	Review of Debtors
Price Waterhouse	Senior Open Structure Core Criteria Project
Price Waterhouse	Charterline (System Development)

Accountancy firm	*Assignment title*
Price Waterhouse	Charterline (Selection of pilot region media and communications, regional seminars, data collection, acceptance testing, financial modelling)
Touche Ross	CCTA Risk Analysis Management Methodology Training and Support (Computer System Security)
Touche Ross	Government Telecommunications Network (Long Distance) Outsourcing Project
Touche Ross	Case Studies on Porgramme Management
Touche Ross	CCTA Risk Analysis Management Methodology Training and Support (Software Support Project)

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Science and Engineering Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current members of the Science and Engineering Research Council are as follows:

Sir Mark Richmond, FRS *(Chairman)*
Dr. A. E. Hughes *(Acting Chief Executive)*
Professor P. G. Burke, CBE FRS
Dr. G. W. Robinson
Mr. D. A. Davis
Professor A. Donnachie
Dr. G. H. Fairtlough, CBE
Dr. K. W. Gray, CBE
Professor R. E. Hester
Sir Gordon Higginson, FEng
Professor S. D. Iversen
Dr. A. Ledwith
Professor J. S. Mason
Professor Sir D. E. N. Davies, CBE FEng FRS
Professor J. T. Stuart, FRS
Professor J. O. Thomas, CBE FRS
Professor D. J. Wallace, FRS
Professor A. W. Wolfendale, FRS
Professor R. E. Smallman, CBE FEng FRS
Mr. J. Speirs

Rented Accommodation

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to extend the scope of the citizens charter to cover the quality and safety of public sector and private sector rented accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: From 1 April 1994, local authority tenants in England will enjoy new citizens charter rights to have repairs carried out and a right to be compensated for certain improvements they have made when their tenancy expires. Also from 1 April, tenants will have the statutory right to manage their homes, which with the extension of the council tenants charter to housing management, will raise the standards of council housing management. Comparable arrangements will come into effect in Scotland—subject to the separate consultation exercise being carried out by the Scottish Office—Wales and Northern Ireland.

These will be set out in an updated council tenants charter. Similar rights to repair and compensation will be introduced for housing association tenants through a revised tenants' guarantee. Where building work is involved in both private and public sectors, reasonable provision for health and safety is ensured through the building regulations.

The citizens charter does not extend to private landlords, but codes of practice on the management of residential property in the private sector are being prepared by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Association of Residential Housing Managers.

Administration

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will provide a substantive answer to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West for answer on 16 December concerning the administrative expenditure of his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have replied to the hon. Member today.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total expenditure by his Department on administration in 1992-93; what is the estimated outturn for expenditure by his Department on administration for 1993-94 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 1992-93 prices; and what is his estimate for expenditure on administration by his Department for 1994-95 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: The final outturn for the recurrent costs of running the Office of Public Service and Science in 1992-93 is £26·490 million. The estimated outturn for 1993-94 is (i) £59·044 million in cash terms and (ii) £57·185 million in real terms. My Department's planned running cost expenditure for 1994-95 will be published in March 1994 in the Cabinet Office Departmental report. I expect this expenditure will be about £65 million in cash terms—£60 million in real terms.

The increase in cash expenditure between 1992-93 and 1993-94, estimated, is attributable mainly to the transfer to OPSS of provision for the Government centre for information systems from the Treasury, citizens charter and the Science and Technology Secretariat from the Cabinet Office and science branch from the then Department of Education and Science.

The increase in expenditure between 1993-94, estimated, and plans for 1994-95 is attributable mainly to the cost of relocating the Government Centre for Information Systems to Norwich, and increased spending on the European fast stream programme. Provision for future years may change if a rationalisation of functions, currently under consideration, between the Cabinet Office: other services vote, class XIX, vote 1 and the Office of Public Service and Science vote, class XVIII, vote 1 is implemented.

EDUCATION

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue money has been spent by city technology colleges each year since the first CTC opened; and how many pupils attended a CTC in each of those years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Total spending on city technology colleges by the Department since the first CTC opened, and the number of pupils on roll in CTCs each year, are shown in the following tables.

DFE expenditure

£ million

Financial year	*Capital cash*	*Revenue cash*	*Total cash*
[1]1988-89	9·0	0·4	9·4
1989-90	23·9	2·5	26·4
1990-91	43·4	9·0	52·4
1991-92	30·0	23·3	53·3
1992-93	13·3	35·4	48·7

[1] Figures from 12 September 1988, ie the date of the opening of the first CTC.

Start-up costs and allowances for the diseconomies associated with the build-up of pupil numbers are included in the revenue figures.

Numbers of pupils on roll at city technology colleges

Academic year	*Numbers*
1988-89	180
1989-90	766
1990-91	3,429
1991-92	7,789
1992-93	9,973

Special Needs

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many appeals are currently with his Department in respect of children who have been statemented by Lewisham local education authority; how many statements have been issued; and how many children have been made the subject of formal assessment by Lewisham local education authority for each year since 1986;

(2) how many children have been (i) statemented and (ii) formally assessed by Lewisham local education authority in each year since 1986, whose special need is as a result of diagnosis of dyslexia;

(3) how many appeals from Lewisham local education authority relating to dyslexia are being dealt with by his Department.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently dealing with two appeals in respect of children with special educational needs from Lewisham local education authority. One of these concerns a child with specific learning difficulties, and both are in respect of children who have been made the subject of a statement.

Information on the number of formal assessments and statements made by Lewisham LEA, for the calendar years 1991, the first full year of the authority's existence, and 1992 is shown in the table below. Information for the 1993 calendar year is still being collated, and is not yet available.

Statements of special educational needs Lewisham LEA

	Calendar year	
	1991	*1992*
Children for whom a statement was made for the first time	55	322
Children assessed for whom no statement was issued	0	6
Total	55	328

Information on pupils who have been made the subject of a formal assessment or a statement is not categorised by disability.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many formal assessments are currently being undertaken by Lewisham local education authority; what lengths of time each stage of the assessment has taken so far; and whether the time taken exceeded the current legislative maximum time for each stage.

Mr. Forth: The Lewisham local education authority, LEA, has told my officials that it is currently undertaking 163 formal assessments. Information about the length of time taken for each stage of assessment is not available centrally. There is at present no statutory maximum time for making a formal assessment, or for the various stages of an assessment. However, subject to Parliament's approval, regulations made under the Education Act 1993 will set statutory time limits for the making of assessments and statements, with effect from the autumn of this year.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many appeals have been submitted to his Department from within Lewisham local education authority since 1986; what length of time each has been with his Department; and in which cases that time has exceeded the current legislative maximum time for such appeals.

Mr. Forth: Since 1 April 1990, the Department has received a total of four appeals under the 1981 Act from within Lewisham local education authority, LEA. The table below provides information on the length of time each of these appeals has been with the Department. Information is not available on appeals received from within Lewisham LEA prior to 1 April 1990.

Appeal	*Date Received*	*Date Resolved*
A	[1]—	[1]—
B	23/3/92	2/12/92
C	15/9/93	[2]—
D	19/7/93	[2]—

[1] Information not available.

[2] Appeal not yet resolved.

There is no statutory maximum time for resolving appeals under the 1981 Act. However, the Department is currently consulting upon draft regulations and rules of procedure which will, subject to Parliament's approval, govern the operation of the new special educational needs tribunal, to be established under the 1993 Education Act. The tribunal will set time targets for the various stages of an appeal. These will be set out in the tribunal's guide for parents. Performance will be assessed in the tribunal's annual report.

Parents Charter

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give a breakdown of the cost of producing and distributing the revised parents charter to every household in the country specifying the cost of *(a)* design and printing, *(b)* translation and printing in ethnic minority languages, *(c)* recording of audio cassette versions and *(d)* distributing a copy to every home.

Mr. Robin Squire: The costs of the revised parents charter can be only estimated as its production has not been completed. The cost of the design and printing is estimated at £1,600,000. The cost of translating and printing the charter in ethnic minority languages is expected to be some

£80,000. No decision has been taken on whether to produce the charter in an audio cassette version. The cost of distributing 20 million copies of the booklet is estimated at some £500,000.

School Holidays

Mr. Dalls: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the pattern of school holidays in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. This is a matter for the LEA in the case of county, voluntary controlled and maintained special schools, and for the governing body in voluntary aided, special agreement and grant-maintained schools.

Capital Grant Bids

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list each bid for capital grants made by both operational and approved grant-maintained schools in Essex by financial year; and if he will give for each school the purpose of their bids and the value of the allocation made in relation to each bid.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

St. Thomas's High School

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what undertakings have been given to St. Thomas's high school, Exeter, in relation to funding under the technology college initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not received an application for technology college status from St. Thomas's high school. No undertakings have been given by the Department to the school in relation to funding under the technology college initiative.

Inner-City School Funding (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations his Department has received about funding inner-city schools in Liverpool.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has received three representations about the funding of inner-city schools in Liverpool. Two representations have been received from the same source, but through different channels, about proposed changes to the LEA's local management of schools funding formula, on which it has recently consulted. The third representation related to the possibility of additional funding for technical resources for an inner-city secondary school. I discussed this particular school with his grace, the Archbishop of Liverpool, when I visited Merseyside on 15 February 1994.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Serbia and Montenegro

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes he has made to the open general supply licence to Serbia and Montenegro which came into force on 26 November 1992; and if he will place a copy of the licence in the Library.

Mr. Needham: Since my reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), 7 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *159*, two companies have been added to the list of 36 persons "connected with Serbia and Montenegro" attached to the open general supply licence—authorised recipients, Serbia and Montenegro. The revised licence came into force on 9 July 1993. I will arrange for a further copy of the licence to be placed in the Library of the House.

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if British Nuclear Fuels sought permission from his Department, or had discussions with his Department, prior to establishing *(a)* BNFL Insurance Ltd. and *(b)* BNFL Indemnity Ltd. in Guernsey in 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The establishment of BNFL Insurance Ltd. was a management matter for BNFL.

In December 1992, in accordance with section 19(1) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, my Department, with the consent of the Treasury, approved BNFL's arrangements to insure its £20 million statutory liability under that Act with BNFL Indemnity Ltd. in Guernsey.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many visits abroad the Minister for Trade made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Needham: During 1993 I made 14 visits abroad. The visits and their purposes are set out below together with an estimate of the costs which covers travel and subsistence for me and those who accompanied me:

Cost	*Purpose/Place*
£11,034·78	Trade promotion, Japan.
£5,036·00	Trade promotion, Dubai and Doha.
£12,114·00	Trade promotion, Korea and Hong Kong.
£943·60	Internal Market Council, Denmark.
£13,900·38	Trade promotion, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.
£1,797·70	Trade promotion, Turkey.
£784·40	Trade promotion, Czech and Slovak Republics.
£12,777·00	Trade promotion, Japan and Malaysia.
£6,340·50	Trade promotion, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.
£11,171·60	Trade promotion, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.
£801·66	Internal Market Council, Luxembourg.
£903·56	Trade promotion, Republic of Ireland.
£8,007·15	Trade promotion, India.
£13,545·00	Trade promotion, China, Hong Kong and Indonesia.

Power Stations

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effects that the agreement with the Office of Electricity Regulation by PowerGen and National Power to use their reasonable endeavours to sell or dispose of 3,000 to 4,000 MW of coal-fired plant will have on the market for coal in the United Kingdom and the economic justification of increased use of gas as a fuel for power stations.

Mr. Eggar: The undertakings which the Director General of Electricity Supply has received from National Power and from PowerGen relate in total to the possible disposal of about 6,000 MW of coal or oil-fired generating plant.

It will be for purchasers of coal-fired plant to determine how that plant should operate and the amount of coal to be used.

The choice of fuel for power stations is a commercial decision for the generating companies concerned.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effects the proposed reductions in the electricity supply voltage will have on the power factor correction requirements of heavy inductive loads.

Mr. Eggar: No effects are currently anticipated for equipment connected to the public electricity supply system.

Voltage Reductions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will produce figures that show, for a given power consumption, the effects that the proposed voltage reductions will have on electricity charges made to industry based on *(a)* the reactive power charge, *(b)* the peak load charge and *(c)* the unit charge per KVAh.

Mr. Eggar: I do not anticipate that the proposed voltage reductions will have any significant effects on electricity charges made to industry.

British Coal (Privatisation)

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if it is his intention to name those involved in the bidding process during the privatisation of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar: No decision has been made on this issue.

Mr. Asil Nadir

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has called for papers from the trustees in bankruptcy relating to the case of Mr. Asil Nadir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My officials have received from the Official Receiver a document prepared by the trustees concerning Mr. Nadir's conduct in the bankruptcy proceedings. That document is being considered.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received from the trustees in bankruptcy in the case of Mr. Asil Nadir.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Insurance Premiums

Ms Harman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the link between levels of crime and levels of insurance premiums.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The cost of insurance is based on a number of factors, including the incidence of crime-related claims in certain sectors of the market.

Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* There is no central record containing the information requested.

Departmental Reorganisation

Dr. Hampson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of Mr. Ray Reardon's essay on the reorganisation of the DTI.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The Library of the House has confirmed that a copy is on order.

Biwater Group

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will describe the assistance given to the Biwater Group in connection with overseas contracts since 1983, listing the value, locations and nature of the projects involved and the nature of the tendering process for each;

(2) what involvement his Department had with the Malaysian rural water supply schemes undertaken by Biwater;

(3) what assistance Her Majesty's Government have given to the Biwater Group in securing overseas contracts since 1983.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member on 17 February, *Official Report,* column *937* and the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 14 February, *Official Report,* column *568* .

In addition, the DTI has awarded Biwater a number of grants under the overseas projects fund to assist with the pre-contractual costs of pursuing overseas contracts. Details of these grants are commercially confidential. Where appropriate, in accordance with scheme rules, grants are repaid.

Overseas Projects Board

Mr. Burden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the membership of the Overseas Projects Board for each year since 1983, giving the names, occupation and employing firms of each of the members, together with their terms of office;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report,* column *323* when the Overseas Projects Board was established.

Mr. Needham *[holding answers 16 February 1994]:* The Overseas Projects Board was established in 1977. Listed in a table are the names of the board members for each year since 1983 together with their occupations and employing firms, and their terms of service or, for current members, their appointment dates. That table has been placed in the Library.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Rented Homes

Mr. Rendel: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how many homes let to tenants by the Church Commissioners contain untreated amosite.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners are not aware of any instance where amosite has been discovered in their residential property. However, it was used extensively in the building trade as heating insulation from circa 1930 to circa 1970, although it is not toxic when in a stable condition.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, (1) how many complaints were *(a)* lodged and *(b)* substantiated against the Church Commissioners in their capacity as landlords in each year between 1983 and 1993;

(2) which body is responsible for investigating complaints against the Church Commissioners in their capacity as landlords.

Mr. Alison: There is no specific body responsible for investigating complaints against the Church Commissioners or other private landlords. The commissioners' tenants, in common with others, may have recourse to the local authority's environmental health officer, or to the courts, as appropriate. The commissioners and their managing agents receive complaints from time to time and these are dealt with as the circumstances require.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Fine Art Commission.

Mr. Sproat: The current membership of the Royal Fine Art Commission are as follows:

Lord St. John Fawsley (Chairman)
David Carter
Sir Phillip Dowson
Mark Girouard
The Duke of Grafton
Donald Hamilton-Fraser
Michael Hopkins
Stuart Lipton
Richard MacCormac
Professor Margaret MacKeith
Hal Moggridge
Diane Nutting
Sir Phillip Powell
Professor John Steer
James Sutherland
Wendy Taylor
Michael Whitfield
John Winter.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of Geffrye museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Geffrye museum are:

The Baroness Brigstoke (Chairman)
Michael Foster Esq.
Mrs. Daphne Gould OBE
John Jacob Esq.
Robert Marshall-Andrews Esq. QC
Peter Metcalfe Esq.
John Morley Esq.
Antony Moss Esq.
Michael Oliver Esq.
Colin Smith Esq.
Frank Smith Esq.
Lady Marina Vaizey.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Victoria and Albert museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum are:

Lord Armstrong of Ilminster GCB CVO (Chairman)
Rt. Hon. Lord Barnett JP
Sir Michael Butler GCMG
Miss Nina Campbell
Sir Clifford Chetwood
The Viscountess Cobham DL
Edward G. J. Dewe Esq
Rodney Fitch Esq CBE
Prof. Christopher J. Frayling MA PhD
Ronnie Gorlin Esq
Lady Pamela Harlech
Sir Terence Heiser GCB
Sir Nevil Macready CBE MA
Miss Anna Plowden
Prof. Michael Podro PhD MA FBA
Maurice Saatchi Esq
Prof. John Steer MA DLitt

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the advisory committee on the Government art collection.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the advisory committee on the Government art collection are:

Mr. John Tusa (Chairman)
Mr. Neil MacGregor
Mr. Nicholas Serota
Dr. Charles Saumarez-Smith
Dr. Wendy Baron (all appointed ex-officio)
Mr. Richard Shone
Mr. Andrew Graham-Dixon

Building Classification

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many buildings are classified by his Department in categories *(a)* I, *(b)* II and *(c)* III; how many in each category fulfil no present function; and how many are falling down.

Mr. Brooke: The total number of list entries recorded by my Department in December 1993 and the number of buildings estimated to be at risk in the 1992 English Heritage sample survey of buildings at risk are as follows:

	Total list entries	*Listed buildings at risk*
List grade I*	6,000	700
List grade II	18,000	1,700
List grade III	419,000	34,000

Figures for the number of vacant properties by list grade are not available. However, based on a sample of 25 per cent. of the listed buildings stock, English Heritage estimates that approximately 28,000 of those listed buildings which can be occupied are vacant at present.

Sports Council

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the timetable for the replacement of the Director General of the Sports Council; and when it is expected that the post will be *(a)* advertised and *(b)* filled.

Mr. Brooke: Under its royal charter, the Sports Council is responsible for the appointment of a director general, subject to my approval. I understand that the council has decided to suspend the selection process until decisions have been taken on the future structure of the council.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anguilla

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Governor of Anguilla regarding the international obligations of Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Ministers and officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are in close and regular contact with the governor concerning our international obligations and the implications these have for Anguilla, as they are with the governors of all the dependent territories.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when her Majesty's Government intend to reinstate the offshore banking regime in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Anguilla has an extant offshore banking sector. Her Majesty's Government provide considerable assistance towards developing the sector's regulatory framework and expertise.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what stake Her Majesty's Government have acquired in the privatisation of the Anguilla Electricity Corporation; and how much that acquisition cost.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government hold no shares in the Anguilla Electricity Corporation.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether senior customs officials in Anguilla are required to declare that they have businesses in the country.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The terms and conditions of employment for all public employees in Anguilla include a requirement to declare private business interests.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty will be staying at the governor's mansion when she visits Anguilla; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty did not stay at the governor's residence during her recent visit to Anguilla. The residence is currently undergoing refurbishment and is not suitable for accommodating guests overnight.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why offshore banks and financial services in Anguilla were closed down by Her Majesty's Government when they took over offshore financial services.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A number of overseas financial institutions previously registered with Anguilla's offshore sector had their licence revoked in the past, due to activities incompatible with the provisions of that licence.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when is the latest date on which a general election can be held in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the present constitution in Anguilla, a general election must be called every five years, with a maximum permissible extension of two months beyond the date of the first sitting of the House of Assemby after the previous election. The present sitting of the Assembly commenced on 3 April 1989, following the election in February that year. The next election must therefore take place no later than 3 June 1994.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Anguilla Parliament has no parliament building; and what plans there are to build one.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agreement for the construction of separate accommodation for Anguilla's House of Assembly features in the country policy plan, CPP, signed between the Government of Anguilla and ourselves in August 1993. The relevant section of the CPP calls for the drawing up of detailed plans for the building in the financial year 1994-95, with construction scheduled to commence the following year.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many offshore banks and insurance companies that had offices in Anguilla have been closed down since Her Majesty's Government took control of offshore financial services; and if he will list them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The report of Mr. Rodney Gallagher, Coopers and Lybrand, on the survey of offshore finance sectors in the Caribbean dependent territories, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 19 January 1990, details on page 10, paragraphs 16 and 17, the number of banks and insurance companies in Anguilla prior to the offshore sector becoming a reserved power of the Governor.

At the beginning of 1994, three offshore banking licences had been issued to:

Barclays Bank Plc
Hansa Bank and Trust Company
Maruya Bank and Trust Company.

At the same date, there was one insurance company licensed for offshore business, Physicians Excess Insurance Company Ltd.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the review of the Anguillan Companies Act; and when new legislation will be introduced to replace the Act.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The review of the Companies Act forms part of the larger exercise reviewing offshore finance legislation. The package of legislation was drafted by the Anguilla Financial Services Association and was recently forwarded to the United Kingdom for scrutiny by a British QC.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the appointment of the son of one of the Anguilla Government Ministers to the post of Chief Magistrate and Acting Judge; what representations the Governor has received about the age and experience of the new Chief Magistrate; and from whom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The appointment of the Acting Magistrate and Registrar in Anguilla falls within the reserved powers of the governor. It was a decision taken on the advice of the Attorney-General of Anguilla and has been endorsed by the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the contracts for auditing the accounts of the Government of Anguilla were put out to competitive tender.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The award of the contract to audit the accounts of the Government of Anguilla was made following the standard Overseas Development Administration tender procedure. The Dependent Territories Regional Secretariat offers close support to the Government of Anguilla in audit matters. The Financial Secretary of the Government of Anguilla will be attending the United Kingdom Government Auditors Conference, to be hosted by Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to appoint a permanent judge in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. Anguilla is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. The Chief Justice has indicated that he intends to appoint a judge jointly for Anguilla and Montserrat.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what youth or community centres exist in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This is a matter for the Government of Anguilla. However I understand that most churches in Anguilla have related youth and community centre facilities and that there are active scout and guide groups on the island. Part of the grounds at Government house forms a designated campsite for scouts and guides.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to prohibit senior customs officials from owning businesses in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Such a policy already exists.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the delays in the processing by customs officials of the goods of Anguillan business people.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The operation of customs in Anguilla is the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance of the Government of Anguilla. Specific cases can be taken up direct with that Ministry.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given to the imminence of a general election in Anguilla when the decision as to the timing of Her Majesty's visit was taken.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The timing of the visit of Her Majesty the Queen to the Caribbean, Latin American countries and Bermuda in the spring of 1994 was not connected in any way with any political events.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the terms of reference of the review of offshore financial services in Anguilla; what were its recommendations; which ones were accepted by Her Majesty's Government; and who carried out the review.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The review was carried out by Mr. Rodney Gallagher of Coopers and Lybrand. His report, which covered all the dependent territories in the Caribbean, was ordered to be printed as an HMSO publication by the House of Commons in January 1990. A copy was sent to the hon. Member by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in December 1993.

India

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the situation in the Punjab, India, and of the recent raids on the Aj Di Awaz newspaper and arrests of its staff; and what representations he is making on the matter.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The dramatic decrease in deaths recently shows that the situation in Punjab has improved. The increasingly high turnout at elections during the last 18 months is a clear indication that the majority of people there have rejected violence.

Her Majesty's high commission in New Delhi has informed us that eight people were arrested during the raid on the Aj Di Awaz newspaper offices. All eight appeared before a magistrate in January, and are being detained under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act.

Knighthoods (Caribbean)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the practice for residents of Caribbean countries receiving knighthoods to be dubbed in those countries; and on what dates in the last 10 years this has been done.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The honour of knighthood is normally conferred by the bestowal of the accolade, the act of dubbing, and investiture. This ceremony can be performed only by the Queen, or by some other person, usually a member of the royal family or a governor-general, specially authorised by Her Majesty.

Details of precisely when and where residents of the Caribbean were invested with the honour of knighthood over the past 10 years are not readily available and to compile this information would involve disproportionate cost.

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress made towards fulfilment of the NATO ultimatum on Sarajevo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Muslim and Bosnian-Serb forces have begun to hand over heavy equipment or withdraw it outside Sarajevo exclusion zone. The ceasefire continues to hold. UNPROFOR continues to monitor compliance.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to urge that United Nations and NATO policy towards the relief of Sarajevo is confined to that city and will not involve military action in the rest of Bosnian-Serb-controlled Bosnia-Herzegovina or against Serbia itself.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN-NATO decision relates specifically to a 20 km radius around Sarajevo, excluding a 2 km zone around Pale.

Embassies and High Commissions

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on accommodation, office facilities, communications and other facilities for Ministry of Defence personnel in post in embassies and high commissions in each of the past four financial years.

Mr. Goodlad: I regret that expenditure incurred by the FCO on accommodation, office facilities, communications and other facilities on behalf of Ministry of Defence personnel cannot at present be identified without incurring disproportionate cost.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the citizenship status of non-Chinese ethnic minority residents in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I have received a number of such representations. These have included letters from hon. Members and representations from Hong Kong's Legislative Council—particularly its sub-committee on nationality.

Parliament looked carefully at the position of the non-Chinese ethnic community in considering the passage of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990. The conclusion drawn was that the future of these people was adequately safeguarded.

The joint declaration provides for those who are permanent residents of Hong Kong to continue to enjoy right of abode there after July 1997. But if members of the non-Chinese ethnic communities with solely British nationality ever came under pressure to leave Hong Kong and had nowhere else to go, we have made it plain that the Government of the day would be expected to consider with particular sympathy any request from such people for admission to the United Kingdom.

We looked again at the provisions in place following representations made in 1993 by the Legislative Council and the Hong Kong Government. We saw no reason to change its established policy. This remains our view.

Intelligence Services Bill

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the Intelligence Services Bill *[Lords]*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I am aware that reports on the Intelligence Services Bill *[Lords]* have been prepared and circulated by Liberty and by the Religious Society of Friends—Quakers—committee on concern for truth and integrity in public affairs.

Bosnian Refugees

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications for family reunion are outstanding for Bosnians now resident in Britain outside the quota system; and what is the average time taken to consider these visa applications.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There is no British mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Statistics on visa applications made by Bosnians at other overseas posts are not centrally recorded according to nationality or to category of application. This information could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nigeria

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Nigeria regarding human and civil rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble friend the Minister for Overseas Development met the Nigerian Foreign Minister on 6 February in Abidjan. She reaffirmed our strong desire to see a return to civilian democratic rule, unhindered by the military in Nigeria.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Nigeria.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The cancellation of the June elections and the military takeover on 17 November in Nigeria last year were steps backward, for Nigeria and for Africa as a whole. However, we place great value on our relationship with Nigeria and we continue to take every opportunity to encourage the Government to take concrete steps towards the restoration of democracy.

German Unification

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the progress of German unification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: An assessment of the progress of German unification is essentially a German domestic matter.

I should, however, like to say that German unification is something which we welcome. It has meant the end of over 40 years of division in Europe. We are happy to work together with the new united Germany as an ally and partner in pursuit of a more stable and prosperous Europe.

I am especially glad that with our encouragement some 160 British firms are represented in Berlin and in eastern Germany, making Britain one of the leading foreign investors there. This represents an important contribution to the process of unification.

PRIME MINISTER

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 17 December, *Official Report*, column 958, what reply has been sent to the Members of the United States Congress, Japanese Diet and hon. and right hon. Members on their appeal for a review and public inquiry on THORP; and on what date.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside replied to right hon. and hon. Members on 16 February.

Royal Family (Education)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the education and upbringing of those in line to the throne.

The Prime Minister: No. This has traditionally been regarded as a matter for the royal family.

International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Prime Minister if he will ask the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic to appoint a High Court inspector to investigate International Investments Ltd., Gibraltar—in liquidation—and its associated companies in the Irish Republic during their next meeting.

The Prime Minister: No. The Royal Ulster Constabulary is, however, carrying out investigations into the affairs of International Investments Ltd., with the assistance of the authorities in the Republic of Ireland.

Government Leader

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister is authorised in the event of his temporary incapacity through injury of illness, to head the Government in the immediate period following such incapacity and before Her Majesty the Queen is able to make a temporary appointment of a chief Minister.

The Prime Minister: The arrangements made would depend on the circumstances at the time.

Highfield Hospital

Mr. Burden: To ask the Prime Minister what response he has made to the letters sent to him by the Save Highfield Hospital Campaign on 20 November 1993 and 31 January 1994 and to the petition on Highfield hospital which was handed in to 10 Downing street on 20 November 1993; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has replied on my behalf.

Devon and Cornwall

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list the results of the Government's policies in Devon and Cornwall since 1983; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will list, by Government Department, the principal aid given to Devon and Cornwall in each year since 1983.

The Prime Minister: Since 1983, the Department of Trade and Industry policy and programmes have committed more than £71·4 million in grants and loans to industry and commerce in Devon and Cornwall. This has created or safeguarded more than 21,000 jobs spread across 3,363 companies.

In addition, the Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau has received over £4·25 million to assist in the attraction of inward investment to the two counties. Overseas investment in the area was more than £164 million.

Government policies of low inflation, low interest rates and less regulation provide the foundation for growth across the country.

Public Appointments

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *972*, if he will give those details on the number of public appointments made by Ministers or by the Crown or nominations by Ministers that can be compiled without incurring disproportionate cost.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Hazel Grove on 4 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *972*.

Design Council

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library a copy of the representations that he has received from Mr. Ivor Owen, the former director-general of the Design Council, about the British railway manufacturing industry, together with a copy of his reply to Mr. Owen.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, I have received no such letter.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the official gifts he has received since November 1990.

The Prime Minister: No.

Council of Europe

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how many conventions have been agreed by the Council of Europe since 1964; and how many have been acceded to by Her Majesty's Government in full or in part.

The Prime Minister: Seventy-two conventions have been agreed by the Council of Europe since—and including—1964. The Government have acceded to 34 of these and signed, but not yet ratified, a further seven.

Iraq

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he is having with President Clinton and President Mitterrand about the increase in malnutrition-related marasmus and other diseases in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *153*. We are also in regular touch with France over Iraq, including the humanitarian situation.

Departmental Accounting Officers

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override a Department's accounting officer's objections.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* The issue of such an instruction is entirely a matter for the Minister and accounting officer concerned. Therefore, no central records are maintained.

Pergau Project

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister when he was first informed that the Foreign Secretary intended to issue a direction to the accounting officer in respect of the Pergau project.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* In February 1991.

Malaysia

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions Tan Sri Arumugam, joint managing director, GEC-Malaysia, has visited his office in the past three years; and if he will list the occasions.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* Once, in 1992, on the occasion of an official dinner for the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

President Yeltsin

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister what views he received from President Yeltsin on the NATO ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs during his discussion with him on Tuesday 15 February; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* I described the specific terms of the North Atlantic Council's response to the United Nations Secretary General's request for NATO assistance at Sarajevo. I agreed with President Yeltsin that our objectives were the same. Both the United Kingdom and Russia wanted to see an effective ceasefire implemented in Sarajevo, with heavy weapons brought under United Nations control. We both strongly supported the negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

We discussed President Yeltsin's decision to send a personal emissary to Belgrade. He told me that he was considering sending additional Russian troops to assist UNPROFOR in maintaining control over heavy weapons. I welcomed this, and agreed with President Yeltsin that it was important for Russia and her western partners in the European Union and the United States to use their channels of influence to promote a ceasefire in Sarajevo and an overall settlement. President Yeltsin stressed that Russia wished to be a full participant in this process, and I welcome his Government's announcement on 17 February that the additional forces will be made available to UNPROFOR.

Regional Offices

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Prime Minister which of Her Majesty's Government's Departments have been incorporated into integrated regional offices since 1992.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* New Government offices for the regions will come into being in April, combining the existing regional offices of the Departments of the Environment, of Employment, of Trade and Industry and of Transport.

HEALTH

Nurses and Carers

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the ratio of trained nurses to carers working in *(a)* London's and *(b)* England's national health service hospitals in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The available information for 1992-93 is shown in the table.

The number of in-patients is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of ordinary admissions, which is the term used for in-patient consultant episodes.

	Ordinary admissions, (includes midwifery admissions)	*Nursing and midwifery staff (WTE)*
London	1,158,449	61,570
England	7,829,403	378,790

Notes:

Admission figures are for the year 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993.

Nursing figures are taken at 30 September 1992 and are for nursing and midwifery, including traditional learners but exclude Project 2000 nursing students who are supernumerary, and those nurses who have transferred to senior management terms and who cannot be identified separately from other senior managers.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of net NHS current expenditure on primary health care excluding hospital and community health service expenditure for each year since 1973-74; and what was the net expenditure each year on (i) administration including executive council, family practitioner committee or family health service authority administration and general practitioner practice administration, (ii) prescription items and (iii) other items including the remuneration of primary health care professionals, expressed in 1993-94 prices adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* changes in input unit costs.

Mr. Sackville: Primary health care consists of the community health and family health services. The information available, excluding expenditure on the community health services, is shown in the table. Indices are not available to adjust drugs bill, other FHS, and family health services authorities' expenditure for changes in input unit costs.

Family health services net expenditure
England

£ million

Year	[1] *Family health services expenditure*	[2] *Drugs bill expenditure*	[3] *Drugs bill expenditure at 1993-94 prices*	[4] *Other family health services expenditure*	[3] *Other family health services expenditure at 1993-94 prices*	[5] *FHSA administrative expenditure*	[3] *FHSA administrative expenditure at 1993-94 prices*
1973-74	522	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	83
1974-75	630	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1975-76	854	277	1,141	577	2,371	n/a	n/a
1976-77	993	361	1,308	632	2,291	n/a	n/a

Year	[1]Family health services expenditure	[2]Drugs bill expenditure	[3]Drugs bill expenditure at 1993-94 prices	[4]Other family health services expenditure	[3]Other family health services expenditure at 1993-94 prices	[5]FHSA administrative expenditure	[3]FHSA administrative expenditure at 1993-94 prices
1977-78	1,123	461	1,470	662	2,111	n/a	n/a
1978-79	1,329	554	1,589	775	2,224	n/a	n/a
1979-80	1,549	633	1,555	916	2,251	n/a	n/a
1980-81	1,923	766	1,592	1,157	2,403	n/a	n/a
1981-82	2,208	876	1,660	1,331	2,522	n/a	n/a
1982-83	2,547	1,009	1,784	1,538	2,719	n/a	n/a
1983-84	2,730	1,130	1,909	1,600	2,704	n/a	n/a
1984-85	3,010	1,192	1,917	1,818	2,925	n/a	n/a
1985-86	3,188	1,275	1,943	1,914	2,917	45	69
1986-87	3,419	1,378	2,040	2,041	3,022	47	69
1987-88	3,802	1,536	2,160	2,265	3,185	49	69
1988-89	4,293	1,744	2,298	2,549	3,358	55	72
1989-90	4,531	1,942	2,393	2,589	3,189	67	82
1990-91	5,156	2,080	2,371	3,076	3,507	104	118
1991-92	5,944	2,317	2,484	3,627	3,889	136	146
1992-93	6,593	2,641	2,727	3,952	4,081	162	167

[1] Net expenditure, after taking account of patient charges and other receipts, on the General Medical, General Dental, General Ophthalmic and Pharmaceutical Services. Excludes administrative costs of FHSAs and other bodies and GP Fundholders budgets for purchasing secondary care services. Information is based on the relevant year's Appropriation Account.

[2] Represents the cost of items prescribed by GPs. Dispensing fees are not included. Costs are not separately identifiable in 1973-74 and 1974-75.

[3] Converted to 1993-94 prices using GDP deflator.

[4] Balance of net FHS expenditure minus the cost of the drugs bill. Consists mainly of the cost of remuneration and practice expenses of FHS contractors.

[5] Net administrative expenditure of Family Health Services Authorities (known as Family Practitioner Committees before September 1990, and as Executive Councils before April 1974). The administrative functions of FHSAs and their predecessors have changed over time as their management responsibilities have been developed. Expenditure was not separately identifiable in the period 1974-75 to 1984-85. Excludes expenditure on national administrative bodies such as the Prescription Pricing Authority and the Dental Practice Board. Information is based on FHSAs' income and expenditure accounts.

Barnsley FSHA

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount, recipient and date of all the grants made by Barnsley family health services authority since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Detailed information is not held centrally. The information in the annual accounts of Barnsley family health services authority is shown in the table.

Year	Grants to general medical service trainers £	Grants to supervisors of ophthalmic optician trainees £	Practice teams and premises improvements—Revenue £	Practice teams and premises improvements—Capital £
1990-91	29,294	1,250	—[1]	[1]9,897
1991-92	30,935	750	0	216,699
1992-93	19,714	1,500	0	139,498

[1] In 1990-91 the expenditure was reported on a different basis to that in subsequent years i.e. as "improvement grants", not analysed between revenue and capital.

Source:

Barnsley Family Health Services Authority's annual accounts.

Consultants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state the value of consultancy contracts awarded by her Department each year since 1988, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure on fees and expenses for contracts awarded by the Department of Health paid under the general management consultancy budget for the financial years 1989-90 to 1992-93 was:

Financial year	Expenditure at current prices (£ million)	Expenditure at constant 1993-94 prices (£ million)
1989-90	4·870	5·999
1990-91	2·870	3·272
1991-92	2·806	3·008
1992-93	3·526	3·641

Prior to 1989-90 management consultants were funded from a joint health-social security budget and it is not possible to identify expenditure solely on health. Expenditure figures for the current 1993-94 year will not be available until after the end of the financial year. The

Department also employs specialist consultants, particularly on information technology projects, and other consultants on specific projects which are funded from other budgets.

NHS (Fraud)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of fraud against health service managers are currently pending.

Mr. Sackville: We do not routinely monitor the progress of fraud investigation in the national health service.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to surcharge national health service directors in respect of fraud or incompetence.

Mr. Sackville: We have no such plans.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue revised advice to NHS authorities and trusts on the action to be taken in cases of corruption and fraud.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance on action to be taken in the case of fraud is currently being routinely updated and will be issued in due course.

NHS Trading Undertakings

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Government's policy on the privatisation of national health service trading undertakings.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are committed to a publicly funded health service with national health service units, both trusts and directly managed units, firmly within the public sector. However, our policy is to encourage health service bodies to concentrate their management skills on the core activities of the NHS and to use their expertise, where possible, to seek better value for money and improved quality in the provision of non-core activities. If trading undertakings prove to be commercially viable, we would expect that they would ultimately become independent businesses.

Geriatric Care

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her estimate of the cost of geriatric care in *(a)* 2004 and *(b)* 2014;

(2) what is her estimate of the percentage increase in the cost of geriatric health care between *(a)* 1980 and 1990, *(b)* 1990 and 2000 and *(c)* 2000 and 2010.

Mr. Bowis: Hospital and community health service spending on non-acute services for elderly people between 1980-81 and 1990-91 increased by 21 per cent. in real terms, as measured by the gross domestic product deflator. The costs of future service provision will depend on a number of complex factors including social and demographic change, advances in medical technology and care skills, and the success of our long-term strategy for health promotion and sickness prevention in later life.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what way dental patients who are registered with dentists on the NHS are to be notified that if they do not have dental treatment over a two-year period, the obligations of the dentist towards that patient lapses; and if he will clarify this position.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no requirement for patients to be notified. Patients who register for national health service treatment with a dentist receive continuing care over a two-year period normally requiring their attendance at the dental surgery during that period, at which point the arrangement can be rolled on for a further two years. The dentist receives a monthly fee for every patient registered and many operate systems to recall patients.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the greatest distance or greatest journey time which the NHS in England regards as reasonable for a patient to have to travel in order to secure dental treatment on the NHS; and what guidance his Department has issued in order to ensure that such targets are achieved locally;

(2) what action she has taken to ensure that every citizen who wishes to receive dental treatment on the NHS can do so expeditiously and conveniently in every area; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dental treatment under the national health service is available throughout England. Patients who experience difficulty in obtaining treatment should contact their local family health services authority who will help them find treatment.

Private Health Care

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of the United Kingdom population is currently covered by private health care plans;

(2) what is her estimate of the current savings to the NHS budget as a result of patients covered by private health care plans.

Mr. Sackville: About 12 per cent. of the population are covered by private health care. It is for the individual to decide whether or not to seek private health care. The national health service will remain available to all on the basis of clinical need, not the ability to pay. It is not possible to quantify the saving to the NHS.

Adoption

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was allocated to funding post-adoption services for the current financial year, for 1991 and for 1985.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not held centrally.

Clothier Report

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional resources she will provide to the NHS for the discharge of the additional duties recommended by the Clothier report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinny: The recommendations contained in the Allitt inquiry report represent good practice, which we expect national health service authorities and trusts to follow within existing resources.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to monitor the incidence of tuberculosis; what are the current trends; and what variations appear in its distribution.

Mr. Sackville: The incidence of tuberculosis is monitored by examination of routinely obtained information and the results of special surveys. Deaths from and notifications of cases of tuberculosis are collated by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and published regularly. Special detailed surveys of tuberculosis notifications have been carried out at approximately five-yearly intervals in order to study the occurrence of the disease in population subgroups. The most recent survey, which is being conducted as a collaboration between the Public Health Laboratory Service, the British Thoracic Society and the Department of Health, will be reporting its results by the end of this year.

Variations in the incidence of tuberculosis are apparent between different age-sex groups, and in different ethnic groups. For instance, the incidence of tuberculosis increases with increasing age as a result of reactivation of infection acquired many years previously. In recent decades tuberculosis notifications have continued to decline. However, in the mid to late 1980s, in common with a number of other European countries, notifications stopped declining and small increases have been seen in most recent years.

Private Treatment

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received alleging that staff at certain hospitals are advising patients to pay for operations rather than wait for them; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Dental Decay

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of five-year-old children in England and Wales had dental decay *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* in 1993;

(2) if she will publish a table indicating for five-year-old children for *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available, the average number of teeth suffering from dental decay, analysed by region for England.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has commissioned the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct surveys of the dental health of children at 10-year intervals. The most recent survey was carried out in 1993 and the report will be published later this year. Copies of previous survey reports are available in the Library.

Information on dental decay among five-year-old children is available from surveys by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry. Copies of the latest published report, which relates to a survey conducted in 1989-90, are available in the Library.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the formula for compensating for loss of office as a consequence of re-organisation of the chairs of regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no plans to compensate the chairmen who will be standing down from 1 April.

Walsgrove Hospital Trust

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been spent by the Walsgrove hospital trust in Coventry on office accommodation re-organisation in the financial year 1992-93 and so far in the current financial year.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Walsgrave Hospital trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Robert Jordan, the chairman, for details.

Mental Health

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to heighten awareness among mental health professionals that people from culturally different communities have different mental health needs; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: It is already our policy to heighten awareness among mental health professionals by issuing publications, such as the "Health of the Nation, Mental Illness Key Area Handbook" and "Health of the Nation, Ethnicity and Health—A Guide for the National Health Service" and "Mental Health and Britain's Black Communities". The mental health task force is holding a series of regional conferences for black service users and health service professionals aimed at improving understanding by all of the mental health needs of black people and how they might be met. The Royal College of Psychiatrists has been funded by the Department to mount a conference on 1 March on "The Provision of Mental Health Services for Minority Ethnic Patients in Britain".

Cancer

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to undertake or sponsor research on the possible link between electromagnetic fields and cancer, especially in children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 9 February at column *325*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to encourage the enactment of a prudent avoidance policy with regard to electrical powerline work, which ensures that all future powerlines will be sited away from schools and houses until the possible link between electromagnetic fields and cancer is disproved; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Radiological Protection Board and Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment have considered this question and concluded that the available information does not establish that electromagnetic fields cause cancer. The significance of an epidemiological study depends, among other things, on the strength of the association, the presence of a dose-response relationship, supporting experimental evidence and a credible biological explanation. These tests for causality are not satisfied for the link between electromagnetic fields and cancer. On the basis of present evidence, the two bodies have not recommended the adoption of a policy of prudent avoidance. The position is being kept under review.

Private Medical Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the President of the Board of Trade following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on private medical services.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures exist to regulate the advertising by consultants within the private medical market; and what amendments she is considering to the regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under the Medical Act 1983 the General Medical Council has statutory responsibility for the regulation and registration of all doctors, including those offering private medical services. The GMC's "Blue Book"—"Professional Conduct and Discipline: Fitness to Practise" contains guidance to doctors on the advertising of medical services. Failure to abide by the council's guidance may call a doctor's professional conduct into question. The GMC keeps its policy on advertising under constant review, but we understand there are no plans to amend the guidance at present.

Community Care

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for *(a)* the shire counties and *(b)* metropolitan areas, the amount each district authority received in special transitional grants for care in the community for *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* 1994-95; and what was the percentage increase or decrease for 1994-95 in each case.

Mr. Bowis: The figures for individual local authorities will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much money was made available in 1993-94 for care in the community in the form of special transitional grant;

(2) how much money is available in the form of special transitional grant for care in the community in 1994-95;

(3) what is the percentage increase in the amount of money available for care in the community in the special transitional grant scheme for 1994-95 compared with 1993-94.

Mr. Bowis: A special transitional grant of £565·4 million was made available in 1993-94 to local authorities in England for their new community care responsibilities.

The grant will be £735·9 million in 1994-95, an increase of 30 per cent. on the 1993-94 figure. In addition, £538·6 million from the 1993-94 grant will be rolled into local authorities' 1994-95 baseline funding, making a total of over £1·2 billion available. These figures are in addition to the personal social services standard spending assessment, which contributes to the cost of community care as well as other social services areas of spending.

Children (Limb Defects)

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to investigate the significance of the reported clusters of children born with limb defects in coastal areas; and what advice is being issued to pregnant women in those areas.

Mr. Sackville: Investigations of suspected or reported clusters of limb reduction defects have been initiated by district health authorities, in concert with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. OPCS has, for the last 30 years, maintained a national monitoring system for collecting data on malformations among newborn babies. The significance of reported clusters is currently being assessed by comparative analyses with the national data. This work is expected to be completed shortly.

Discussions have also been held between the Department of Health, OPCS and the environmental epidemiology unit, London school of hygiene and tropical medicine, which incorporates the small area statistics unit, to identify and make the necessary provisions for any additional expertise that may be required.

Decisions about any further action necessary will be taken as quickly as possible, once the results of these investigations are known.

Oral Health

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she will publish the oral health strategy;

(2) when she will publish her response to the Bloomfield report.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February at col. *1042*.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish for each year since 1990, by region, the incidence of dental decay in *(a)* children and *(b)* adults.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally in the form requested. The Department commissions the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct surveys of the dental health of adults and children at 10-year intervals. The report of the last adult dental health survey carried out in 1988 was published in 1991 and copies are available in the Library. The most recent survey of children was carried out in 1993 and the report will be published later this year.

Information on dental decay among children is available from surveys by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry. Copies of the latest report published will be placed in the Library.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy with regard to charging for personal social services other than residential care for users or carers in receipt of *(a)* income support payments, *(b)* disabled living allowance and *(c)* attendance allowance; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: It is for each local authority to decide what charges to make for day and domiciliary services. Local authorities should have regard to individual service users' income and overall financial circumstances in assessing their ability to pay. They may take into account all types of income, except the mobility component of disability living allowance.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the expected saving resulting from making incapacity benefit payable in respect of any day at one seventh rather than one sixth of the weekly rate.

Mr. Scott: This measure will produce both gainers and losers, depending on whether a Sunday is included in a part-week payment, or in the waiting days at the start of a claim. We estimate that the overall expenditure consequences of this change will be minimal.

Pensioners (Benefits)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most accurate up-to-date figures he has of the number of pensioners on benefit in *(a)* Southwark, *(b)* London, *(c)* England and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. Figures are not available in relation to Southwark and London. Figures are available for England and Great Britain. Information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The figures relate to the numbers of pensioners receiving individual benefits: they do not represent the total number of pensioners receiving benefit —subject to the exceptions shown in the footnotes a pensioner may receive any combination of the benefits listed.

Benefit	*Number[1] of pensioners[2] England*	*Number[1] of pensioners[2] Great Britain*	*Date of statistical sample*
Attendance allowance[3]	760,000	890,000	31 March 1993
Community charge benefit	2,216,000	2,621,000	May 1992
Disability living allowance[4]	283,000	354,000	30 November 1993
Disability working allowance	17	19	31 August 1993
Family credit	280	320	31 July 1993
Housing benefit	1,387,000	1,675,000	May 1992
Income support	1,289,000	1,524,000	February 1993
Industrial injuries disablement benefit[5]	62,000	79,000	4 April 1992
Invalidity benefit	198,000	264,000	4 April 1992
Invalid care allowance	n/a	11,000	31 December 1993
Reduced earnings allowance[5]	47,000	62,000	4 April 1992
Retirement pension	8,141,000	9,476,000	31 March 1993
Graduated retirement benefit only	116,660	134,130	31 March 1993
Sickness benefit	1,000	1,000	4 April 1992
Severe disablement allowance	31,000	40,000	4 April 1992
Unemployment benefit	60	60	13 May 1992
Widows' benefit	40,000	48,000	31 March 1993

[1] Figures shown are rounded to the nearest thousand except in relation to disability working allowance, family credit and unemployment benefit where exact figures have been shown.

[2] A pensioner is defined as any person over state pension age—ie a man aged 65 or over and a women aged 60 and over.

[3] Attendance Allowance is for persons aged 65 and over.

[4] Disability Living Allowance was introduced in April 1992 to replace attendance allowance for the under 65s and mobility allowance.

[5] Figures for industrial injuries disablement benefit and reduced earnings allowance are provisional and relate to pensions/assessments in payment not recipients.

n/a = Not available.

Note:—A benefit listed may be payable to a pensioner with any other benefit or benefits listed (subject to offsetting where appropriate) except in the cases of the following combinations:—

Family credit or disability working allowance and income support, invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, sickness benefit or unemployment benefit.

Retirement pension or graduated retirement and invalidity benefit, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit or widows' benefit.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of extending the linking rule for incapacity benefits to two years.

Mr. Scott: The expenditure consequences of extending the linking rule would depend on the extent to which claimants subsequently gave up incapacity benefit to attempt work, training or other activities. There is no reliable information on which to base an assessment of these possible behavioural changes.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply of 11 February, *Official Report,* columns *499-500,* concerning children in families in receipt of invalidity benefit, what is the earliest year for which such information is available.

Mr. Scott: The earliest date for which information is available is 31 March 1984. The information is as follows:

Number of child dependency increases in payment to invalidity benefit recipients in Wales 23,000.

Source: 1 per cent. sample of claimants in Great Britain, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that any appellants against having their invalidity benefit terminated should, if they so wish, be entitled to a professional advocate to speak on their behalf at any hearing, without the cost of such representation falling on the appellants or their families.

Mr. Scott: Appeals against decisions on invalidity benefit are heard by a social security appeal tribunal. The hearings are intended to be informal, with the tribunal and the presenting officer assisting the appellant to make his or her case. In these circumstances the provision of an advocate would be inappropriate.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated saving to his Department from applying the new incapacity test to severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: The new incapacity test will not be applied to existing severe disablement allowance recipients and the majority of new beneficiaries. Savings, if any, are therefore expected to be negligible.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of income support payments to people with learning disabilities covers the cost of meeting day care charges.

Mr. Burt: Particular items of expenditure are not identified in income support, although people with learning difficulties may be entitled to receive a disability premium. Social services authorities have discretionary powers to make charges for day care services for adults. Charges are not uniform.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the value of the Christmas bonus in the next financial year if it had increased in line with *(a)* prices and *(b)* earnings since 1979.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his reply 14 February 1994, c. 599]:* The information contained a typographical error. The value of the Christmas bonus in 1994-95 if increased in line with prices should read £24·50.

Pension Increases

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the percentage increase in the state pension each year from 1970 to 1993, *(b)* whether the pension was uprated in line with earnings or the retail prices index in each year from 1970 to 1980 and *(c)* whether the percentage increase in the pension each April 1970 to 1993 was higher or lower than the year-on-year April to April retail prices index rise for the relevant year.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Standard rate of category A retirement pension man or woman on own insurance	*Rate (£)*	*Percentage increase over previous rate*	*Increased by earnings or RPI*	*Year-on-year percentage RPI increase April to April*
November 1969	5·00	11·1	—	5·5
1970	5·00	—	—	5·6
September 1971	6·00	20·0	—	9·4
October 1972	6·75	12·5	—	6·3
October 1973	7·75	14·8	—	9·2
22 July 1974	10·00	29·0	—	15·2
7 April 1975	11·60	16·0	Earnings	21·7
17 November 1975	13·30	14·7	Earnings	21·7
15 November 1976	15·30	15·0	RPI	18·9
14 November 1977	17·50	14·4	RPI	17·5
13 November 1978	19·50	11·4	Earnings	7·9
12 November 1979	23·30	19·5	RPI	10·1
24 November 1980	27·15	16·5	RPI	21·8
23 November 1981	29·60	9·0	—	12·0
22 November 1982	32·85	11·0	—	9·4
21 November 1983	34·05	3·7	—	4·0
26 November 1984	35·80	5·1	—	5·2
25 November 1985	38·30	7·0	—	6·9
28 July 1986	38·70	1·0	—	3·0
6 April 1987	39·50	2·1	—	4·2
11 April 1988	41·15	4·2	—	3·9
10 April 1989	43·60	6·0	—	8·0
9 April 1990	46·90	7·6	—	9·4
8 April 1991	52·00	10·9	—	6·4
6 April 1992	54·15	4·1	—	4·3
12 April 1993	56·10	3·6	—	1·3

Source:

The Abstract of Statistics for Social Security Benefits and Contributions and the Indices of Retail Prices and Average Earnings.

Notes:

1. Prior to 1975 pensions were increased by an Act of Parliament rather than by an annual up-rating order.
2. Retirement pension was not increased in 1970.
3. April to April uprating introduced in 1987.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people, and what percentage of the population in England, Wales and Scotland, receive *(a)* income support, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* sickness —invalidity benefit, *(d)* industrial disablement benefit and *(e)* housing/council tax benefit.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Benefit (April/May 1992)	*England*	*Percentage of population*	*Scotland*	*Percentage of population*	*Wales*	*Percentage of population*
Sickness benefit	109,000	0·28	17,000	0·42	12,000	0·52
Invalidity benefit	1,072,000	2·78	200,000	4·90	159,000	6·91
Industrial injuries disablement benefit[1]	163,000	0·42	18,000	0·44	18,000	0·78
Income support[2]	4,282,000	11·10	519,000	12·70	287,000	12·47
Unemployment benefit	582,000	1·51	58,000	1·42	28,000	1·23
Housing benefit[2]	3,572,000	9·26	539,000	13·19	217,000	9·43
Community charge benefit	7,116,000	18·45	861·000	21·07	437,000	18·98

[1] More than one pension may be in payment.

[2] Numbers represent benefit units.

Notes:

1. Recipients may be in receipt of more than one benefit.
2. Benefit figures are rounded to nearest thousand.
3. Population figures represented by those aged 16 and over.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to assist Angola in emergency aid during 1994.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We expect to maintain a substantial programme of humanitarian aid to Angola this year. A mission will visit in mid-March to assess the situation.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral and multilateral aid each EC member state has given to Angola since the outbreak of war in 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We provided £1·8 million of bilateral aid in 1992-93 and have allocated £10 million of humanitarian aid for Angola in 1993-94. Our share of EC aid to Angola in 1993 was £3·5 million. We do not have figures for other EC member states for 1992 and after.

Dominica

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Prime Minister of Dominica, on the discussions within the European Union on bananas; what action he is taking as a consequence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development and I have discussed the EC banana regime with Dame Eugenia Charles. Dame Eugenia gave my right hon. and noble Friend a document on restructuring the Windward Islands banana industry on Saturday in Dominica and this is now being studied.

World Bank Group

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list for each year since 1988 the amount of *(a)* United Kingdom subscription to the World bank group in the form of callable shares *(b)* the amount of United Kingdom subscription to the World bank group consisting of callable shares which have actually been paid in and *(c)* the above figure as a percentage of the total United Kingdom subscription to the World bank group.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1988, a general capital increase (GCI) of $74·8 billion, with a 3 per cent. paid-in element, was agreed for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The United Kingdom subscribed to 30,450 shares with a value of $3·67 billion, of which $110·2 million (3 per cent.) was paid-in over the period 1988-93.

In 1985, a capital increase of $650 million was approved for the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The United Kingdom subscribed to 30,500 shares with a value of $30·5 million, all fully paid-in in five equal instalments over the period 1986-89. In 1991, a further capital increase of $1 billion was agreed. The United Kingdom is subscribing to 52,615 shares, fully paid-in, in five equal instalments over the period 1993-96.

The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) was established in 1988 with a capital stock of SDR1 billion ($1·1 billion). The United Kingdom subscribed to 4,860 shares at a value of $52·6 million, of which 10 per cent. was paid in cash in 1988, 10 per cent in the form of a promissory note and the balance callable.

Payments since 1988 associated with these subscriptions to capital stock are shown in the table. The table excludes payments to the International Development Association (IDA) which relies on contributions from donors, not subscriptions to capital stock, to finance its activities.

United Kingdom Payments to World Bank Group
Capital increases 1988-93

£ million

	IBRD 1988 GCI	*IFC 1985 GCI*	*IFC 1991 GCI*	*MIGA*
1988	6·561	3·558	—	3·098
1989	12·646	3·678	—	—
1990	10·209	—	—	—
1991	11·741	—	—	—
1992	10·219	—	—	—
1993	12·887	—	14·174	—

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all contributions made by Her Majesty's Government to the World bank group, excluding those made by the Overseas Development Administration, since 1988.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Department of Trade and Industry has contributed £570,000 since 1988 to the United Kingdom consultants trust fund administered by the World bank.

EMPLOYMENT

Careers Service

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many bids have been received to run the careers service for each of the 13 pathfinder areas he designated in July 1993; and how many in each case and in total were submitted by private employers.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on organisations which submitted bids to provide careers on services is commercial-in-confidence while negotiations on business plans continue.

Race Discrimination

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the limit on awards available to tribunals in racial discrimination cases.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government announced on 1 November 1993 that they would seek a suitable opportunity to remove the limit on compensation which may be awarded by industrial tribunals in racial discrimination cases, and to allow interest to be included in compensation awards.

The Government are supporting a Private Members' Bill, the Race Relations (Remedies) Bill, introduced by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) on 16 December 1993, which offers an early opportunity to pursue the Government's own objective in this area. The Bill had its Second Reading, Committee and Report stages on Friday 18 February. If it is passed by Parliament, commencement will be by the autumn of this year.

At present, the limit on compensatory awards is reviewed each year, although there is no compulsion to do so.

Education Allowance

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently on full-time vocational courses within the Barnsley, East constituency as a consequence of the education allowance introduced in the budget statement in March 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: In November 1993 there were 34 people participating in the learning for work programme in the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council area. The information requested is not collected at constituency level.

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average estimated yearly cost to the Treasury of an unemployed person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available estimate of gross benefit payments to the unemployed is £9·3 billion for the 1992-93 financial year. If the assumption of 2·8 million unemployed is used, this gives an average benefit cost of £3,300 per unemployed person per year.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons have benefited since 1992 from back-to-work bonus schemes in inner city areas for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. David Rendel, dated 21 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Back to Work Bonus schemes.

The Government launched two pilots of a back to work bonus scheme called the Jobfinder's Grant on 7 February this year in my East Midlands and Eastern and West Midlands Regions. Up to 15 February, 65 grants has been issued in the East Midlands where 2,000 grants of £200 are available to people previously unemployed for more than two years who find work. Thirty three grants has been issued in the West Midlands where 1,000 grants of £100 are available to people, previously unemployed for more than two years and who live within the areas of Birmingham, Sandwell, Dudley, Wolverhampton or Walsall.

I hope this is helpful.

Health and Safety (Children)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is collected by the Health and Safety Executive on the incidence of accidents at work involving school-age children.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) gathers information on accidents to employees, including those aged under 16. Under regulation 3 of RIDDOR, incidents involving people who are not themselves at work —including school children—must also be reported to the Health and Safety Executive if the person sustains an injury

"arising out of or in connection with work activity".

SCOTLAND

Scottish Grand Committee

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by what date he expects all the measures put forward in the Scottish Office document "A Partnership for Good" to be fully implemented, with particular reference to the proposed changes in the procedures of the Scottish Grand Committee.

Mr. Lang: The majority of proposals have already been implemented. Some others will take effect from April and the remainder are either in hand or are on-going. As regards the procedures of the Scottish Grand Committee on 10 February, I placed in the Library of the House proposed amendments to Standing Orders which will implement our commitment to expand the role of the Committee.

The amendments will be tabled in due course.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Extra Parliamentary panel.

Mr. Lang: The current membership of the panel appointed for 1991-95 is shown in the table:

Professor Hugh Begg
Professor Christopher Blake
Mrs. Ruth Blackie
Mr. William Cook
Mr. Alexander Hamilton, CBE
Professor J. Ross Harper, CBE
Miss Ethel Houston, OBE
Mr. John Langan
Professor Brian Loasby
Mr. Duncan Macleod, CBE
Mr. E. Lowson, MBE
Mr. Donald MacGregor
Mr. James McPherson, CBE
Mrs. Jean Morris, CBE
Mr. David Myles, CBE
Mr. David Patterson
Mrs. Kathleen Rennie
Mr. James Stobo, OBE
Professor Urlan Wannop
Mr. Bruce Weatherstone.

Homosexual Offences

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many alleged cases of consensual homosexual acts have been reported since December 1991 by procurators fiscal to the Crown Office for Crown Counsel's consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Only two such cases have been reported to the Crown Office for Crown Counsel's consideration since December 1991.

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1979, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The following information on annual expenditure on management consultancy is readily available:

Year	*Current price (£)*	*Constant price December 1993 (£)*
1984-85	47,512	74,594
1985-86	491,864	732,877
1986-87	569,038	819,415
1987-88	193,338	275,690
1988-89	1,162,108	1,522,361
1989-90	374,620	457,036
1990-91	806,343	888,077
1991-92	1,028,000	1,079,400
1992-93	3,510,000	3,580,200

Old Royal High School

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he plans to put for former Crown Office building, the Old Royal high school in Edinburgh, on the market.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to my reply, 14 February 1994, c. 593]:* In accordance with the guidance set out in the Scottish Office Circular 38/1992 "Disposal of Surplus Government Land—The Crichel Down Rules", Property Holdings in my Department has today written to the City of Edinbrugh district council, the former owners, to offer to sell to them at market value the Old Royal high school Edinburgh which is now surplus to Government requirements.

The district council has two months to exercise the option to purchase and if it declines or fails to respond within this period then the property will be offered for sale on the open market.

Prison Officers

Mr Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to alter the status of prison officers in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his reply, 3 December 1993, c. 733]:* I intend to table a clause for inclusion in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill which will give prison officers and governors in Scotland, and prisoner custody officers performing custodial duties, the power to detain in any place in the prison on reasonable suspicion, any person suspected of bringing in prohibited artricles—for example, drugs or weapons—on to prison property, until police officers arrive and have the opportunity to question the person. The clause will permit searching of any person by prison officers and governors on reasonable suspicion that the person was bringing in a prohibited article. Searching will not include intimate searching and will be restricted to "rub-down" searching in relation to prohibited articles other than controlled drugs, firearms and ammunition. It will also permit any prohibited article so found to be seized and detained. These measures will assist prison officers in the fight against the smuggling of drugs into prisons, and will in substance give them the same powers as their counterparts in the rest of the United Kingdom.

NORTHERN IRELAND

NHS Waiting Lists

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of NHS waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Additional funding to reduce waiting lists and times has been made available in the last two years and significant progress has been made over this period.

In March 1991 a total of 27,086 people were waiting for inpatient treatment, 8,600—32 per cent.—of whom were waiting more than one year, and 5,071—19 per cent.—more than two years. By the end of September 1993, the number waiting was down to 25,420, of whom 4,675—18 per cent.—were on the list for more than one year, while 1,041—4 per cent.—were on it for more than two years. I am confident that the charter guarantee of 18 months will be reached by the end of this year for most, if not all patients.

Although these figures represent a considerable achievement, the Government wish to see further progress as soon as possible. The chief executive of the HPSS management executive has written recently to boards urging continued and positive action on waiting lists and the position will be closely monitored at all times.

Hearing Aids (Children)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which agency is responsible for monitoring the provision and maintenance of hearing aids for *(a)* pre-school children, *(b)* children at school and *(c)* young people aged 16 years and above who are in full-time education; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement.

Mr. Ancram: Hearing aids are available from health and social services boards for anyone who needs one. There are no plans to change the present arrangements.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the conditions under which children and young people are entitled to be provided with the most appropriate heearing aid whether or not this is part of the national health service range of hearing aids.

Mr. Ancram: It is for the clinician concerned to decide on the basis of assessed need which is the most appropriate hearing aid in each case, whether it is from the standard range or purchased by hearing aid centres from a commercial source.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which agency monitors the provision of insurance on hearing aids for children and young people; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement.

Mr. Ancram: Hearing aids are provided on loan. There is, therefore, no requirement for the patient, or in the case of a child under 16, the child's parent to insure the appliance they receive. There are no plans to change the present arrangements.

Inward Investment

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about job creation and industrial development in Northern Ireland, with particular reference to inward investment in South Down and other areas of high unemployment.

Mr. Tim Smith: One of the Government's priority objectives is to improve employment prospects in all parts of Northern Ireland. In pursuit of this objective the IDB and LEDU are working with their client companies to encourage them to develop their international competitiveness, thus creating the conditions for growth in durable employment.

During the current year the Industrial Development Board has continued to attract an increasingly high number of new inward investment projects to Northern Ireland. IDB cannot direct promoters as to where to locate projects within Northern Ireland. However, every effort is made to encourage inward investors to establish their new businesses in the areas of highest unemployment including South Down.

Community Care

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision has been made for convalescent care in the figures prepared by officials of the health and social services boards.

Mr. Ancram: All residents of independent sector homes entitled to income support, including those receiving convalescent care, were taken into account when the funds to transfer from the social security vote to health and social services boards were being calculated. People requiring convalescent care were not identified separately.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision is to be made for the training of assessors of proposed candidates for care in the community.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards received £1·1 million in 1991-92, £0·62 million in 1992-93 and £4·82 million in 1993-94 for the development of their infrastructure for the delivery of community care services. These allocations include money for the recruitment and training of professional and other staff required to carry out assessments and operate the care management procedures. All four boards have developed training programmes for staff responsible for the assessment and review of the care needs of clients requiring community care services.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what framework has been established to create feedback and dialogue on the policy of community care.

Mr. Ancram: The Department, as part of its preparation and support for the introduction of the new community care arrangements established a joint DHSS/health and social services board "People First" liaison group to facilitate feedback and dialogue on the implementation of the new arrangements. A monitoring framework has also been established to obtain quarterly information about boards' assessment and care management performance.

Boards have also established various systems to obtain feedback on the way in which the new arrangements are working, to ascertain user satisfaction and to work with statutory and independent providers in developing the range of residential and non-residential services required.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the *(a)* average and *(b)* target length of time between the inquiry and assessment and the making of a decision to provide care in the community for an elderly person.

Mr. Ancram: The information is not available in the form requested. Health and social services boards have reported that during the six-month period from April to September 1993, 92 per cent. of assessments of elderly people were carried out within one week of referral and 83 per cent. of care packages for elderly people commenced within one week of completion of the assessment.

The Department is currently reviewing community care standards in the charter for patients and clients. Standards will include local waiting times for access to various services, including access to care management and the provision of community care services.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what savings he expects to result from the closure of homes for the elderly and a reduction in home help and community care budgets.

Mr. Ancram: None. Health and social services boards are responsible for managing the financial resources at their disposal and for determining the appropriate level of resources to be committed for the purchase of particular services. Boards are following a policy for the development of community care services which involves a shift from institutional care to domiciliary and day care. To support this policy additional resources of £29 million have been made available to boards this financial year.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what appeals procedure is available to carers and applicants for assistance under the community care initiative.

Mr. Ancram: Clients and carers who are dissatisfied with any aspect of their treatment in relation to community care have recourse to the comprehensive complaints procedures which are in place in each health and social services board. Anyone who is dissatisfied with a board's written response to his or her complaint can appeal to a review panel, which includes a member who is independent of the board. Details of the procedures and arrangements for review are published by each board.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what advice has been issued to the Eastern health and social services board on the future numbers of independent homes for the elderly and the numbers of statutory homes which should be maintained.

Mr. Ancram: None. It is for the board to assess the needs of its resident population and determine the nature and level of services it wishes to provide to meet those needs within the available resources.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what joint forums have been established to permit independent homes to have an input in community care policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: None. Government policy for the provision of community care is clearly set out in the 1990 policy document "People First" and the regional strategy for the Northern Ireland health and personal social services 1992-97. A wide range of interested parties, including independent sector care providers, were consulted during the preparation of both these documents. Future policy developments will be subject to similar consultation.

Residential Homes

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what figure for the numbers of people in private and independent homes at 31 March 1993 he based his budget; what was the actual figure for capacity on that date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The amounts of money to transfer from the social security budget to health and social services boards for community care were calculated on the basis of the estimated numbers of income support claimants resident in independent sector residential and nursing homes at mid-year in each of the financial years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. The estimated numbers of such residents for each of these years were 11,112, 13,247 and 15,382 respectively. The total number of residents in independent sector homes at 31 March 1993 is not known.

Details of the transfer calculation were explained in a memorandum widely distributed throughout Northern Ireland in December 1992. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figure his Department has arrived at for placement of persons in homes for the elderly; and what involvement independent sector providers had in the selection of this figure.

Mr. Ancram: There is no pre-determined figure for the numbers to be placed in homes for elderly people. The number of people placed in residential and nursing homes by health and social services boards will be determined by the outcome of comprehensive assessments of patients' and clients' need for community care. Where care in residential or nursing home settings is indicated this will be arranged.

Personal Injury Awards

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the level of personal injury awards in Northern Ireland; and what comparison he has made with costs elsewhere.

Sir John Wheeler: In Northern Ireland the statutory criminal injuries compensation scheme makes provision for compensation for the victims of violent crime. On 15 December 1993 my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary published a White Paper outlining his proposals for reform of the criminal injuries compensation scheme in Great Britain. I am currently considering what lessons might be learnt from this for Northern Ireland. If, as a result, changes are proposed to the current compensation scheme in Northern Ireland, there will be consultation with all interested parties.

Awards for personal injury at common law are a matter for the courts.

Car Insurance

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effects of the levels of charges for private car insurance in Northern Ireland; and what comparisons he has made with costs elsewhere.

Mr. Tim Smith: None.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect of the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tim Smith: The privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity has been a great success. Competition has been introduced to the industry, enterprising new companies have entered the electricity market, an effective regulatory regime has been established to protect consumers' interests, and NIE employees and consumers have been able to invest in the industry.

Care of the Elderly

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contingency plans are being made for the care of the elderly in Northern Ireland in the event of insufficient accommodation for the elderly being available locally and to provide transport for their families; and at what cost.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards are responsible for developing appropriate contingency arrangements in the event of residential care and nursing home failures. The level of accommodation available throughout Northern Ireland is such that residents who might need to be relocated on closure of a home will have a reasonable choice of alternative accommodation.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights.

Sir John Wheeler: The current membership is:

Chairman:
Mr. Charles Hill QC

Members:
Mrs. Joan Harbison CBE
Mrs. Mary Clark-Glass CBE
Mrs. Jane Corr
Miss Geraldine Keegan
Professor Simon Lee
Mr. Al Mackle OBE
Mr. Dermot Nesbitt
Mr. Aidan Sherrard
Mrs. Joan Smyth

Ex-Officio Members:
Mr. Bob Cooper CBE
Mrs. Jill McIvor QSM

There is one vacancy.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to the Arts Council for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mr. Jim Aiken
Sir Charles Brett, CBE *(Vice-Chairman)*
Councillor Fred Cobain
Mr. Donnell Deeny, QC *(Chairman)*
Mr. Patrick Donnelly
Ms Rita Duffy
Dr. Tess Hurson
Ms Kate Ingram
Mr. Nicholas Livingston
Professor Edna Longley
Councillor William O'Connell
Mr. Richard Pierce
Ms Chrissie Poulter
Mrs. Irene Sandford
Professor Robert Welch.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland tourist board.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current members of the Northern Ireland tourist board are as follows:

The Hon. Hugh O'Neill, *(Chairman)*
Mr. Brian Adgey
Mr. Colin Anderson
Mr. Tony Hopkins
Mr. Alan Lambert
Mr. John Lavery, OBE
Mr. Ian McQuiston
Dr. Mary Peters, CBE
Ms Diane Toner.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: For security reasons it is not our policy to disclose the names of members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the staff commission for education and library boards.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Chairman
Mr. M. Moroney

Members
Mrs. D. Boyd
Mr. J. Corey
Mr. J. Donaghy
Mr. J. Gallagher
Mr. P. A. Kilpatrick
Rev. J. McAllister
Mrs. E. McClurg
Mr. J. N. Montgomery
Mr. T. Nolan
Dr. R. J. Rodgers
Mr. G. Topping
Mrs. M. E. Torrans

Loyalist Paramilitaries

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many incidents of arrests of loyalist paramilitaries have occurred while pursuing criminally inspired acts in each of the last three years; and how many individuals were involved in such arrests.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the major study on a blood test for bovine tuberculosis has been completed; if he will publish the results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The field study on a blood test for bovine tuberculosis is not yet completed. No decision has yet been made on whether the results should be published. It is not possible to anticipate the outcome of the study.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Privy Councillors' Oath

46. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the reason for maintaining the convention that the terms of the Privy Councillors' oath are confidential.

Mr. Newton: The convention, which is of long standing, reflects the principle that matters spoken of in council are exclusive to the Sovereign and to members of the Privy Council.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Kitchens

34. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what financial provision is being made to enable the House of Commons kitchens to reflect present-day health and safety requirements.

Mr. Channon: Some £1·3 million have been included in the works services vote for 1994-95. Further sums will be allocated in future years depending on the House's decision on the recent report of the Catering Committee on refreshment services for the House of Commons.

Cost-benefit Analysis

30. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what proportion of the budget of the National Audit Office will be spent on cost-benefit analysis in 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Sir Peter Hordern: In 1992-93 the National Audit Office delivered 51 major value-for-money outputs, which comprised about half the work of the NAO, and plans to continue deliveries at the same level in future. The selection of topics for investigation is based on a systematic review of expenditure and value for money. The NAO's investigations employ cost-benefit analysis techniques where appropriate, but it is not possible to isolate the costs of such analyses.

Visitors (Facilities)

37. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what provisions has been made in the estimates for improving facilities for visitors to the House of Commons.

Mr. Beith: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs).

Child Care Allowance

38. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what consideration he has given to introducing a child care allowance for hon. Members' staff.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to propose such an allowance. It is up to individual Members to make arrangements to suit their own staff.

Sittings of the House

41. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he proposes to bring forward proposals to modify the sitting hours and procedures of the House.

43. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to act upon the report of the Select Committee on sittings of the House.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer hon. Members to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

EC Legislation (Scrutiny)

45. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of parliamentary scrutiny of EC legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The arrangements for parliamentary scrutiny of EC legislation are kept under continuing review and were the subject of examination by the Select Committee on Procedure in 1989 and 1991; in general they work well. Problems at the end of last year with the late arrival of certain Community documents are being investigated.

Wine Sales

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what were the receipts by the House of Commons Refreshment Department from the sale of wine for the three years up to and including 1993; what assumptions have been made in the House's estimates on receipts in future years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The House of Commons Refreshment Department does not record separately details of receipts from the sale of wine, although sales of alcoholic beverages are recorded and are included in the financial objectives for the Refreshment Department.

Day Nursery

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he will make a statement on the provision of a day nursery in the Palace of Westminster.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what progress has been made towards the establishment of a day nursery in the Commons.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave on 9 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 278.

Disabled People

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what further plans he has to assist disabled people who wish to lobby hon. Members.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Facilities available to disabled people visiting the House and arrangements for their reception when lobbying Members are described in leaflets available from the Serjeant at Arms which are also incorporated into the Members' Handbook. In addition, special arrangements are made whenever mass lobbies, including a significant number of disabled people, are expected. These arrangements have recently been reviewed by the Administration Committee and include, as appropriate, the use of Westminster Hall. Plans for the next such lobby on Wednesday 9 March are in hand.

I understand that proposals to improve physical access to Parliament for disabled people are also being considered by the Accommodation and Works Committee.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Monitoring (Non-elected Agencies)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what assessment the Commission has made of whether the National Audit Office has sufficient staff effectively to monitor non-elected agencies.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office's corporate plan for 1994-95 to 1998-99 was considered and approved by the Commission in July 1993. This includes provision for financial audit of Government Departments, executive agencies, including those expected to be established over the next five years, and other public sector bodies; for inspection visits to a wide range of non-departmental and other public sector bodies; and for value-for-money investigations.

DEFENCE

Italian Air Force

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft, and of what types, were involved in the Italian air force deployment to RAF Leeming during November 1993; which RAF squadron hosted the exchange visit; what were the dates of the deployment; how many low-level sorties were undertaken by Italian aircraft during the deployment, and at what minimum authorised altitudes; and how many of these sorties included use of the Spadeadam range.

Mr. Hanley: Six AMX aircraft of the Italian air force deployed to RAF Leeming between 19 and 26 November 1993. The deployment was hosted by No. 11 Squadron RAF. The IAF booked eight low level sorties down to a minimum height of 500 ft; four of the sorties included use of the range at RAF Spadeadam.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft, and of what types, were involved in the Italian air force deployment to RAF Waddington during September 1993; which RAF squadron hosted the exchange visit; what were the dates of the deployment; how many low-level sorties were undertaken by Italian aircraft during the deployment, and at what minimum authorised altitudes; and how many of these sorties included use of the Spadeadam range.

Mr. Hanley: Six AMX aircraft of the Italian air force deployed to RAF Waddington between 6 and 10 September 1993. The deployment was hosted by the Wing Operations/Visiting Aircraft Section at RAF Waddington. The IAF booked 23 low level sorties down to a minimum height of 500 ft; 21 of the sorties included use of the range at RAF Spadeadam.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the level of utilisation of RAF Spadeadam and access to the United Kingdom low flying system by Italian air force aircraft in the past year were related to the extent to which RAF aircraft deployed to Gioia del Colle, Italy, conduct low-flying training in Italian airspace.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Exercise Hardcore

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role is performed by the Dutch air force 3 guided missile group in the air defence of the United Kingdom; what role was performed by this unit during Exercise Hardcore 94; and what role the unit has performed in previous exercises involving Royal Air Force Harriers.

Mr. Hanley: The Dutch Air Force 3rd guided missile group does not have an assigned role in the air defence of the United Kingdom. During Exercise Hardcore 94 the unit was providing simulated target defences, as it has in previous exercises involving RAF Harriers.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the reasons why the location for Exercise Hardcore was switched from Norway to Scotland this year; and what are his plans for holding further exercises in this series in Scotland.

Mr. Hanley: The exercise was never scheduled to take place in Norway. Exercise Hardcore is an annual exercise held in the United Kingdom. It will normally involve flying sorties in Scotland, subject to training requirements and prevailing weather conditions at the time.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many live bombing sorties were flown by RAF Harriers during Exercise Hardcore 94.

Mr. Hanley: During Exercise Hardcore 94, 22 live bombing sorties were flown by RAF Harriers.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were undertaken during Exercise Hardcore 94; and how many of these were authorised at heights of less than 250 ft.

Mr. Hanley: Sixty-two low-level sorties were flown during Exercise Hardcore 94; 38 of the sorties were conducted at heights less than 250 ft.

Field Training, Germany

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles, locations and dates of all field training exercises in Germany involving British Army units of battalion size or larger, since 1988.

Mr. Hanley: A list of all field training exercises carried out in Germany since 1989 involving British Army units of more than 500 troops is given in the table. The information requested on exercises conducted in 1988 is no longer available.

Exercise name	*Location*	*Start date*	*End date*
Polar Nomad 11/89	Holz Minden	20 January 1989	5 February 1989
Quick March 11/89	Hameln	24 February 1989	7 March 1989
Hungry Bear 13	Holstein	5 July 1989	21 July 1989
Treaty 89	Herford	18 August 1989	25 August 1989
White Rhino 89	Munster	4 September 1989	25 September 1989
Zodiac Rhino 89	Steinfurt	6 September 1989	9 September 1989

Exercise name	*Location*	*Start date*	*End date*
Morning Glory 89	Hameln	2 September 1989	10 September 1989
Galloping Bugle 89	Lubbecke	18 September 1989	5 October 1989
Grand Canyon 89	Steinfurt	28 September 1989	14 October 1989
Key Flight 89	Osnabruck	1 September 1989	30 September 1989
Garreg Wen 89	Fallingbostel	12 October 1989	27 October 1989
Noble Aries 89	Paderborn	13 October 1989	28 October 1989
Iron Wagon 3/89	Bielefeld	15 October 1989	28 October 1989
Kyrenia Curfew 89	Iserlohm	9 November 1989	18 November 1989
Hungry Mick	Helmstadt	24 September 1990	11 October 1990
Holstein Bugle	Hildeshein	31 August 1990	21 September 1990
Mosquito Mick	Segeberg	7 September 1991	30 September 1991
Moving Dragon 91	Segeberg	4 October 1991	20 October 1991
Quick March 1/91	Segeberg	8 November 1991	22 November 1991
Highland Monarch 91	Holz Minden	11 November 1991	22 November 1991
Roaring Dragon 92	Harburg	6 March 1992	26 March 1992
Twisted Spear 92	Lubbecke	14 May 1992	23 May 1992
Last Chance 92	Eustkirchen	4 October 1992	23 October 1992
Sussex Way	Northeim	9 November 1992	18 November 1992
New Shield 92	Gifhorn	16 November 1992	27 November 1992
Rampant Rose 2/92 – Hungry Bear	Segeberg	20 November 1992	10 December 1992
Forest Chase	Soest	1 March 1993	25 March 1993
Kilted Warrior	Aachen	3 May 1993	14 May 1993
Wet Gap	Hameln	4 September 1993	20 September 1993
Hungry Bear 1/93	Lubbecke	15 September 1993	24 September 1993
Hungry Bear 2/93	Holz Minden	4 November 1993	3 December 1993
Flame Thunder 94	Hameln	6 April 1994	26 April 1994
Flame Rocket 94	Dortmund	6 May 1994	21 May 1994

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training man days were spent by British Army units on the Bergen training area, Germany, in each year since 1988; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into activity by *(a)* infantry, *(b)* armoured and *(c)* other units.

Mr. Hanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training man days were spent by British Army units on the Soltau-Luneberg training area, Germany, in each year since 1988; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into activity by *(a)* infantry, *(b)* armoured and *(c)* other units.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested for activity on the Soltau-Luneberg training area since 1988 is given in the table.

Soltau-Luneberg area comparison of usage rates

Year	*Man/days*	*Tank/days*	*Light AFV/days*	*Gun/days*	*Wheels/days*
1988	426,074	20,203	38,204	681	49,631
1989	438,356	16,503	43,961	960	46,482
1990	210,704	9,245	19,791	1,405	21,711
1991	137,813	6,142	12,526	80	20,339
1992	113,648	4,885	10,258	292	14,297
1993	91,870	4,900	8,251	504	11,889

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military units currently stationed in the Fallingbostel area; and if he will list the principal equipment in use by these units.

Mr. Hanley: The major units currently stationed in the Fallingbostel area, and their principal equipment, are as follows:

2nd Royal Tank Regiment—Challenger main battle tank.
The Queen's Royal Hussars—Challenger main bettle tank.
1st Battalion The Cheshire Regiment—Warrior armoured combat vehicle.

Live Bombing Training

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum authorised altitude for Harrier aircraft on live bombing training sorties.

Mr. Hanley: Within an air weapon range danger area, the minimum authorised altitude for Harrier aircraft on live bombing training is 120 ft minimum separation distance.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the regulations concerning overflight of towns and villages by aircraft carrying live bombs *(a)* at low level and *(b)* at heights greater than 2,000 ft.

Mr. Hanley: The regulations state that overflight of built-up areas is to be avoided. No distinction is made with respect to the altitude of the aircraft.

Buccaneer

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what laser designation support is currently provided by Royal Air Force Buccaneers to Dutch air force F-16s; and if this task will be continued when the Buccaneer is replaced by the Tornado.

Mr. Hanley: RAF Buccaneers have provided laser designation support to Dutch air force F-16s during exercises since 1987. While there is no formal commitment, if required RAF Tornados equipped with thermal imaging airborne laser designator pods could offer a similar service.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on authorising low flying at less than 250 ft during military exercises in the United Kingdom; what changes have occurred in this policy since 1990; and if he will list each exercise which has involved flying at less than 250 ft since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: RAF aircraft are permitted to fly below 250 ft during military exercises in the United Kingdom provided that prior authorisation has been obtained from the air officer commanding of the group concerned. There have been no changes to this policy since 1990. Records of requests for operational low flying are not maintained on a basis which differentiates between exercise and non-exercise activity.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *117*, if he will set out the criteria he uses to judge the scientific merits of the information on alleged Desert Storm syndrome; and from which departments of the United States Government or other United States authorities he has received information.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has applied standard epidemiological and statistical criteria, universally employed by the medical profession when researching existing or possible new diseases, in judging the scientific merits of all information received relating to the alleged Desert Storm syndrome. The application of such criteria to information available to date has not identified any scientific evidence proving the existence of a new medical condition peculiar to service in the Gulf conflict.

Information originating in the United States and relating to the alleged Desert Storm syndrome has been received from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and from the Congressional record.

RAF Stafford and Carlisle

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what conditions of sale in the event of closure the land at 14MU RAF Carlisle is held by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Following reports from local trade unions, I have agreed that the consultation period for our proposals to close 14MU RAF Carlisle be extended to 31 March 1994. If closure is confirmed and there is no alternative defence use for, or likely former owner interest in the site, it will be offered for sale on the open market with the most favourable planning permission achievable so as to maximise the return to the taxpayer. Arrangements are already in hand for the disposal of areas of the site declared surplus before the announcement on 15 December 1993, *Official Report*, columns *739-40*, of possible closure.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current life expectancy of the recently refurbished buildings at RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Hanley: Thirty years.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on refurbishment and upgrading of technical facilities over the past 10 years at *(a)* RAF Carlisle and *(b)* RAF Stafford.

Mr. Hanley: Because of changes in budgeting arrangements detailed financial records are not available for all elements of the programmes of refurbishment and upgrading of technical facilities undertaken over the past 10 years at RAF Stafford and Carlisle. Our estimate of expenditure is as follows:

(a) £28,000,000 at RAF Carlisle.
(b) £49,000,000 at RAF Stafford.

Radioactive Material (Storage)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for the storage at RAF Stafford of radioactive material.

Mr. Hanley: It is proposed that hazardous storage, including the storage and preparation for disposal of low-grade radioactive material, primarily luminous paint, will be undertaken by a contractor on behalf of the RAF.

RAF Equipment Supply Depots

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the Cranfield institute of technology study into the relative costs of freight distribution as between each of the current RAF equipment supply depots.

Mr. Hanley: Yes.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether British forces currently serving with the United Nations in Bosnia-Herzegovina are equipped to deal with any situation which might arise should a full-scale conflict break out involving united United Nations ground forces.

Mr. Hanley: British forces are deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of UNPROFOR in support of the humanitarian relief effort. Their numbers and equipment reflect this role. Contingency plans for the safety of British troops are in place and could be activated at short notice, if it became necessary to safeguard or reinforce British troops for their own protection.

Sergeant Tomlinson

Mr. Benton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will intervene in the case of Sergeant Tomlinson, 242 92 616, on the timing of his disciplinary hearing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The investigation by the Royal Military Police is continuing. I am unable therefore to comment on the timing of any disciplinary hearing.

Northumberland National Park

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to hold a public inquiry in connection with any proposals to increase military activity in the Northumberland national park.

Mr. Hanley: Any proposals relating to the further development of military facilities in the Northumberland national park will be subject to the formal planning consultation process as laid down in the Department of Environment circular 18/84.

Maritime Operations

Mr. Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have taken place in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation concept of maritime operations since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: NATO's concept of maritime operations has been revised to reflect changes in the strategic environment. The emphasis has shifted from defence against the threat posed by the former Warsaw pact to promoting stability, peacekeeping and crisis management.

Operations Cauldron and Hesperus

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, columns *396-97*, to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), if he will place in the Library a copy of all papers relating to Operations Cauldron and Hesperus in 1952 and 1953, including a description of the pathogens used and the results of the experiments, plus the means of storage on land and at sea; and if he will commission an independent inquiry into the hazards to the Scottish public from these and similar experiments.

Mr. Hanley: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 21 February 1994:

Parliamentary Question 35, Order Paper 14 February 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking about Operations CAULDRON and HESPERUS in 1952 and 1953 has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The papers relating to Operations CAULDRON and HESPERUS are classified and it would not be in the national interest to make these available as the information therein could be misused by states seeking to acquire a biological weapons capability. The pathogens used were as follows:

(a) Operation CAULDRON: the pathogens that cause brucellosis and plague.

(b) Operation HESPERUS: the pathogens that cause brucellosis and tularaemia.

The results of these trials are as indicated in the Official Report, 27 January, column 396-97.

3. The safety aspects of handling, transport and packaging were all carefully addressed to ensure that there was no danger to any of those engaged in the trial whether on land or at sea. As indicated in the Official Report, 9 February, column 360, there is no cause to believe that there was any hazard to the public or the environment and there is no evidence to the contrary. Consequently, there is no reason to commission an independent inquiry into these trials.

Air Training Corps

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Air Training Corps units there are in England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested, as at 15 February 1994, is as follows:

	Squadrons	*Detached Flights*	*Volunteer Gliding Schools*	*Air Experience Flights*
England	733	68	21	11
Scotland	97	13	3	1
Wales	76	2	3	0

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy concerning the Air Training Corps.

Mr. Hanley: The Air Training Corps serves not only to foster a practical interest in the RAF and aviation, but to develop qualities such as leadership and self-discipline. The Air Cadet Organisation is also an effective means of introducing the public to the RAF, particularly in areas where the adult service is not represented.

The defence costs study—"Front Line First"—announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 1 December last year, is examining all aspects of support. The Air Training Corps is being studied as part of this process. It is as yet too early to speculate on the outcome of this work.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will allocate the Air Training Corps extra moneys to enable it to develop its youth work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to provide extra moneys to the Air Training Corps for the purpose of developing its youth work.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will visit the Air Training Corps squadron located at Hawarden, Deeside, Clwyd.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has no current plans to visit this Air Training Corps squadron.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Air Training Corps squadrons he has visited in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has not visited any Air Training Corps squadrons during his term of office.

British Arms Manufacturers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which unit in his Department advises foreign Governments about which British arms manufacturers are suitable contractors; and to whom this unit is accountable.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation, which is accountable to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, gives advice to foreign Governments on all aspects of procurement of defence equipment from companies in the United Kingdom. The choice of contractor is a matter for the purchaser.

Malaysian Defence Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are working in the unit set up to oversee the defence contracts made between United Kingdom contractors and the Malaysian Government as a result of the 1988 memorandum of understanding; and how many of these are based *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in Malaysia.

Mr. Aitken: There are 22 people working in the Malaysian project office, of which 10 are based in the United Kingdom and 12 in Malaysia—of those, five are locally employed staff.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has given advice to the Malaysian Government since September 1988 on the suitability of United Kingdom companies to carry out defence contracts; and to what extent this advice has included the rating of companies by reliability.

Mr. Aitken: My Department frequently advises on the technical competence of companies, but does not make firm recommendations.

The choice of contractors lies solely with the Malaysian Government, who have negotiated contracts directly with United Kingdom companies.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of the loans made available to the Government of Malaysia since September 1988 to assist them in the purchase of defence exports from the United Kingdom; when these loans will be repaid; and on what terms.

Mr. Aitken: All the defence purchases by Malaysia under the 1988 memorandum of understanding have been made on a cash basis.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been awarded to United Kingdom companies as a result of the 1988 memorandum of understanding with the Malaysian Government.

Mr. Aitken: Since the 1988 memorandum of understanding was signed defence contracts totalling over £1 billion pounds have been awarded to United Kingdom companies by Malaysia. These contracts cover radars and electronic equipment, training aircraft together with a flight simulator, frigates and associated equipment and air defence missile systems.

Chinook Helicopters

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total operating costs of the RAF's Chinook helicopter fleet during the past 10 years; how many aircraft have been in service on average at any one time out of the total available; and how many hours of operational flying have been achieved in the same period.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 26 January 1994]:* The total number of hours flown during the past 10 years is 99,528. Records of operating costs are not available prior to 1989-90, since when costs have been approximately £232,000,000 and during which time some 44,200 hours have been flown. Operating costs include personnel costs and fuel and maintenance but exclude depreciation, interest on capital and station and administration costs.

On average, 18 of of 32 aircraft have been available for front-line service at any one time. These figures reflect the need for planned maintenance and servicing.

Piers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report,* column *528,* what value was placed by his Department on the piers prior to their sale.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 21 January 1994]:* The information is commercial in confidence, but the sale prices represented the market value.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* In respect of MOD executive NDPBs, appointments are made as follows:

(a) CHAIRMEN

Navy Museums

Except for the Fleet Air Arm Museum (ex-officio appointment) chairmen for all other Navy Museums are appointed by the respective Museum Board.

RAF Museum

Appointed by Secretary of State for Defence.

Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC)

Appointed by SSVC council.

Oil and Pipelines Agency (OPA)

Appointed by Secretary of State for Defence.

(b) MEMBERS

Navy Museums

The Director for each Navy Museum is appointed by a special Board of the appropriate museum. All Trustees are appointed by the respective Museum Board.

National Army Museum (NAM)

The Director of the Museum is appointed by the council of the NAM and the Trustees are appointed by the Army Board.

RAF Museum

The Director of the Museum is appointed by the Trustees and the Trustees are appointed by the Secretary of State.

Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC)

The Board of Management is appointed by the SSVC council.

Oil and Pipelines Agency (OPA)

Members are appointed by the Secretary of State.

Merchant Navy (Deaths)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many men have been killed while serving in the Merchant Navy in each year since 1964.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

The number of Merchant Navy personnel reported as having been killed in, or who died as a result of an accident involving a United Kingdom registered merchant vessel of 100 gross tons and over since 1964 is:—

Year	*Number of deaths*
1965	66
1966	122
1967	78
1968	41
1969	50
1970	77
1971	29
1972	95
1973	49
1974	47
1975	71
1976	46
1977	40
1978	71
1979	47
1980	67
1981	38
1982	44
1983	15
1984	14
1985	7
1986	13
1987	44
1988	13
1989	7
1990	5
1991	8
1992	3
1993	4

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Goosanders

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *107*, if she will give details of the number of goosanders shot on the Duke of Devonshire's estates; and what non-lethal scaring methods were first tried.

Mr. Soames: Between 1 October 1993 and 31 January 1994, seven goosanders have been shot on the Duke of Devonshire's estates. A range of non-lethal scaring methods including human presence, netting and scarecrows have been previously employed.

Birds (Killing)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *108-09*, if she will give reasons in each case for the granting of licences to kill greenfinches, robins and blackbirds in 1990, and robins, blackbirds, thrush, blue tits and wrens in 1992.

Mr. Soames: In each case, the birds were shot for the purpose of preserving public health when they had become trapped inside premises where food supplies were at risk of contamination and where non-lethal methods of removing the birds were ineffective or impractical.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she expects to make a decision on the future of the Agricultural wages board.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *50*.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence she has that bovine spongiform encephalopathy is vertically transmissible, from cow to calf, or horizontally transmissible, from cow to cow.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Laboratory-based studies and epidemiological analyses have provided no unequivocal evidence of either vertical or horizontal transmission of BSE. Research is continuing to address these questions and the results will be published in due course.

A letter published in the veterinary record of 12 February stated that the Ministry is aware of 534 confirmed cases of BSE that were offspring of dams which were confirmed cases. This in itself does not prove that transmission was from dam to calf since interpretation of data has been complicated by the fact that most of the positive offspring had also been exposed to ruminant protein.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list, by county, the number of cases of BSE in each month since January 1992.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of cases of BSE in Great Britain listed by month of confirmation and county from January 1992 to January 1994 inclusive, are as follows:

Total number of cases by month confirmed and county

County/Month: Year	*Jan-92*	*Feb-92*	*Mar-92*	*Apr-92*	*May-92*	*June-92*	*July-92*	*Aug-92*	*Sept-92*	*Oct-92*	*Nov-92*	*Dec-92*	*Total*
Avon	53	37	55	59	47	87	55	41	55	36	94	57	676
Bedfordshire	7	6	3	12	12	7	12	3	9	10	4	11	96
Berkshire	17	14	9	15	12	22	17	16	22	7	14	17	182
Borders	11	8	6	5	10	4	5	9	15	9	9	9	100
Buckinghamshire	18	21	20	14	31	24	28	19	24	14	24	17	254
Cambridgeshire	7	14	5	6	11	7	9	7	8	5	8	4	91
Central	4	4	1	3	1	1	4	1	5	3	6	5	38
Cheshire	86	75	111	89	174	122	209	98	182	167	118	86	1,517
Cleveland	5	1	4	2	4	3	4	1	6	3	6	2	41
Clwyd	31	36	31	63	51	59	38	33	47	52	45	51	537
Cornwall	200	181	180	201	260	309	170	184	166	244	185	175	2,455
Cumbria	92	85	54	101	103	132	86	97	102	115	107	79	1,153
Derbyshire	74	64	60	58	109	72	93	62	78	55	86	65	876
Devon	216	263	240	253	344	427	264	236	235	337	250	200	3,265

County/Month: Year	*Jan-92*	*Feb-92*	*Mar-92*	*Apr-92*	*May-92*	*June-92*	*July-92*	*Aug-92*	*Sept-92*	*Oct-92*	*Nov-92*	*Dec-92*	*Total*
Dorset	185	191	174	199	165	272	145	130	148	117	205	127	2,058
Dumfries	67	40	36	26	22	49	54	36	52	41	51	44	518
Durham	9	10	12	5	19	26	13	7	21	17	14	12	165
Dyfed	144	147	159	118	199	219	146	146	155	165	121	144	1,863
Essex	7	8	15	19	9	15	22	5	10	13	18	27	168
Fife	3	4	6	4	5	7	0	4	3	2	5	12	55
Glamorgan Mid	7	2	1	5	2	2	1	6	4	7	6	2	45
Glamorgan South	10	7	13	7	11	6	9	11	10	10	11	5	110
Glamorgan West	2	0	1	2	2	5	2	5	5	1	2	1	28
Gloucestershire	53	38	46	56	49	87	46	63	69	38	61	61	667
Grampian	15	14	14	26	14	26	22	22	26	27	30	31	267
Gwent	15	16	30	17	21	21	18	16	15	20	27	16	232
Gwynedd	8	6	8	13	14	14	12	14	18	13	17	18	155
Hampshire	63	60	39	59	58	77	86	54	52	41	65	75	729
Hereford and Worcester	32	26	60	38	56	65	55	26	79	46	32	32	549
Hertfordshire	5	4	4	9	6	12	16	6	7	15	9	6	99
Highland	4	2	6	5	4	4	1	4	10	6	7	7	60
Humberside	8	10	12	3	15	22	7	3	11	10	12	22	135
Isle of Wight	14	8	9	13	10	18	11	9	19	7	9	10	137
Kent	46	33	20	26	44	44	39	32	21	21	32	41	399
Lancashire	70	89	70	121	104	142	107	125	86	147	124	115	1,300
Leicestershire	65	45	43	35	58	59	47	59	67	41	60	36	615
Lincolnshire	15	15	14	19	13	20	25	16	17	13	9	21	197
London	2	2	1	2	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	2	23
Lothian	6	3	0	3	7	3	1	1	3	5	7	3	42
Manchester	3	5	3	5	1	5	3	4	6	7	9	6	57
Merseyside	4	3	1	5	1	4	4	2	4	1	4	1	34
Norfolk	80	64	26	55	96	109	87	59	49	33	52	86	796
Northamptonshire	32	26	9	20	31	17	14	29	15	20	28	28	269
Northumberland	7	11	11	21	34	31	21	8	24	19	31	22	240
Nottinghamshire	14	19	7	10	24	18	31	18	14	7	28	16	206
Orkney	0	3	0	2	2	0	1	1	2	3	3	3	20
Oxford	60	51	28	30	54	48	56	32	34	24	28	58	503
Powys	29	20	25	32	59	63	51	23	45	43	37	34	461
Shropshire	49	40	82	50	81	131	73	66	91	69	64	63	859
Shetland	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Somerset	239	239	214	249	209	361	206	187	204	164	309	126	2,707
Staffordshire	39	64	70	87	95	141	81	43	116	89	76	59	960
Strathclyde	41	34	23	18	25	31	43	25	43	46	40	29	398
Suffolk	32	32	17	19	36	37	44	35	31	24	25	24	356
Surrey	20	27	15	20	30	25	27	21	22	13	17	30	267
Sussex, East	38	35	23	30	32	46	39	19	37	11	27	37	374
Sussex, West	70	56	43	62	62	58	52	43	57	28	46	68	645
Tayside	3	11	4	7	6	8	3	6	17	18	15	14	112
Tyne and Wear	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	10
West Midlands	1	0	4	0	3	6	4	2	3	2	2	0	27
Warwickshire	21	19	22	18	31	47	31	11	20	18	17	39	294
Wiltshire	124	111	127	136	103	182	154	94	119	119	69	98	1,436
Yorkshire, North	96	97	106	95	153	175	124	85	164	115	120	141	1,471
Yorkshire, South	4	6	11	10	6	16	12	5	12	10	16	8	116
Yorkshire, West	12	9	18	11	24	24	13	3	25	19	17	20	195

Total number of cases by month confirmed and county

County/Month: Year	*Jan-93*	*Feb-93*	*Mar-93*	*Apr-93*	*May-93*	*June-93*	*July-93*	*Aug-93*	*Sept-93*	*Oct-93*	*Nov-93*	*Dec-93*	*Total*
Avon	82	63	65	55	59	53	38	37	31	57	58	37	635
Bedfordshire	11	8	13	7	4	11	8	6	6	2	9	13	98
Berkshire	21	14	14	8	18	9	8	13	13	15	17	7	157
Borders	15	20	15	11	15	15	5	9	10	10	13	16	154
Buckinghamshire	46	37	30	23	33	21	19	27	19	23	34	21	333
Cambridgeshire	14	15	13	7	12	16	11	7	6	9	12	8	130
Central	3	9	10	1	5	2	11	5	3	4	9	5	67
Cheshire	166	172	136	122	115	142	98	125	100	109	166	106	1,557
Cleveland	6	8	7	4	4	5	0	9	2	5	3	5	58
Clwyd	48	67	54	53	39	67	51	50	48	54	49	44	624
Cornwall	145	318	222	209	129	205	156	79	151	218	135	157	2,124
Cumbria	149	134	117	150	88	94	79	83	104	90	145	95	1,328
Derbyshire	96	84	130	75	54	103	47	64	79	63	96	50	941
Devon	285	330	250	242	209	218	214	281	232	208	253	190	2,912
Dorset	180	181	162	203	107	181	110	163	124	131	178	102	1,822
Dumfries	72	58	68	45	66	66	36	56	22	68	68	46	671
Durham	23	16	14	12	13	14	3	12	12	20	16	16	171
Dyfed	190	229	179	157	151	149	136	119	133	130	194	136	1,903
Essex	20	14	21	13	19	18	14	18	11	15	22	14	199
Fife	13	8	7	8	10	6	3	9	10	8	9	14	105

County/Month: Year	*Jan-93*	*Feb-93*	*Mar-93*	*Apr-93*	*May-93*	*June-93*	*July-93*	*Aug-93*	*Sept-93*	*Oct-93*	*Nov-93*	*Dec-93*	*Total*
Glamorgan Mid	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	1	4	1	10	5	51
Glamorgan South	8	16	11	5	9	7	7	8	9	9	10	7	106
Glamorgan West	6	2	1	0	6	3	3	0	2	6	4	3	36
Gloucestershire	95	57	82	52	50	40	31	47	41	60	63	34	652
Grampian	35	43	29	36	26	34	29	21	27	36	47	33	396
Gwent	27	37	31	19	25	11	16	22	13	13	23	18	255
Gwynedd	17	20	19	11	14	12	9	12	16	17	17	22	186
Hampshire	91	39	106	51	81	63	51	49	67	40	72	29	739
Hereford and Worcester	54	77	52	55	61	38	35	50	58	50	70	46	646
Hertfordshire	17	9	12	6	19	22	4	15	8	14	16	14	156
Highland	12	7	7	5	4	9	4	11	4	6	9	11	89
Humberside	31	19	19	15	20	16	12	22	17	16	13	14	214
Isle of Wight	14	8	24	14	13	18	3	5	8	11	13	6	137
Kent	64	17	34	25	63	52	23	30	48	25	35	39	455
Lancashire	158	105	130	173	103	125	78	89	104	95	120	75	1,355
Leicestershire	88	38	67	59	37	68	51	39	61	38	78	40	664
Lincolnshire	27	5	24	13	23	31	11	16	14	34	25	29	252
London	2	1	8	3	3	4	0	4	1	3	1	4	34
Lothian	8	8	5	6	3	8	3	4	3	9	3	8	68
Manchester	9	3	12	8	12	12	6	4	4	8	11	5	94
Merseyside	2	1	4	5	0	1	1	1	5	0	4	1	25
Norfolk	106	25	80	29	95	107	80	111	76	64	105	88	966
Northamptonshire	43	15	30	17	35	23	15	20	22	19	23	20	282
Northumberland	38	18	32	13	22	20	13	23	14	33	19	35	280
Nottinghamshire	19	18	26	21	27	19	13	16	19	9	19	6	212
Orkney	2	4	5	3	2	1	1	2	2	5	3	3	33
Oxford	66	39	44	44	33	39	21	49	20	24	46	29	454
Powys	56	59	46	49	33	47	45	48	56	36	66	53	594
Shropshire	98	98	80	68	74	90	59	79	61	71	101	67	946
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	287	268	270	220	110	316	163	167	216	175	227	116	2,535
Staffordshire	78	113	97	67	72	118	70	96	92	66	74	49	992
Strathclyde	59	66	47	29	47	50	19	32	26	60	61	44	540
Suffolk	56	22	33	35	48	54	22	44	28	32	47	43	464
Surrey	36	11	32	17	40	24	16	13	17	16	26	21	269
Sussex, East	50	19	36	26	48	49	13	26	22	24	50	31	394
Sussex, West	97	36	62	51	80	66	42	58	50	40	58	62	702
Tayside	19	13	11	12	13	4	12	10	10	17	11	12	144
Tyne and Wear	3	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	16
West Midlands	3	1	4	5	3	1	1	3	2	0	7	5	35
Warwickshire	34	27	43	27	34	29	22	35	27	30	35	27	370
Wiltshire	168	163	166	108	123	127	79	93	97	85	145	81	1,435
Yorkshire, North	181	151	164	97	160	130	106	157	97	143	93	141	1,620
Yorkshire, South	14	16	24	8	9	7	12	13	12	15	5	10	145
Yorkshire, West	29	26	20	13	21	16	17	23	12	25	18	23	243

Number of confirmed cases in January 1994 by county

	Number
Avon	19
Bedfordshire	5
Berkshire	8
Borders	20
Buckinghamshire	18
Cambridgeshire	6
Central	8
Cheshire	102
Cleveland	7
Clwyd	44
Cornwall	79
Cumbria	69
Derbyshire	78
Devon	93
Dorset	75
Dumfries	86
Durham	17
Dyfed	131
Essex	9
Fife	7
Mid Glamorgan	1
South Glamorgan	10
West Glamorgan	2
Gloucestershire	21
Grampian	29
Gwent	10
Gwynedd	10
Hampshire	90
Hereford and Worcester	21
Hertfordshire	5
Highland	13
Humberside	27
Isle of Wight	11
Kent	14
Lancashire	76
Leicestershire	49
Lincolnshire	11
London	1
Lothian	6
Manchester	4
Merseyside	3
Norfolk	38
Northamptonshire	13
Northumberland	40
Nottinghamshire	19
Orkney	3
Oxfordshire	20
Powys	55
Shropshire	70
Somerset	115
Staffordshire	62
Strathclyde	53
Suffolk	30
Surrey	9
East Sussex	31
West Sussex	40

	Number
Tayside	18
Tyne and Wear	3
West Midlands	1
Warwickshire	18
Wiltshire	41
North Yorkshire	161
South Yorkshire	19
West Yorkshire	30

Grants and Licences

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all grants and licences issued by her Department; what is the target response time for applications for these grants and licences; in what form this information is published; and what was the comparable situation in April 1992.

Mr. Jack: An extensive, but not exhaustive, list of grants and licences with relevant target times was published in the Ministry's regional service standard "Commitment to Service" in December 1992. A copy of that document is in the Library of the House. It is planned to publish a revision of "Commitment to Service", which will extend targets to other grant and licence schemes, in May this year. Comparative information on performance against targets will be published later in the year and copies will be available on request from Ministry regional service centres.

EU Fisheries Policy

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations she proposes to have with representatives of the fishing industry to discuss the EU proposal for a Council regulation fixing management objectives and strategies for certain fisheries or groups of fisheries for the period 1994 to 1997; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: This complex proposal has recently been published by the European Commission. It requires clarification and careful study, including by scientists. When Fisheries Departments have obtained fuller information from the Commission and have analysed its implications, discussion will be arranged with representatives of the fishing industry.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to grant notifiable livestock disease status to sheep scab; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Most of the detailed measures on the control of sheep scab were removed by the repeal of secondary legislation in July 1992. The Government have already announced that they intend to use the deregulation order making powers in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, if enacted, to complete this process by amending the Animal Health Act 1981 to remove *(a)* the powers of Ministers to make orders under it on the periodic treatment of sheep scab and *(b)* the obligation on farmers to notify outbreaks of sheep scab. We propose to achieve the second point by removing sheep scab from the definition of "disease" in the Act.

I have no other plans to require the notification of sheep scab.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to grant notifiable livestock disease status to bovine immunodeficiency virus; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: We have no such plans. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), *Official Report*, 10 February column *430*.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents of bovine immunodeficiency virus have been reported for each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: No cases of disease caused by bovine immunodeficiency virus have been identified by the Department in the last five years. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, 18 February column *1057-58*.

Agricultural Development Operational Programme

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions she has had with her ministerial colleague in Northern Ireland concerning the reinstatement of the agricultural development operational programme scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I have been asked to reply on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. She has not had any discussions with my noble Friend concerning the reinstatement of the ADOP scheme. The successor to ADOP forms part of the Northern Ireland structural funds plan that has been submitted direct to the European Commission. Officials from the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland are currently negotiating with the Commission on the detail of the new community support framework, which will implement the plan, and it is hoped that agreement will be reached by May with implementation following as soon as possible thereafter.

Special Conservation Areas

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to ensure that additional resources will be made available to *(a)* English Nature, *(b)* the Countryside Council for Wales, *(c)* the Nature Conservation Committee and *(d)* Scottish Natural Heritage for the designation and management of special areas of conservation in accordance with the EC habitants and species directive 43/92/EEC.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Grant-in-aid to English Nature for the financial year 1994-95 will be £40·4 million, an increase of 6·5 per cent. over 1993-94. Scottish Natural Heritage will receive £39·9 million and the Countryside Council for Wales £20·6 million, increases of 10·4 per cent. and 3·8 per cent. respectively. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee receives its funding from the grants-in-aid made to the other nature conservation agencies, but the level of their funding for 1994-95 has not yet been determined. Resources made available to all the agencies responsible for countryside and nature conservation have increased by over 240 per cent. in real terms over the past 10 years. The Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales have asked nature conservation agencies to give implementation of the habitats directive the highest priority for available resources.

TRANSPORT

Rail Services (Competition)

11. **Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what priority the Government will give to competition in the future development of rail services.

Mr. Freeman: One of the objectives of our railway policy is to increase competition. This will be achieved by, for example, the competitive letting of passenger franchises and by competition between rail freight operating companies.

East London River Crossing

15. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future route of the east London river crossing.

Mr. Norris: The way ahead for the crossing is being considered as part of the national review of the trunk road programme. An announcement will be made in due course.

Blackwall Third Crossing

16. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement about the Blackwall third crossing.

Mr. Norris: We still need to give a good deal of thought to what we should do to respond to the public consultation exercise. Considerable concern was expressed about the environmental consequences of the bridge option. But I also recognise that development of the Greenwich peninsula and other areas of docklands could be hampered by ever-increasing congestion at the current Blackwall crossings. I will make an announcement in due course.

Rail Privatisation

17. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has from previous privatisations of transport industries that passengers will benefit from the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: British Airways has been transformed into one of the world's leading airlines since privatisation, with passengers benefiting from its innovative approach and commitment to high standards of service which regularly win international awards.

The privatisation of bus companies has resulted in great efficiency, more choice, more bus miles, innovative services and lower cost to the taxpayer.

The best way to achieve our obective of improving the quality of service for rail users is to give the private sector similar opportunities to provide existing, and new, rail services.

Heathrow (Night Flights)

18. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the current restrictions on night flights at Heathrow.

Mr. Norris: The current winter season lasts from 24 October 1993 until 27 March this year. During the preceding consultation, we received representations from local authorities, environmental groups, the airports, airlines and aviation bodies. We have aimed to maintain the balance between the needs of the aviation industry and the concerns of local people.

Tower Hill-west Docklands River Crossing

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how investigations are proceeding into the Tower hill-west docklands river crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The relevant local authorities feel it prudent to take a closer look at the condition and operation of Tower bridge and Rotherhithe tunnel. I am sure they are right to do so. The results will help them to decide what, if any, further steps are needed. Therefore, no plans for new river crossings currently exist or are being pursued.

Motorway Charges

20. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the first toll-paying motorway to be opened.

Mr. Key: The introduction of tolling on existing motorways will depend on the development of suitable electronic technology and on Parliament's approval of the necessary legislation. It is not possible to give a target date, although we expect tolling to be technically feasible within about five years.

The privately financed Birmingham northern relief road, a new road which is being promoted under existing legislation, could be open at about the turn of the century, subject to satisfactory completion of the necessary statutory procedures.

25. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he can give comparative figures for the level of motorway charges in other European countries compared with the levels mentioned in his Green Paper, "Paying for Better Motorways".

Mr. Key: As I said in my answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column 79, average tolls for cars on motorways in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal are between about 5p and 10p per mile. In Greece, they are up to 4p per mile. The levels of electronic tolls for cars discussed in the Green Paper were between 0·5p and 1·5p per mile.

A1

21. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to widen the A1 at Newcastle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: There are no current plans to widen the A1 at Newcastle.

East Coast Main Line

22. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with local authorities in the north-east of Scotland relating to the electrification of the east coast main line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 347.

Northern Line

23. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects London Transport to complete modernisation of the Northern line.

Mr. Norris: The implementation of individual investment schemes is a matter for London Underground. I understand that the timing of this project is currently under review.

Transatlantic Air Routes

24. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made towards liberalisation of transatlantic air routes.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) earlier today.

Twyford Down

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on what date the contract with Bray's Detective Agency for surveillance of the Twyford down section of the M3 began; and on what date it will end;

(2) what is the total cost to date of the contract with Bray's Detective Agency for surveillance of the M3, Twyford down section.

Mr. Key: Bray's Detective Agency, Southampton, has been employed since March 1992 to service papers and collect evidence of trespass on the M3 construction site. At present, its contract runs until the end of July 1994. By the end of January this year, the agency had been paid approximately £228,000.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total cost to date of legal action taken against protestors concerning the Twyford down section of the M3.

Mr. Key: The total cost of legal fees to date in connection with action against trespassers on the M3 construction site is approximately £165,000, excluding value added tax.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when it is expected the Twyford down section of the M3 will be completed.

Mr. Key: The motorway is due to be completed in the autumn.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost to date of running the vehicle registration office review in the DVLA; and what budget has been set aside for the whole review.

Mr. Key: The sums are £66,000 and £115,000, including VAT.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total running cost of the voluntary redundancy scheme in the DVLA last year; what were the numbers and grades of the staff taking advantage of the scheme; and from which budget the money originated.

Mr. Key: There were no redundancies. Some 194 staff left DVLA under a voluntary early retirement scheme in March 1993:

Grade	*Numbers*
Support grades 2	22
Support grades 1	2
Administrative assistants	51
Administrative officers	66
Executive officers	26
Higher executive officers	11
Senior executive officers	3
Grade 7	4
Medical officer	1
Typists	5
Personal secretary	1
Typing manager	1
Chief typing manager	1
Stores officer Gd D	1
	194

The total running costs of the scheme, including advance funding of the principal civil service pension fund, amounted to some £3 million from the agency's voted running costs provision.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many grade 7s and above in the DVLA received bonus payments and what was the total cost of those payments, in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: The figures are as follows:

	Number of Payments	*Total Value*
1990-91:	1	£400
1991-92:	5	£2,500
1992-93:	1	£2,250

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each visit made by the chief executive of the DVLA to the Department of Transport Headquarters in Marsham street in the last six months.

Mr. Key: Between August 1993 and January 1994, the chief executive visited the headquarters on 3 August, 2, 17, 22, 27 and 28 September, 12, 22, 27 and 28 October, 4, 5, 12, 23 and 29 November, 7 and 15 December, 10, 12, 13, 17 and 30 January.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much additional funding was made available this financial year to vehicle registration office staff to clear unactioned reports; and from which budget this money came.

Mr. Key: Some £100,000 was made available in November 1993 for selected offices to recruit casual staff or work overtime until 31 March 1994 to meet very high receipts of offence reports from police and traffic wardens. This sum was made available from in-year efficiency savings on other activities of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the figures for travel and subsistence made by the chief executive of the DVLA in the last six and 12 months.

Mr. Key: Expenditure on the chief executive's travel and subsistence over the periods requested were:

Six months	August 1993 to January 1994	£3,530
12 months	February 1993 to January 1994	£8,100

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why additional funding was made available to the DVLA to clear unactioned reports this financial year; and whether extra funds will be made available for the same purpose next year.

Mr. Key: Some £100,000 was made available to deal with specific problems of high levels of unactioned reports. The extra funding is expected to produce 10,000 more successful cases this year worth £640,000 in additional revenue.

The targets and budgets for next year have yet to be decided.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the official car supplied to the chief executive of the DVLA; what was the cost of purchase; and what are then actual running costs.

Mr. Key: The chief executive does not have an official car.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each visit made by the chief executive of the DVLA to vehicle registration offices, London enforcement offices and DVLA area offices in the last six months.

Mr. Key: During the period August 1993 to January 1994, the chief executive visited:

Stoke on Trent vehicle registration office, 5 August.
Birmingham vehicle registration office, 6 August and 28 January.
Edinburgh vehicle registration office and the area office, 18 November.
Dundee vehicle registration office, 18 November.
London enforcement office, Great Marlborough street, 13 December.

M1

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cause of a 10-mile tailback on the M1 north of the junction with the M25 on Monday 14 February; and what steps were taken to issue warning of extensive delays on BBC and other radio stations.

Mr. Key: Following adverse weather conditions, and despite treatment of the carriageways, there were numerous breakdowns on the M1 and M25 motorways during Monday 14 February. As a result there were queues of traffic much greater than normally experienced on Monday mornings.

As is usual in such situations, the media and motoring associations were in regular contact with the police. General and specific warnings of delays and extreme driving conditions were given by national and local radio stations, based on the information provided.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the cost for widening the M1 between junctions 28 and 32.

Mr. Key: The works cost will depend on what options are pursued, but on present estimates it is likely to be around £170 million at 1992 prices.

Cherished Number Transfers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list which vehicle registration offices offer over-the-counter service for cherished number transfers.

Mr. Key: Provision of an over-the-counter service will be determined by a number of factors including the variable demand for this service at different offices and at different times; the need for inspection of the donor vehicle, the availability of trained staff and limitations on parking for vehicles to be inspected.

Currently the service availability is as follows:

Offices providing an over-the-counter service, where no inspection is required.
Aberdeen, Bangor, Bristol, Cardiff, Chester, Exeter, Gloucester, Guildford, Haverfordwest, Hull, Liverpool, Sheffield, Swansea, Taunton.

Offices providing a service within 24 hours, where no inspection is required.
Birmingham, Bournemouth, Leicester, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Portsmouth, Preston, Reading, Shrewsbury, Stoke, Truro.

Offices providing a service within 10 working days.
Brighton, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Coventry, Croydon, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Ilford, Inverness, Ipswich, Leeds, Lincoln, London Central, Luton, Maidstone, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Norwich, Peterborough, Stanmore, Swindon, Worcester.

Of the 51 offices, 14 provide an over-the-counter service, 12 offices provide a 24-hour service, the remaining 25 offices meet the 10-day target date. The majority complete the full processing including inspection within five days.

St. Paul's Avenue, Blackburn

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decision has been made with regard to the application by Blackburn borough council for the closure to vehicles of St. Paul's avenue, Blackburn.

Mr. Key: We have decided to advertise the proposal. A final decision on it will not be taken until any objections have been considered.

Vehicle Registration Office

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account will be taken in the vehicle registration office review of the effect on people with disabilities of the possible closure of the VRO network.

Mr. Key: The needs of all VRO customers, including those with disabilities, will be taken into account when I consider the options for the future of the VRO network.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to discuss with the Police Federation or any disabled groups as part of phase 2 of the vehicle registration office review the options arising from phase 1 of the review.

Mr. Key: The consultants conducting the review on my behalf are taking into account the views of representatives of the police and disabled organisations and other VRO customers in making recommendations on the future of the VRO network.

Drink-driving

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a breakdown by sex, age and occupation of those arrested for drink-driving over the Christmas period.

Mr. Key: Information for the 1993 Christmas campaign is not available. Information about three previous campaigns, relating to convictions rather than arrests, is as follows:

(a) Drink-drive convictions for offences committed between 19 December and 1 January, male and female:

Year	Male	Female	Total
1990-91	4,195	356	4,551
1991-92	3,955	343	4,298
1992-93	2,994	264	3,258

(b) Age distribution of drivers convicted under (a):

Year	20 or less Per cent.	20-30 Per cent.	Over 30 Per cent.
1990-91	11·6	39·9	48·5
1991-92	9·6	41·5	48·9
1992-93	10·0	38·8	51·2

Information on occupation or socio-economic group of drivers convicted is not available.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to conduct a sociological study of hardcore drink-drivers in order to re-evaluate the drink-drive campaigns.

Mr. Key: We have recently established such a study in collaboration with the Portman Group.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* drink related accidents, *(b)* fatal accidents arising from drink-driving and *(c)* drink-related accidents during the Christmas period campaigns occurred in each year since 1986.

Mr. Key: The following table gives estimates of the number of road accidents in each year since 1986 in which at least one driver or motorcycle rider was above the legal alcohol limit and at least one person was *(a)* injured or *(b)* killed. Similar information relating to the periods of the Chistmas campaigns is not available.

	(a) Drink-related road accidents	*(b)* Drink-related fatal road accidents
1986	16,940	850
1987	15,560	780
1988	14,520	680
1989	14,390	700
1990	13,210	650
1991	11,690	570
1992	10,840	510

Seat Belts

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the findings of his review into the provision of seat belts in buses which take children to and from school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I expect to receive a report on the review of the full technical and cost implications of the compulsory fitment of seat belts in minibuses and coaches within the next few weeks. I cannot anticipate when decisions will be taken; but we shall be publishing our conclusions.

Rail (Financing Limit)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is now in a position to announce the external financing limit for British Rail, Railtrack and the franchising director from 1 April for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Freeman: The external finance limits for the railway industry were announced in the unified Budget. The division of these external finance limits between British Rail and Railtrack, and the grant level for 1994-95 will be published in the Department of Transport Report in March.

European Passenger Services Ltd

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his plans are for the future ownership of European Passenger Services Ltd.

Mr. MacGregor: On 11 November 1993 I announced the Government's intention to privatise EPS by transferring it as part of the Government's financial contribution, to the private sector partner chosen to construct and operate the channel tunnel rail link, CTRL. As a first step in this process I have decided to transfer the company to Government ownership as soon as the necessary legal and contractual changes can be made. Mr. P. J. Butler, CBE, FCA, the immediate past senior partner of KPMG Peat Marwick will become a member of the BR board on 1 March and chairman of EPS in April. Mr. Butler will manage the tranfer of EPS from BR to Government ownership.

Woodford Aerodrome

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Tansport if the Civil Aviation Authority has granted full category 4 standard, as laid down by documents CAP 168, at Woodford aerodrome in Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for the safety regulation of civil aviation in the United Kingdom. Its fire safety branch has informed me that its records show that in accordance with document CAP 168, the scale of rescue and fire-fighting services, RFFS, provided at Woodford aerodrome has been to category 4 standard for the past five years. There is no evidence of a proposal to change the scale of protection currently being provided.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 27 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. Norris: Some questions have already been answered. The others will be answered in due course.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what work the railway inspectorate of the health and safety inspectorate has done to determine if a long tunnel under Boxley valley on the channel tunnel rail link would have to be a twin bore tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The extra cost of the mid Kent long tunnel compared with the short tunnel is around £65 million, based on twin track in a single bore, which the Government did not consider was justified. Union Railways needs take no further its safety studies and discussions with Her Majesty's railway inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive on the acceptability of a single bore for the rejected long tunnel option. Single tracks in twin bores would have cost a further £50 million for the long tunnel.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what compensation arrangements will apply for those properties affected by the channel tunnel rail link which lie outside the safeguarded zone.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to the answers given on 15 February to my hon. Friend and to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), *Official Report*, column *724*.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision has been made for appeal against decisions by Union Railways on compensation due to the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: The Lands Tribunal would settle any disputes on statutory compensation for compulsory purchase and compensation for loss of value due to the physical effects of the operation of the railway—available 12 months after the railway opens under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973. If agreement cannot be reached on advance voluntary purchase of homes within the surface safeguarded area, blight notices could be served and any disputes could then be settled by the Lands Tribunal. The purchase scheme in cases of hardship, for homes likely to be affected by noise above the threshold for noise insulation compensation, is not a statutory requirement and decisions are entirely at the discretion of Union Railways. Provision for property purchases has been made within the present public expenditure survey.

Typists

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by annual staff report marking the number of typists receiving box 1, box 2, box 3, box 4 and box 5 performance markings in the last year.

Mr. Norris: In the reporting year 1991-92—the last full year for which figures are available—six typists received box 1; 147 box 2; 181 box 3; and four box 4 ASR markings. No typist received a box 5 marking.

Track Charges

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning access to track charges on Britain's railways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend received various representations since the Government's proposals for charging for access to the railways were first set out in February 1993. The proposed approach to initial charges to be adopted by Railtrack from 1 April was set out in my right hon. Friend's reply to a question from the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *716-17*.

Horse Users and Cyclists, London

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the number of horse users and cyclists using the roads of London currently and 10 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no records of the numbers of horses owned or ridden in London.

The estimated number of Londoners—defined here as people resident within the M25—using cycles on a typical weekday, excluding school holidays, is:

Year	*Number*
1991	138,000
1981	185,000

Data are not available for 1971.

Stonehenge

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take part in the international conference and exhibition in support of the proposal by English Heritage for a long bored tunnel under the Stonehenge world heritage site to take traffic at present using the A303 trunk road.

Mr. Norris: Yes. Those attending would wish to know the highway authority's requirements for the safe construction, use and maintenance of such a solution in such a location.

Class A Roads

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the locations at which road calmers have been allowed on class A roads.

Mr. Key: This information is not collected centrally. Where highway authorities wish to use road humps or other traffic calming features which conform with the established regulations, they are free to do so without reference to the Department of Transport.

M25

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to publish full and final proposals for link roads alongside the M25 between junctions 12 and 15; and when he expects the public inquiry to begin.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* I expect to publish draft orders for the M25 link roads between junctions 12 and 15 following completing of the road programme review. This should lead to the public inquiry starting towards the end of the year.

Sir Christopher Thompson

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the appointment of Sir Christopher Thompson, his special adviser on the privatisation of British Rail, as a director of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 25 November 1993, *Official Report,* column *102.*

Sir Christopher Foster

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report,* column *102,* if he will set out those terms of his original appointment of Sir Christopher Foster which prevented conflicts of interest arising between his role as adviser to the Department of Transport and his position as a director of Coopers and Lybrand.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The arrangements for Sir Christopher Foster's secondment to the Secretary of State for Transport as special adviser stated that he would be subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts and would be expected to abide by the conditions and rules governing the conduct of civil servants. In particular, he would be required to observe the rules governing political activities and the need to avoid situations that may lead to conflicts of interest.

Greece (Marine Pollution)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations have been made to the Greek authorities since May 1993 in respect of the alleged dumping of coal residue in international waters west of Shetland in 1992 by the Greek registered vessel MV Tigris; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Following the outcome of the investigation by the Greek authorities, notified to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in May 1993, and set out in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 June at column *530,* no further representations have been made to the Greek authorities.

My Department has discussed with the Treasury Solicitor and the aviation and maritime department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office whether the case can be taken further, either in the United Kingdom or with the Greek authorities, to try to secure a prosecution under MARPOL. The outcome of these discussions is that without any new evidence, no further progress can be made.

Railtrack

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that a fixed minimum proportion of Railtrack's income from rail franchisees is re-allocated to the franchise director; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend set out the approach to charges for access to Railtrack's network in his reply to a question from the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 15 February at column *716.* Income to Railtrack from franchised train operators will be set at a level to allow Railtrack to recover its costs, including a return on capital. The franchising director will have sufficient grant to enable franchisees to pay access charges in respect of socially necessary services.

Stanwell Buses Ltd.

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects Stanwell Buses Ltd., trading as Westlink, to be sold.

Mr. Norris: London Buses Ltd. sold Stanwell Buses Ltd., trading as Westlink, to a management buy-out team for £1·937 million on 19 January.

WALES

Woodland Planting Schemes

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to offer new grants to encourage the participation of farmers in woodland planting schemes in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government are keen to encourage the participation of farmers in woodland planting schemes in Wales. The forestry review group is now reviewing the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, and Ministers expect to receive the review group's advice soon.

Nurses

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the total number of full-time nurses employed by the national health service for each health authority and for Wales as a whole for each year since 1964.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available, which relates to directly employed nursing and midwifery staff in post as at 30 September, is given in the tables. Information for years prior to 1979 is not readily available.

Number of full-time nurses

	Health Authority area										
	Clwyd	*East Dyfed*	*Pembrokeshire*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*	*Common services authority*[1]	*Wales*
Excluding learners											
1979	1,785	[2]1,375	[2]—	1,947	1,138	2,404	530	2,023	1,463	—	12,665
1980	1,900	[2]1,406	[2]—	2,083	1,167	2,530	567	2,111	1,514	—	13,278

	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Pembrokeshire	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Common services authority[1]	Wales
1981	2,021	[2]1,427	[2]—	2,153	1,244	2,691	576	2,246	1,653	—	14,011
1982	2,095	1,192	291	2,194	1,217	2,729	617	2,408	1,723	—	14,466
1983	2,139	1,269	277	2,292	1,245	2,778	682	2,373	1,807	—	14,862
1984	2,200	1,355	301	2,328	1,316	2,869	676	2,529	1,841	—	15,415
1985	2,233	1,314	321	2,321	1,433	3,003	688	2,698	1,934	—	15,945
1986	2,259	1,373	317	2,305	1,386	3,094	668	2,690	1,994	—	16,086
1987	2,223	1,403	309	2,291	1,432	3,285	660	2,782	2,052	—	16,437
1988	2,190	1,382	324	2,322	1,448	3,265	700	2,952	2,028	2	16,613
1989	2,194	1,371	339	2,438	1,478	3,289	704	3,033	2,057	6	16,909
1990	2,163	1,436	346	2,450	1,492	3,321	666	3,050	2,068	10	17,002
1991	2,246	1,420	365	2,380	1,502	3,312	688	2,943	2,076	66	16,998
1992[3]	2,275	1,449	344	2,343	1,519	3,461	651	3,122	2,189	67	17,420
1993[3]	2,221	1,443	238	2,216	1,567	3,409	618	3,087	2,217	68	17,084
Learners[4]											
1979	468	[2]316	[2]—	509	237	767	59	736	498	—	3,590
1980	467	[2]339	[2]—	509	268	708	66	767	506	—	3,630
1981	541	[2]330	[2]—	521	290	758	81	843	571	—	3,935
1982	552	282	60	524	275	784	76	811	562	—	3,926
1983	527	262	54	501	241	726	77	799	534	—	3,721
1984	500	230	43	540	245	734	77	754	506	—	3,629
1985	521	236	34	516	254	703	80	697	500	—	3,541
1986	505	253	43	496	240	671	78	661	520	—	3,467
1987	514	239	35	439	237	699	84	706	494	—	3,447
1988	524	212	32	395	226	713	71	680	481	—	3,334
1989	470	204	47	352	218	647	57	645	477	—	3,117
1990	406	210	56	364	230	618	53	628	502	—	3,067
1991	296	208	56	366	165	612	50	678	480	—	2,911
1992[3]	168	138	36	239	99	438	34	455	338	—	1,945
1993[3]	67	70	21	120	30	253	23	250	183	—	1,017

Note:

The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 onwards may affect the comparability of figures as these staff cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included above. This affects figures for Pembrokeshire in particular.

[1] Welsh Health Common Services Authority. Includes blood transfusion service nurses from 1991 (transferred from South Glamorgan).

[2] Pembrokeshire figures included with East Dyfed.

[3] Includes staff employed by NHS trusts.

[4] Since the autumn of 1991 student nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in the NHS staff figures. Staff included here are students finishing courses begun before this date. At 1 October 1993 there were about 1,900 Project 2000 nursing students in Wales.

NHS Administration

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in the national health service in 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The total cost of employing administrative and clerical staff in the national health service (in Wales) in 1979-80 was £27,816,043.

Source:

Health Authorities Annual Accounts.

Note:

The total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff is taken to be that covering salaries and wages. The health authorities annual accounts for 1979-80, however, do not separately identify costs in each of the above four categories.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the total number of *(a)* senior managers, *(b)* managers and *(c)* total senior managers and managers for each health authority and for Wales as a whole for each year since 1964.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information relating to the whole-time equivalent numbers of managers employed as at 30 September is given in the following table. Due to the regrading of staff during 1989 comparable data are not available for previous years.

Health authority area	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*[1]	*1993*[1]
Clwyd:					
Senior managers	11	18	22	26	30
Other managers	16	33	76	110	117
Total	27	51	98	136	147
East Dyfed:					
Senior managers	6	13	22	27	31
Other managers	5	23	39	43	71
Total	11	36	61	70	102
Gwent:					
Senior managers	7	7	9	8	11
Other managers	—	44	60	75	118
Total	7	51	69	83	129
Gwynedd:					
Senior managers	8	19	19	30	32
Other managers	—	2	12	36	42
Total	8	21	31	66	74
Mid Glamorgan:					
Senior managers	12	15	22	12	15
Other managers	—	20	67	78	117
Total	12	35	89	90	132
Pembrokeshire:					
Senior managers	6	5	4	—	—
Other managers	5	11	13	3	1
Total	11	16	17	3	1

Health authority area	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*[1]	*1993*[1]
Powys:					
Senior managers	5	4	12	12	15
Other managers	3	21	26	27	37
Total	8	25	38	39	52
South Glamorgan:					
Senior managers	25	28	32	37	27
Other managers	36	59	101	150	156
Total	61	87	133	187	183
West Glamorgan:					
Senior managers	8	12	14	16	16
Other managers	21	55	65	73	77
Total	29	67	79	89	93
Welsh Health Common Services Authority:					
Senior managers	10	18	22	29	39
Other managers	3	9	48	57	78
Total	13	27	70	86	117
Wales:					
Senior managers	98	139	178	197	215
Other managers	89	277	505	651	813
Total	187	416	683	848	1,028

[1] Includes staff employed by NHS trusts.

Notes:

Includes staff employed by those Family Health Service Authorities using Health Authority payroll systems.

The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 onwards may affect the comparability of figures as those staff cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included above. This affects figures for Pembrokeshire in particular.

The growth in the number of staff in the table arises from the extension in 1989 of senior manager/manager terms and conditions of service to "second and third level managers" and the resulting reclassification of a number of staff in 1989 and subsequent years.

Certain responsibilities and staff have transferred to the Common Services Authority from health authorities in recent years, affecting the comparability of figures over time.

Asthma

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning the allocation of resources to the treatment and prevention of asthma; and what studies his Department has made of its incidence in childhood.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Health authorities are expected to assess the health needs of their local populations and identify future action in their local strategies for health. The Protocol for Investment in Health Gain for Respiratory Diseases, published in February 1992, includes specific targets for asthma.

The Welsh Office has funded three projects under the Welsh scheme for the development of health and social research, which have looked specifically at childhood asthma. In addition, the Welsh Medical Committee has established a working party on asthma, charged with assessing the current provision for asthma and recommending appropriate development. The working party is expected to report to the Secretary of State shortly.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many special consultants there are in asthma practice in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information relating to the numbers of consultants working in the NHS in Wales is collected centrally on the basis of specialties recognised by the royal colleges. Asthma is not one of these recognised specialties and hence the information requested is not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the effect upon asthma sufferers of air pollution in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Evidence suggests that asthma attacks in those who already suffer from asthma may be triggered by episodes of air pollution. Regular monitoring of air quality in Wales shows that pollution levels are generally within European Community and World Health Organisation guideline limits.

The committee on the medical effects of air pollutants has set up a sub-group on asthma which will investigate the relationship between air pollution and trends in asthma incidence, and will make recommendations to Government on research.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he proposes to protect the health of asthma sufferers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since July 1993, GP practices receive payments for organising specific programmes for the care of patients with asthma. Initial evidence shows a 90 per cent. take-up level amongst GPs organising such programmes in Wales. The Welsh Medical Committee working party on asthma has been charged with assessing the current provision of help for asthma sufferers, to identify deficiencies and to recommend appropriate developments.

A range of measures are also being taken to reduce air pollution in Wales, including tighter controls on industry and improved standards for road vehicles. Air quality is also regularly monitored by the Government and local authorities. The air quality helpline, freephone 0800 556677, provides a public information service, enabling asthmatics to take steps to reduce their exposure, should air pollution levels become high.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the proposed new unitary council ward boundaries and details for all parts of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A copy of the proposals for the electoral areas to be used for the first elections to the proposed unitary authorities were placed in the Library of the House on Thursday 10 February. My right hon. Friend is currently consulting the two local authority associations, individual authorities and the Local Government Boundary Commission on these proposals. The consultation closes on 31 March. Final decisions rest with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. Following the first elections to the new authorities, the Local Government Boundary Commission would conduct a full review of all unitary authority electoral areas in Wales.

River Dee Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the date and costs of the construction of the new River Dee crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The scheme is estimated to cost £55 million and to start in 1994-95. The precise date is a matter for Clwyd county council.

Aston Hill, Queensferry Dual Carriageway

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the date and costs of the widening and improvement of the Shotwitch, Drome Corner, Queensferry, Aston Hill dual carriageway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The details are as follows:

Scheme	*Estimated cost £ million*	*Timing indication*
A550 Deeside Park—Drome Corner	16	Before April 1996
A494 Drome Corner—Ewloe Interchange	25	Between April 1996 and March 1999

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to hold a public inquiry concerning his plans to widen the Aston Hill, Queensferry dual carriageway.

Mr. Redwood: The Department has not yet published its proposals in the form of draft trunk road orders for the scheme. The need for a public inquiry into the orders cannot be assessed at this stage.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received covering the Aston Hill, Queensferry dual carriageway road-widening scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister of State gave him on 25 November 1993 at column *149*.

NHS Directorate

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what proposals he has to review the organisation of the national health service directorate in Wales and the policy-making health function in his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date John Wyn Owen will cease to be director of the national health service in Wales; what proposals he has to fill the vacancy created; in what way he proposes to advertise the vacancy; and what organisational alterations he will make to the responsibilities of the national health service director, Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Mr. John Wyn Owen will leave his present post on 18 March.

An announcement about future organisational arrangements for dealing with health matters within the Welsh Office will be made shortly.

Grant-maintained Schools Foundation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the resourcing and staffing of the Grant-maintained Schools Foundation with respect to its activities in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The foundation does not receive any assistance, financial or otherwise, from the Welsh Office.

Pembrokeshire NHS Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Pembrokeshire national health service trust in relation to compensation for loss of office and transfer of contract obligations to the Welsh Office for senior staff of the trust.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has had no consultations with the chairman of the Pembrokeshire NHS trust on such matters.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of NHS trusts in Wales in respect of disqualification conditions for service as chairmen; and if he will list the primary causes of disqualification applicable to the holding of such office.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Regulation 11 of the National Health Service Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990 (Statutory Instrument 1990 No. 2024) prescribes the circumstances in which persons are disqualified for appointment as chairmen of NHS trusts. A copy of the regulations is in the Vote Office. Before candidates accept appointment as chairmen they have first to confirm that none of these disqualifications apply.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales concerning the cost of the press conference to announce the retirement of the executive director and the professional fees of Golley Slater Public Relations in relation to the press conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* None. The press conference was a matter for the former chief executive.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 22 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Privity of Contract

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to meet the British Retail Consortium to discuss its concerns regarding privity of contract.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Arrangements are being made for a meeting at the earliest convenient date.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Correspondence

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North which was transferred to him by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland concerning the seizure of arms from MV Inowroclaw.

Sir John Cope: I replied to this letter on Tuesday 22 February 1994.

Regina *v.* Charrington

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by whom an application for public interest immunity was made in the case of Regina *v.* Charrington and others; and for what reason.

Sir John Cope: No public immunity certificates were signed by Ministers in this case.

Money Laundering

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action his Department is taking to prevent money laundering, particularly with regard to profits from drug trafficking.

Mr. Nelson: Domestically, the Treasury has introduced the Money Laundering Regulations 1993, which come into force on 1 April. This legislation requires all financial institutions to identify all customers opening business relations with them or conducting large transactions, to keep records of identification evidence and of transactions for at least five years to assist any subsequent money laundering investigations, to train staff in anti-money laundering policies and practices, to report suspicions of money laundering to the authorities and to co-operate with those authorities on request. Together with the Criminal Justice Act 1993, these regulations implement the EC money laundering directive in the United Kingdom.

Internationally, Treasury officials have been actively involved in the work of the financial action task force on money laundering—FATF—established by the 1989 economic summit. The FATF has developed a set of 40 recommendations designed to tackle all aspects of money laundering, and in particular the laundering of the proceeds of drug trafficking. The task force, to which 26 Governments now belong, is in the process of evaluating its own members to assess the effectiveness of their money laundering counter-measures. It has also developed a programme of international seminars and conferences with the aim of achieving the widest possible dissemination in all countries of its recommendations. The United Kingdom currently holds the presidency of the task force.

The Treasury is also working closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to improve the money laundering legislation in the United Kingdom's dependent territories.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Ministers, and on what occasion and for what reasons, have signed public interest immunity certificates since 1979.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* There is no central record containing the information requested.

European Funds (Wales)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts, expressed in pounds sterling, were received by Wales for each year between 1989 and 1993 from *(a)* the European regional development fund, *(b)* the European social fund, *(c)* the European agricultural diversification fund, *(d)* all other EU initiatives, including SPRINT, STRIDE and INTERREG and *(e)* in total.

Mr. Redwood: I have been asked to reply.

I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Omasase Lumumba

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service in respect of prosecution in the case of the death of Omasase Lumumba.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service received a report from the Metropolitan police relating to the circumstances of the death of Omasase Lumumba and a transcript of evidence given at the inquest into the death and came to the conclusion that the evidence was not sufficient to justify the institution of proceedings against any person.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by the Bosnian Muslim forces to demilitarise Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on these issues.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations Security Council resolutions 824 and 836, which set up the safe areas of

Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, call for an end to attacks on and demilitarisation of these areas. We continue to urge all parties to comply fully with these resolutions. United Nations efforts also continue towards securing compliance.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last communicated with the Bosnian-Serb leadership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary attended the meeting between European Union Foreign Ministers and the Bosnian parties on 29 November 1993. I attended a further such meeting on 22 December 1993.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the level of fighting between Muslim and Croat forces in central Bosnia during the past seven days; and what efforts Her Majesty's Government are making to try to secure a ceasefire between these armies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fighting continues between Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Muslim forces in central Bosnia. Discussions are taking place between Croatia and the Bosnian Government, but so far there has been no agreement on a ceasefire. Bringing an end to this fighting is a high priority within the international efforts to bring about a political settlement in Bosnia.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to relieve the siege of Mostar; what representations have been made to the besieging Croat forces; and what plans there are to require the Croat forces to surrender their heavy weapons to the United Nations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The situation in Mostar is of grave concern. The European Union plan of action calls for Mostar to be put under European Union administration. Both the Bosnian and Croatian Governments have accepted this in principle as part of an overall settlement. Meanwhile, efforts continue to alleviate the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Money Laundering

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken through the European Union to prevent money laundering, particularly with regard to profits from drug trafficking.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In June 1991, the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers adopted a directive—91/308/EEC—on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering. It specifically requires prohibition of money laundering where the money laundered is the proceeds of drug trafficking.

Member states were required to implement the directive by 1 January 1993. Provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1993, together with Her Majesty's Treasury's Money Laundering Regulations 1993, brought United Kingdom legislation into line with the directive.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position on international co-operation to prevent money laundering particularly related to the drug traffic.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances commits all signatories to introduce legislation against laundering the proceeds of drug trafficking, and measures to trace, freeze and confiscate these proceeds. There are currently 96 signatories, including the United Kingdom.

The Council of Europe convention on laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime was opened for signature in November 1990. The United Kingdom was the first country to ratify it on 28 September 1992. The purpose of the convention is to facilitate international co-operation in these areas against all types of crime, including drug trafficking.

In addition, the United Kingdom has established bilateral agreements to trace, freeze and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking with 29 countries.

The United Kingdom also plays an active role in the financial action task force and holds the presidency this year. The FATF, which consists of all members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development together with Hong Kong and Singapore, has drawn up 40 recommendations to prevent money laundering. The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Limassol last October agreed, at the Prime Minister's initiative to call for the early implementation of the FATF recommendations throughout the Commonwealth.

Turkey

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Turkish ambassador to discuss reports of ethnic cleansing of Kurdish areas of south-east Turkey.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the question of south-east Turkey when he visited Ankara on 19 and 20 January. He has no plans to meet the Turkish ambassador to discuss this subject.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the general agreement on tariffs and trade and all supporting papers in the Library.

Mr. Goodlad: A copy of the 15 December version of the final act embodying the results of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations has already been placed in the Library. A copy of the definitive version of the final act, which will be signed in Marrakech in April, will be placed in the Library.

Ngo Van Ha

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proposed repatriation to Vietnam from Hong Kong of Ngo Van Ha.

Mr. Goodlad: The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Hong Kong determined that Ngo Van Ha was not a refugee on the basis of internationally accepted criteria, including the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees. In light of a submission made by Ha's lawyer last month, UNHCR is re-examining the case. It has undertaken not to repatriate Ha until these inquiries are complete.

Housing Assistance Scheme

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report,* column 587, what are the criteria and rules applying to the housing assistance scheme advances, including the circumstances under which advances can be written off; what were the total amounts advanced under the scheme in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94; and how many staff were assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

The criteria and rules of the diplomatic housing assistance scheme

To qualify for an advance of salary for house purchase diplomatic service officers must be buying, for the first time, a house within normal commuting distance from London or Hanslope Park. They may apply for the advance at any time during or after a substantive tour of duty abroad. Application must be made at the time of purchase.

Repayment of the advance may be spread over a maximum of nine years following an initial three-year grace period. Any amount outstanding at retirement, resignation or death is recovered immediately.

The advance is subject to a range of maxima—the highest of which is currently £10,500—related to current salary scales and in any case will not exceed the difference between the purchase price and the mortgage obtained.

All applications must be supported by documentary evidence, normally in the form of a solicitor's letter indicating the purchase price of the property, the mortgage obtained and the expected completion date.

Circumstances under which advances may be written off

The officer must sign an undertaking to repay any outstanding balance on leaving the diplomatic service for any reason, or in the case of death. This is recovered by abating the accrued superannuation or death entitlement due to the officer. These entitlements are thus used as security when early recovery is required. In cases where this security is not sufficient, recovery would be pursued vigorously if necessary, including recourse to legal action up to the point where the cost of that might exceed the benefit of recovery, in accordance with the provisions of government accounting. But in fact no advance has been written off since the scheme was introduced in 1975.

Total amounts advanced

	£	*Staff*
1992-93	549,321·05	66
[1]1993-94	769,800·50	90

[1] To date.

The figures for the ODA scheme to which I referred in my reply of 19 January are:

	£	*Staff*
1992-93	18,736	2
1993-94	27,693	3

Military Equipment Sales

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries to which the United Kingdom has sold military equipment following upon intergovernmental discussion at a ministerial level and where a protocol or other memoranda have been drawn up linking overseas aid to the supply of military equipment or military services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 25 January, *Official Report,* columns 145-46. I repeat that our aid programme is not linked to arms sales.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Health and Safety

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the qualifications required by his Department of a candidate for appointment as a health and safety officer at the grade of HPTO.

Mr. David Davis: When recruitment was centrally co-ordinated, with standardised entry criteria, the basic qualification for the grade of HPTO was a relevant degree plus two years' training/experience. In May 1993 authority to set appropriate eligibility criteria for non-scheduled grades—which includes HPTO—was delegated to Ministers in charge of Departments. Within my own Department there are no health and safety officers in the grade of HPTO.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current membership of the Medical Research Council is as follows:

Sir David Plastow (Chairman)
Sir Dai Rees FRS (Secretary)
Mr. R. P. Bauman
Professor Colin L. Berry
Professor M. Bobrow
Professor Alasdair M. Breckenridge FRSE
Dr. K. C. Calman FRSE
Sir Michael Carlisle
Dr. J. T. Carter
Professor M. Dexter
Dr. Peter Doyle CBE
Professor C. R. W. Edwards
Professor John G. Evans
Professor Robert E. Kendell CBE
Sir Aaron Klug FRS
Miss Emma Nicholson MP
Professor John R. Pattison
Professor Michael Peckham
Professor Sir Michael L. Rutter CBE FRS
Professor Sir David Weatherall FRS

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who are the members currently appointed to the Economic and Social Research Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The current membership of the Economic and Social Research Council is as follows:

Professor H. Newby, *(Chairman)* FRSA
Ms J. Abramsky
Professor M. Anderson, FBA, FRSE
Professor V. Bruce, FBPsS
Dr. W. Daniel
Ms E. Filkin
Professor J. Finch
Professor R. Floud, FRHISTS

Mr. J. Fox
Mr. R. Freeman
Professor J. Goodman, CIPM
Mr. N. Glass
Miss C. Hancock
Dr. J. Harbison, FBPsS, FPSI
Professor D. Hargreaves
Professor A. Hay
Professor D. Kavanagh
Professor S. Nickell, FBA
Mrs. M. Tuck, CBE, FHRS

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what is the objective of removing equal opportunities requirements from private contractors for Government contracts.

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 20 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *776*.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.

Mr. Sproat: The seven current members of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art are:

Mr. Jonathan Scott *(Chairman)*
Mr. Henry Fothringham
Professor Francis Haskell
Mr. Gervase Jackson-Stops, OBE
Dr. Jennifer Montagu
Mr. Jack Baer
The Hon. Georgina Stonor, O.StJ.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the imperial war museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the imperial war museum are:

Field Marshal Lord Bramall, KG, GCB, OBE, MC, JP *(Chairman)*
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of Australia
General Sir Peter de la Billiere, KCB, KBE, DSO, MC
Admiral Sir Jeremy Black, GBE, KCB, DSO
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of Canada
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of New Zealand
Mrs. Anne Heseltine
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of India
Sir Edward Jackson, KCMG
HRH The Duke of Kent, KG, GCMG GCVO
J. K. Ledlie, Esq
The Rt. Rev. Michael Mann, KCVO
Professor Robert O'Neill, AO, DPhil
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of Pakistan
I. Jonathan Scott, Esq, FSA
Dennis Silk, Esq, MA
Major General George Sinclair, CB, CBE
HE The High Commissioner of the Government of Sri Lanka
Ian Smart, Esq
Lady Vaizey

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national gallery.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trustees of the national gallery are:

Nicholas Hugo Baring, Esq *(Chairman)*
Lady Airlie, CVO
Alan Bennett, Esq
Lady Bingham
Bamber Gascoigne, Esq FRSL
Mrs. Elizabeth Mari Monck
Sir A. Derek M. Oulton, GCB QC MA PhD
Sir Mark Richmond, ScD FRS
Hon. Simon Sainsbury
Sir Keith Thomas
Peter Troughton, Esq
Euan Uglow, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who are the members currently appointed to the board of the natural history museum.

Mr. Sproat: The members of the board of trusteese of the natural history museum are:

Sir Walter Bodmer, KT FRS FRCPath *(Chairman)*
Baroness Blackstone
Raymond John Carter, Esq CBE
Mrs. Jennifer d'Abo
Professor Sir Brian Follett, FRS
Sir Owen Green, KT
Professor John L. Harper, CBE FRS
Sir Denys Henderson, CBIM FRSA
Sir Anthony Laughton, FRS
Professor Robert McCredie May, FRS
Dame Anne McLaren, FRS FRCOG
Professor Sir Ronald Oxburgh, FRS
Sir Crispin Tickell

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The following list contains details of those responsible for making appointments to the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department of National Heritage.

Name of body	*Appointment of chairman by*	*Appointment of members by*
Arts Council	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
British Film Institute	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
British Library	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage (12) Her Majesty The Queen (1)
British Tourist Authority (BTA)	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
Broadcasting Complaints Commission	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
Broadcasting Standards Council	Secretary of State for National Heritage	
Crafts Council	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
English Tourist Board (ETB)	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
Football Licensing Authority	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage

Name of body	*Appointment of chairman by*	*Appointment of members by*
Historical Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (English Heritage)	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
British Museum	Trustees	Her Majesty The Queen (1) Prime Minister (15) President of the Royal Society (1) President of the Royal Academy (1) President of the British Academy (1) President of the Society of Antiquaries of London (1) Trustees (5)
Geffrye Museum	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage (4) Trustees (8)
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage (5) Trustees (10)
Horniman Museum	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage (4) Trustees (8)
Imperial War Museum	Her Majesty The Queen (The President of the Board) Trustees (Chairman)	Her Majesty The Queen (1) Prime Minister (10) Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2) Government of Canada (1) Government of New Zealand (1) Government of Pakistan (1) Government of Sri Lanka (1) Government of India (1) Government of Australia (1)
Museum of London	Trustees	Prime Minister (9) Corporation of London (9)
National Gallery	Trustees	Prime Minister (13) Trustees of the Tate Gallery (1)
Natural History Museum	Trustees	Prime Minister (8) Trustees (3) President of the Royal Society (1)
National Maritime Museum	Trustees	Prime Minister (12)
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage (20)
National Museum of Science and Industry	Prime Minister	Prime Minister (20)
National Portrait Gallery	Trustees	Prime Minister (16)
Sir John Soane's Museum	Trustees	Trustees (4) President of the Royal Society of Arts (1) President of Royal Society (1) President of the Royal Academy (1) President of the Society of Antiquaries of London (1) Corporation of London (1)
Tate Gallery	Trustees	Prime Minister (11) Trustees of the National Gallery (1)
Victoria and Albert Museum	Prime Minister	Prime Minister (20)
Wallace Collection	Trustees	Prime Minister (6)
Millennium Commission	Her Majesty the Queen	Her Majesty the Queen
Museums and Galleries Commission	Prime Minister	Prime Minister (15)
National Film and Television School	Secretary of State for National Heritage	The Board on recommendation of the Secretary of State for National Heritage
National Film Development Fund	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
National Heritage Memorial Fund	Prime Minister	Prime Minister
Registrar of Public Lending Right (PLR)	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage Her Majesty The Queen (2)
Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)	Her Majesty The Queen	Her Majesty The Queen
South Bank Theatre Board	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage
Sports Council	Secretary of State for National Heritage	Secretary of State for National Heritage

ENVIRONMENT

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits abroad the Minister for Housing made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Sir George Young: I made one departmental visit abroad during 1993. This was to Beirut, heading a construction industry trade mission. The cost to public funds was £2,147 and the purpose was to help win orders for United Kingdom construction companies in a competitive international marketplace.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits abroad the Minister for the Environment and Countryside made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Atkins: My predecessors made 13 departmental visits abroad during 1993, at a total cost of £34,036. Details of the places visited and the purpose of each visit are set out.

Place visited	*Reason*
Belgium (Brussels)	EC Environment Council.
Luxembourg	EC joint Energy and Environment Council.
Germany (Berlin) and Switzerland (Zurich and Lucerne)	BWIG conference "Wasser Berlin" and "Environment for Europe" Ministers conference.
Denmark (Copenhagen)	Informal EC Environment Council.
Luxembourg	EC Environment Council.
China and Japan	British construction industry mission to China. Discussion of environmental and construction issues with new Japanese Government.
Luxembourg	EC Environment Council.
Germany (Frankfurt and Bonn)	Meeting with German Environment Minister about EC packaging directive.
Belgium (Brussels)	EC symposium on environment and development.
USA (Los Angeles)	To study United States approach to air pollution, energy management and the use of economic instruments.
Belgium (Brussels)	EC Environment Council.
Denmark (Copenhagen)	Intermediate ministerial meeting on the North sea.
Belgium (Brussels)	EC Environment Council.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many visits abroad the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and (b) the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Curry: My predecessor made no departmental visits abroad in 1993. In my capacity as Minister for Local Government and Planning, I made two departmental visits abroad during 1993. These were to the Netherlands to attend an EC Council of Ministers meeting and to the United States to examine local government and planning practices and to discuss issues of mutual concern with my counterparts in the US Administration. The cost to public funds of these two visits was £10,590.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the total cost in 1992-93 of management agreements between English Nature and owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest to (i) compensate for profit forgone and (ii) facilitate positive conservation management.

Mr. Atkins: There were 1,840 such management agreements under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 at 31 March 1993, made up as follows:

	Number
Agreements with compensatory payments—almost all of these also provided for positive conservation management. Payments were mainly on the basis of profit foregone, but a few agreements provided for lump sum payments	1,510
Agreements where the payments were for positive conservation management—including 120 agreements under the pilot wildlife enhancement scheme	330
Total	1,840

Payments under these agreements in 1992-93 totalled £7·5 million, of which £500,000 related to agreements for positive conservation. Information on nature reserve agreements has been excluded from the figures.

Groundwork Foundation

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations and individuals who have made representations to him regarding his Department's review of the Groundwork Foundation; if he will list its most frequent recommendations; and when these recommendations will be acted upon.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's internal review is looking at its sponsorship of Groundwork and the organisation's future direction. As part of the review, officials have met some of Groundwork's partners and customers among local authorities, private sector companies and voluntary organisations to learn how they perceive the organisation and would wish it to develop. This process is continuing but it is not envisaged that formal written representations will be invited.

The review will inform our consideration of our future objectives for Groundwork and the resources to be made available to it in the context of the 1995-96 public expenditure round later this year.

European Local Government Charter

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now sign the European charter for local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government do not intend to sign the European charter for local self-government. Local government is not a suitable subject for regulation by international convention, but the Government support the broad principles underlying the charter.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of properties under the control of each urban development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: The total number of properties—the number of sites both with and without buildings on them—in which urban development corporations have a greater than 50 per cent. interest is as follows:

UDC	*Properties*
Bristol	42
Black Country	116
Birmingham Heartlands	4
Central Manchester	16
Leeds	31
London Docklands	124
Merseyside	109
Plymouth	18
Sheffield	30
Teesside	35
Trafford Park	100
Tyne and Wear	79
TOTAL	704

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties under the control of the development corporations in England and Wales have been victims to terrorist attacks since the establishment of the corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the development corporations in England and Wales and their dates of establishment.

Mr. Baldry: The urban development corporations in England and Wales and their dates of establishment are as follows:

	Date
Merseyside	25 March 1981
London Docklands	2 July 1981
Trafford Park	10 February 1987
Cardiff Bay	3 April 1987
Tyne and Wear	15 May 1987
Black Country	15 May 1987
Teesside	15 May 1987
Leeds	30 June 1988
Sheffield	30 June 1988
Central Manchester	30 June 1988
Bristol	19 January 1989
Birmingham Heartlands	10 March 1992
Plymouth	1 April 1993

Research Contracts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a list of current research contracts concerning any aspects of transport and the environment, giving costs and the names of consultants employed.

Mr. Atkins: There are 19 current research contracts which link aspects of transport with the environment. The total cost is £9·2 million.

Contract Title	*Contractor*
United Kingdom urban air quality research: policy support and programme management	University of Birmingham
United Kingdom atmospheric emissions inventory	Warren Spring Laboratory
Diffusion tube survey of NO_2, SO_2, NH_3 and hydrocarbons in urban and rural areas	Warren Spring Laboratory
Diffusion tube surveys and statutory monitoring of smoke, SO_2 and lead	Warren Spring Laboratory
Statutory and urban long-term monitoring of NO_2, O_3, CO and SO_2	Warren Spring Laboratory
Air pollution forecasting	Warren Spring Laboratory
A catalogue of urban hydrocarbons	University of Leeds
United Kingdom atmospheric emissions from vehicles and fuels	Warren Spring Laboratory
The chemistry of NOx in urban air	University of Birmingham
The United Kingdom enhanced urban air quality monitoring network	TBV Science
Central management and co-ordination unit for the monitoring of gaseous hydrocarbons	AEA Technology
Urban air assessment box model	Meteorological Office
The quality of urban air review group—QUARG—secretariat	University of Birmingham
To define the possible economic effects of draft planning policy guidance note 13 on transport	Land Use Consultants
Viability and vitality of town centres	URBED
International experience of implementing planning policies for sustainable development	UK CEED
Intensification of development within existing urban areas	Shankland Cox Ltd.
Survey of public attitudes to the environment	NOP Consumer Public Research—Mai Research Ltd.
A study of the cost of complying with the petrol vapour recovery directive	CHEM Systems

Markets

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many town centre markets in each region he estimates will be affected by his proposal to deregulate markets.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the employment impact of his proposal to deregulate town centre markets.

Mr. Baldry: The provision in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill to remove from local authorities the right to object to rival markets will create new employment opportunities in the retail sector wherever local authority markets operate.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the effect on local authority income of his proposal to deregulate town centre markets.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities were asked to provide this information as part of the consultation exercise last year, but we did not receive sufficient evidence to produce a reliable national estimate.

Rent Assessment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to review the terms of reference of rent assessment officers; and when the existing terms of reference were introduced and last reviewed.

Sir George Young: When determining fair rents for regulated tenancies, rent officers and rent assessment panels follow the provisions of section 70 of the Rent Act 1977. When determining market rents for assured tenancies, rent assessment committees follow the provisions for sections 13 and 22 of the Housing Act 1988. When exercising their functions as regards housing benefit or home renovation grants, rent officers follow the provisions of the Rent Officer (Additional Functions) Order 1990, as amended, and section 110 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The provisions are reviewed and amended from time to time as necessary.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the composition of rent assessment review bodies was last reviewed.

Sir George Young: The composition of rent assessment panels, from which rent assessment committees are drawn, is reviewed regularly. Members of the 13 panels in England, who currently number 480, are normally appointed for a three-year term, and a number of reappointments and new appointments therefore fall to be made each year.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many instances since the introduction of mineral planning guidance note 3 appeals against local authority refusals to agree opencasting have been allowed by his Department; and which local authorities were involved.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's records show that the number of planning appeals granted for opencast sites were as follows:

Planning Authority	*Number*
Barnsley	2
Derbyshire	8
County Durham	16
Gateshead	2
Lancashire	1
Leeds	2
Norfolk	1
North Tyneside	1
Northumberland	6
Staffordshire	2
Wakefield	3
Wigan	1
Total	45

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many instances since the introduction of mineral planning guidance note 3 the costs of appeals against local authority refusals to agree opencasting have been awarded against the local authorities; and what is the breakdown of such costs by authority.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not readily available. It could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many instances since the introduction of mineral planning guidance 3 the costs of appeal against local authority refusals to agree opencasting have been paid by his Department; and what is the total sum involved.

Mr. Baldry: None.

New Forest

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he intends to apply when considering the granting of statutory power to the New Forest Committee; and what account he has taken in considering the granting of such powers of the New Forest Acts of Parliament.

Mr. Atkins: Our 1992 consultation paper set out the remit under which a statutory New Forest Committee might operate. They are that it could have a strategic role in co-ordinating the management of the wider New Forest area and could be charged to work with and through existing organisations in pursuit of the care and protection of the wider New Forest area and its enjoyment by the public. Responsibilities of the existing bodies concerned with the protection of the forest or the New Forest Acts would not be affected.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that any granting of statutory power and Government funding to the New Forest Committee will not diminish or threaten the continuance of the current New Forest Acts of Parliament.

Mr. Atkins: Yes.

City Grant

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs have been created in the city grant area of the Dearne valley since the commencement of the city grant schemes.

Mr. Baldry: There are three city grant projects in the Dearne valley currently under construction. As yet, no permanent jobs have been created, although it is expected that up to 400 will be created later this year following the completion of one of the projects and a further 1,800 when all three schemes are finished.

In addition, between 60 and 100 jobs have been created during the construction period.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which engagements during the visit to Cornwall of the Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and

Construction on Friday 25 February are being undertaken in his ministerial capacity; and what proportion of the cost of the visit is borne by the vote of his Department.

Sir George Young: The visit is party political and as such none of the cost will come from the Department's vote.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for extending compulsory competitive tendering to local authority professional construction-related and property services.

Mr. Baldry: We are today issuing a consultation document inviting comments on the Government's detailed proposals for extending compulsory competitive tendering to local authority professional construction-related and property services, including architecture, engineering, valuation and surveying services.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment announced to the House the Government's decisions on proposals to extend CCT to local authority white-collar corporate and professional services on November 10 1992, *Official Report*, column *744*, he undertook that the Government would discuss details of implementing these decisions with representatives of local government and other interested parties. Since then, my officials have had very useful discussions with the local authority associations, the Audit Commission and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on a number of joint working groups.

Detailed proposals for CCT for the first of the new services to be brought into the CCT regime, local authority legal work, were issued for consultation last December. The paper issued today on professional construction-related and property services will be followed later this year by our detailed proposals for IT, finance, personnel and corporate and administrative services.

Copies of today's consultation paper will be placed in the Library. It includes a definition of these services, indicating how much of this work local authorities will be required to subject to CCT. The definition includes all professional construction-related and property management work undertaken for the management, maintenance or development of local authority buildings and land, and we are seeking views on whether it should also encompass professional support to regulatory and enforcement work.

As with the legal services, it also gives details of modifications which we intend to make to the statutory framework for competitive tendering to ensure that authorities will continue to be able to deliver services in a way which meets their own objectives and local people's aspirations.

We propose that local authorities be permitted to carry out up to 35 per cent., by value, of all professional construction-related and property services work using their own staff without going through competition, subject to smaller authorities being able to retain a minimum of £450,000 worth of work in-house and free of competitive tendering. This recognises that certain work must be retained both to enable an authority to fulfil its democratic responsibilities and to act as an intelligent client for bought-in services.

We propose that an authority will not be able to award any of the remaining 65 per cent. of work to their own staff unless they have won it in fair and open competition. This requirement will be phased in over six months to allow authorities time to make proper preparations. We also intend to make provision to exempt professional work supporting construction or maintenance projects under way at the time at which CCT first bites to prevent undue disruption to work programmes.

Following consideration of comments received on the proposals included in this consultation document, I will submit to the House the statutory instruments required under the Local Government Act 1988 to give effect to our proposals. I anticipate that CCT will take effect from 1 October 1995 in metropolitan districts and in London. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning announced on 17 December last year a modified timetable for white collar CCT, including construction-related services, in shire counties and districts which are subject to review by the Local Government Commission.

Experience with the manual services already subject to CCT has shown that competition brings not only financial savings, but significant improvements in the management, efficiency and quality of public services. I fully expect that CCT will bring the same benefits to construction-related and other white collar work.

Policy Co-ordination

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will be taking to ensure that planning and transport policies are better co-ordinated to minimise damage to the environment and the nation's health.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to chapter 26 of the Government's "United Kingdom Sustainable Development Strategy", which sets out our overall approach. One key element will be planning policy guidance note 13—PPG13—"Transport". It will provide guidance on integrating and co-ordinating land-use planning and transport procedures. It will also suggest locational policies for local planning authorities to take into account in preparing their development plans. The aim is to meet the social and economic needs for access, with less need for travel and consequential air pollution.

Medical aspects of air pollution are being explored by a number of independent groups that have been set up by the Government. These include the Committee on Medical Aspects of Air Pollution, the Advisory Group on Medical Aspects on Air Pollution Episodes and the expert panel on air quality standards.

Canals

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support is currently available for the development and redevelopment of canals in the United Kingdom; and what was available in April 1992.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The British Waterways Board, which is responsible for canals in England, Wales and Scotland, is receiving grant in aid of £49·3 million from my Department in the financial year 1993-94. Grant support in 1992-93 was £51·1 million. In addition, individual canal projects can be considered for my Department's derelict land grant and environment action fund schemes. Local authorities can assist in maintaining and improving inland waterways, and financial support may also be available from EC structural funds.

Rented Housing (Lettings)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the oral answer by the Minister for Housing to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 16 February, *Official Report*, column 936, if he will publish a table distinguishing the total number of lettings of rented housing expected to be completed in 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96, from the total expected output by housing associations in those three years.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The Housing Corporation's approved development programme provides new lettings of rented housing in two ways: new lettings provided by the rental programme; and new lettings freed up through the tenants' incentive scheme and 60 per cent. of the do-it-yourself shared ownership programme which helps existing housing association and local authority tenants to become full or partial owner occupiers. The Housing Corporation estimates that in the years 1993-94 to 1995-96 its approved development programme will provide new lettings for rent and for shared ownership as set out in the table.

	1993-94	*1994-95*	*1995-96*
New lettings for rent	42,800	41,800	31,900
Properties freed up by:			
TIS	6,300	7,000	7,000
DIYSO (60 per cent. of total DIYSO)	3,240	2,820	4,560
Total lettings for rent	52,340	51,620	43,460
New lettings for shared ownership:			
DIYSO (40 per cent. of total DIYSO)	2,160	1,880	3,040
Low Cost Home Ownership	3,100	4,800	5,000
Total lettings for shared ownership	5,260	6,680	8,040
Total lettings for rent and shared ownership	57,600	58,300	51,500

Sheep Dip (Disposal)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list details and dates of all representations the Government have received from EU bodies concerning the Government's implementation of legislation covering the disposal of sheep dip, and the Government's responses to them.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The United Kingdom received a letter of formal inquiry from the European Commission dated 29 April 1993 to which a response was sent on 12 August 1993. This followed a prior informal letter dated 24 October 1991 to which we responded on 20 December 1991.

Local Authority Support Services Costs

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the proposed new accounting framework for local authority support services cost, outlined in the consultation paper "Competing for Quality: Competition in the Provision of Local Services", November 1991.

Mr. Baldry: This Government are committed to bringing the benefits of competition to all public services. When he announced the Government's decision to extend compulsory competitive tendering to local authorities' professional and corporate services on 10 November 1992, column *744*, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for the Environment also made clear he intended to require local authorities to account for the cost of these services under a rigorous and comprehensive statutory accounting framework.

I am pleased to announce that my Department is today publishing a consultation paper setting out detailed proposals for requiring local authorities to prepare and publish a statement of support service costs. This statement, which will be published with an authority's annual accounts and be subject to audit, will illustrate the full cost, including overheads, of each of the professional and corporate services to the authority and show how this cost is borne by front-line service departments. A copy of the consultation paper will be placed in the Library of the House.

Requiring local authorities to publish the cost of procuring or providing support services will stimulate the challenging of these costs by both internal customers and by local taxpayers, and promote the development of fair competition and a proper choice between internal and external service providers. It will also, I believe, encourage comparisons between similar authorities, thus increasing pressure for greater efficiency and value for money.

These proposals have been developed by Government following detailed discussions with representatives of local authorities, the audit and accounts commissions and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Consultation with local authorities and other interested parties will end on 29 April. The new requirement to keep an SSSC will be introduced by regulations made under section 23 of the Local Government Finance Act 1983 soon after that. The first authorities will be required to publish an SSSC for the financial year 1994-95.

TRANSPORT

London Traffic (Security Measures)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments are being made by his Department on the impact on traffic flows in surrounding areas arising from the City of London's current security arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has made no formal assessment of the experimental traffic measures introduced by the City of London but is aware of the traffic monitoring at sites in the City and in five adjacent boroughs.

Highway Inquiries

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce the outcome of his review of the rules governing highway inquiries.

Mr. MacGregor: My review has now been concluded and a consultation document on revised draft inquiry rules is being published today with a view to implementing revised rules in the summer. The public inquiry represents a key stage in the planning of a trunk road as it allows a final decision to be made in the light of all information and arguments. The current 1976 and 1967 rules governing highway inquiries no longer represent accepted best practice. This means that proceedings can take longer than is necessary or desirable. This wastes time and money and can mean substantially higher costs for objectors.

The consultation document, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, covers both highway inquiry procedures rules and compulsory purchase by Ministers inquiry procedure rules. There will be a three-month consultation period and I would welcome comments from anyone with an interest in the conduct of trunk road inquiries.

British Rail

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the British Railways Board will be issuing guidance to BR staff on management-employee buy-out bids for franchisers.

Mr. Freeman: The British Railways Board, with the strong support of the Government, is keen to help its managers and staff to mount successful bids for passenger franchises. BR therefore issued guidelines to its staff on 3 February about the steps it is taking to help managers and staff wishing to mount management or management-employee buy-outs for franchises, including the provision of financial assistance, and to minimise potential conflicts of interest which may arise.

Under these guidelines BR employees wishing to lead a possible MBO or MEBO are asked to inform senior management before talking to third parties, such as potential backers or joint venture partners. Having done so, and agreed to accept the guidelines, potential MBO-MEBO teams may talk to advisers, prospective partners and backers as soon as the arrangements for establishing the shadow franchise in question have been agreed by the board's restructuring committee and endorsed by the franchising director.

Two guiding principles are established for giving access or information to franchise bidders. These are evenhandedness—the need for information provided to one bidder to be provided to all—and the need to ensure that the release of information is properly controlled and recorded. The guidelines set out detailed arrangements governing the provision of information, covering in particular the franchising director's important rôle in ensuring that the arrangements for the franchise competitions he holds are fair.

The guidelines indicate that the board will decide whether it is necessary or expedient to provide substitutes or additional cover for the members of an MBO-MEBO team for the period in which they would be mounting a bid, in the light of discussion with the team, and after consulting the franchising director.

The guidelines also indicate that the board will decide in each case whether it wishes to bid for a franchise and its intention, should the board win a franchise, to transfer the franchise company to the private sector as soon as possible after the franchise award.

I welcome the issue of these guidelines, which make clear the British Railways Board's positive and helpful approach. I have placed a copy in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the British Railways Board.

Mr. Freeman: The following are currently appointed to the British Railways Board: Sir Bob Reid; finance director, Mr. J. J. Jerram; technical director, Dr. P. Watson, OBE; full-time member, Mr. D. E. Rayner CBE; part-time members: vice-chairmen, Messrs. C. J. Campbell CBE and R. B. Horton; other part-time members: Messrs. P. D. Allen, J. K. Aziz, K. H. M. Dixon, C. W. Jonas, A. J. Norman, E. F. Sanderson, Miss K. Kantor and Miss J. A. Page.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the special bonus payments made to the previous chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Key *[pursuant to his reply, 15 February 1994, c. 719]:* The previous chief executive of the Driving Standards Agency was appointed on 2 April 1990. He did not receive any payments under his performance bonus scheme in respect of his first two years in DSA. Payment in respect of the third year is still being considered. He did receive in 1993 a special bonus of £500 for his work on options for the future of the agency.

Number Plates

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to regulate the sale of replacement number plates.

Mr. Key: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently working with the British Standards Institution, the police and the number plate industry to improve the readability and durability of number plates. Manufacturers and suppliers of plates could be required to put their names and addresses on plates so that they can be traced.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the criteria by which the performance pay of the chief executive of the DVLA is determined.

Mr. Key: The chief executive is eligible for performance-related bonuses of up to 15 per cent. which currently depend on the agency meeting or exceeding targets relating to efficiency, vehicle excise duty enforcement and quality of service.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the grade of the chief executive of the DVLA; what is his basic salary; and what is the maximum amount of performance pay that he can achieve in a year.

Mr. Key: The chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is a grade 3 post. His basic salary is £51,360 per annum. He is eligible for performance related cash bonuses of up to 15 per cent, which depend on the agency meeting or exceeding specific targets, but not for the general performance bonus arrangements for civil servants at grade 3.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much the chief executive of the DVLA has received in bonus pay since his appointment to the post; and for what reason such payments are made.

Mr. Key: The chief executive has received the following non-consolidated bonus payments: in the financial year 1991-92 a bonus of £750 in respect of personal performance in 1990-91; in the financial year 1992-93, a bonus of £2,250 in respect of personal performance in 1991-92; in the financial year 1993-94, a bonus of £5,782 for meeting the 1992-93 targets concerned with efficiency, VED enforcement and quality of service. The chief executive does not participate in the general performance bonus arrangements for civil servants at grade 3.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the current chief executive of the DVLA was appointed to his present position; and when his contract expires.

Mr. Key: The chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency was appointed on 12 March 1990. His appointment expires on 1 April 1995.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, since DVLA prosecuted section 8 cases, the total amount of fines, backduty and costs awarded.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The information is as follows:

	Fines (£s)	*Section 9 Backduty (£s)*	*Costs (£s)*
April-March 1990-91	10,114,280	6,267,337	1,585,784
April-March 1991-92	11,847,904	7,644,060	2,479,567
April-March 1992-93	13,416,850	8,786,816	3,485,706
April-January 1993-94	14,954,417	8,322,997	3,757,913
Total	50,333,451	31,021,210	11,308,970

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year since its introduction the amount of revenue generated for the enforcement operations of DVLA by the use of the LOBS computer system; and if he will estimate for the next three years the amount expected.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* Revenue from all VED enforcement activities for the years since the local office branch system project began in 1985 are:

Year	*Revenue raised £ million*
1985-86	21·0
1986-87	23·1
1987-88	23·6
1988-89	25·6
1989-90	25·9
1990-91	27·5
1991-92	34·5
1992-93	37·5
[1]1993-94	36·1
1994-95	—
1996-97	[2]—

[1] Figures to end January 1994.

[2] Estimated similar year-on-year increase.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions there have been for violation of the construction and use regulations 1986 governing in-service emissions from motor vehicles.

Mr. Key: I regret the information is not available. The Home Office collects statistics relating to police prosecutions under the Construction and Use Regulations 1986; but they do not identify specific offences.

However, the latest statistics published by the Department's vehicle inspectorate show that almost 2 per cent. of heavy goods vehicles, 2·5 per cent. of public service vehicles, and almost 11 per cent. of cars and other passenger vehicles initially fail the emissions check at their annual roadworthiness test.

Roads, Warwickshire

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist to improve the crossing of the A5 in Warwickshire at Lilbourne-Clifton.

Mr. Key: There are no such plans.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider providing a means of access from the M45 to the A5 in Warwickshire.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to do so.

US-UK Bilateral Air Agreements

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making in talks on the US-UK bilateral air agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom tabled a liberalisation proposal in December which goes much further than anything we have previously offered. It takes a phased approach offering immediate complete liberalisation of all UK-US services except those involving Heathrow and Gatwick and offers real commercial opportunities at those two airports.

I hope that the United States will recognise our proposal as a serious one and agree to meet us around the negotiating table soon so that we can achieve a deal by 19 April, as agreed between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his United States counterpart last year.

Road Traffic Accidents (Greenwich)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the number of road traffic accidents involving injury to *(a)* vehicle users, *(b)* pedestrians and *(c)* all persons affected in the Greenwich town centre area in each year since 1985.

Mr. Norris: The information that is available is set out in the table; statistics are not kept for persons affected by accidents.

Road accidents and casualties on A200 and A206 within Greenwich town centre area (Romney road and westwards to junctions with Norman road)

Year	*Total PI accidents*	*Vehicle user casualties*	*Pedestrian casualties*
1985	98	99	17
1986	95	101	17
1987	75	66	23
1988	66	60	18
1989	99	93	25
1990	91	71	25
1991	76	80	15
1992	79	65	18
[1]1993	51	51	11

[1] January to October.

Motorists Charter

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to publish a motorists charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The new Highways Agency will be required to implement a road users charter to be published before the establishment of the agency at the beginning of April.

Minibuses (Accidents)

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the latest figures for road accidents involving each category of minibuses for each of the last three years in each *(a)* local authority and *(b)* police area.

Mr. Key: Police reports of injury road accidents involving minibuses and motorised caravans for the years 1990 to 1992 in police force areas are shown in the table. No more detailed analysis of these vehicles is collected. Information for 1993 is not yet available.

There are 461 London boroughs and local authority districts. An analysis of minibus and motorised caravan accidents at this level of detail is not readily available.

Personal injury accidents involving minibuses/motor caravans, by police force area, 1990 to 1992

Police area	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Metropolitan police	114	136	133
Cumbria	22	28	24
Lancashire	37	39	48
Merseyside	68	77	74
Greater Manchester	109	93	82
Cheshire	43	37	49
Northumbria	24	20	18
Durham	8	17	16
North Yorkshire	56	34	44
West Yorkshire	38	30	32
South Yorkshire	48	40	42
Humberside	28	26	25
Cleveland	19	11	4
West Midlands	51	59	55
Staffordshire	28	23	21
West Mercia	36	18	15
Warwickshire	8	9	14
Derbyshire	7	6	6
Nottinghamshire	32	20	16
Lincolnshire	40	20	27
Leicestershire	58	27	40
Northamptonshire	22	25	16
Cambridgeshire	32	40	33
Norfolk	51	39	26
Suffolk	11	18	15
Bedfordshire	13	16	17
Hertfordshire	22	18	16
Essex	42	51	49
Thames Valley	52	64	65
Hampshire	77	74	75
Surrey	40	26	23
Kent	78	79	56
Sussex	63	56	63
City of London	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	58	34	47
Avon and Somerset	31	48	27
Gloucestershire	18	23	17
Wiltshire	8	6	20
Dorset	24	27	23
North Wales	41	44	34
Gwent	24	25	19
South Wales	51	57	65
Dyfed-Powys	27	35	32
Northern	27	31	26
Grampian	40	18	22
Tayside	17	15	14
Fife	20	11	11
Lothian and Borders	21	36	20
Central	9	6	14
Strathclyde	122	88	76
Dumfries and Galloway	11	10	5
Total	1,926	1,790	1,711

Community Barge Project, Rotherham

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of the recent prosecution regarding the community barge project in Rotherham.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The cost of the prosecution was £1,221.

M6

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that the contraflow system in place during widening of the M6 in Cheshire is adequately and correctly signposted to ensure no last-minute lane changing on the southbound carriageway of the M6 at junction 21A and 21, when changes to the contraflow take place.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Additional signs will be erected. I am satisfied that these arrangements will ensure that the contraflow system will operate satisfactorily.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on a cones hotline concerning the lack of signposting of the correct lane for access off the M6—southbound—to M56 on Sunday 13 February.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* I received one complaint.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made with the widening of the M6 in Cheshire; and when he expects work to be completed.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Work on the widening scheme started in November 1992. Good progress is being made and I expect the widening—including the refurbishment of the present Thelwall viaduct—to be completed in summer 1996.

M4

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received via the cones hotline concerning the carriageway repairs to the M4 at Heston; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what progress is being made to the carriageway repairs of the M4 near Heston; and when he expects the work to be completed.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The M4 has provided sterling service since it was built nearly 30 years ago but now needs major refurbishment. Three representations have been made through the cones hotline about the carriageway works currently under way between Heston service area and Boston Manor road. These works, involving partial reconstruction of the concrete carriageway followed by full overlay with bituminous material, started on 22 January and were expected to take 13 weeks. However, good progress is being made and, weather permitting, the works could be completed in a total period of about 10 weeks.

Further works are planned between junction 4 and the elevated section for later this year to complete the refurbishment programme which will prevent the sort of failures experienced last year.

These are part of a £30 million programme of essential works for the main radial routes in west London over the next 18 months. These works are necessary to keep the roads safe and serviceable, and to improve their appearance, but everything possible will be done to minimise any inconvenience to road users.

A570

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made concerning the A570 Ormskirk bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* We are considering the large response to the public consultation. I shall announce a preferred route shortly.

Marine Traffic

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by the European Union in *(a)* identifying sensitive areas which are at high risk from marine traffic and *(b)* developing measures to protect these areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The Council of Ministers—Environment—on 28 June 1993 invited member states to identify environmentally sensitive areas at high risk from marine traffic, on the basis of criteria circulated by the Commission. The Commission is currently studying member states' responses. A joint meeting of Environment and Transport Ministers on 24 March, during the Environment Council, will review progress on this and other Community maritime safety and pollution initiatives.

North Sea

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the Dutch Government's proposals for a system of marine protected areas for the recovery of sections of the marine ecosystem in the North sea; and if he will make it his policy to support their creation.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Proposals to designate areas of the sea which would be required to remain undisturbed, in order to assess the way in which damaged marine ecosystems might recover, were considered at the intermediate meeting of North sea Ministers in Copenhagen in December 1993. The meeting, which included United Kingdom Ministers, invited the European Commission to collaborate with the International Council for Exploration of the Sea to investigate suitable scientific criteria for the establishment of such areas on an experimental basis.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Staff Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and (c) the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Hague: Two schemes address financial difficulties brought about by the fall in house prices since 1989.

1. Bridging Loans

The Department may assist a member of staff transferred at the public expense who is in severe and immediate financial difficulties as a result of taking out a bridging loan which now exceeds the selling price of property.

Provided the member of stafff cannot make good the shortfall of funds from his or her own resources and, that a value for money case can be clearly established, the Department can offer:

An interest-free advance of up to 12 months salary repayable over 15 years; and/or

An additional housing cost allowance to cover the interest charges on extra mortgage borrowing; and/or

As a last resort where other options are not possible, to write off up to £5,000 of the bridging loan. Amounts in excess of this require Treasury approval.

2. Mortgage Redemption (Negative Equity)

Where staff transferred at the public expense face genuine financial hardship an advance of up to 12 months salary may be made, repayable over 15 years.

The total amounts loaned or granted and the number of staff assisted are as follows:

	Bridging loan	*Mortgage*
1992-93		
Total amount loaned or granted (£)	805,865	192,000
Number of staff assisted	65	23
1993-94 (to date)		
Total amount loaned or granted (£)	188,983	123,000
Number of staff assisted	18	21

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration the Government are giving to the question of occupational pension rights on divorce; and when he proposes to make a definitive statement of the Government's policy on this issue.

Mr. Hague: The Pension Law Review Committee considered the question of occupational pension rights on divorce as part of its wide-ranging review of pensions issues. We shall announce the results of our consideration of all the PLRC proposals in due course.

War Disablement Pensions

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the newspapers and broadcasting advertisement campaigns undertaken by his Department in the last 10 years to make service men and former service personnel aware of their discharge rights to a war disablement pension.

Mr. Hague: None. There is no need for such publicity when arrangements exist for service men and women to receive full information about the war pensions scheme on their discharge from service. In addition, those invalided from service are automatically considered for a pension without having to claim.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February at column *1010.*

Income Support

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of income support payments to residents in care or nursing homes with preserved entitlement during *(a)* the current financial year, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1996-97; and if he will give his estimate of the total number of likely claimants for each year.

Mr. Burt: The latest estimates are:

	Year	*Expenditure £ million*	*Numbers*
(a)	1993-94	2,330	246,000
(b)	1994-95	1,830	186,000
(c)	1996-97	1,150	112,000

These estimates are based on assumed rates of decline and become progressively less reliable.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were in receipt of income support payments towards the cost of *(a)* residential care, *(b)* higher rate residental care and *(c)* nursing homes for each year since 1990; and if he will give the annual total for each category.

Mr. Burt: The available information is as follows:

Numbers of income support claimants

	Residential care homes	*Nursing homes*
1990	127,000	66,000
1991	139,000	94,000
1992	152,000	116,000
1993	159,000	123,000

Source:

The Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries May 1990, May 1991 and May 1992.

The Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry February 1993.

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Pension Funds

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his most recent estimate of the gap between assets and liabilities of *(a)* the Maxwell pension funds in general and *(b)* the AGB fund; and if he will make a statement on current and prospective provision for Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Hague: On the basis of information supplied by the pension scheme trustees, the Maxwell pensions unit estimates the current overall gap between the assets and liabilities of the Maxwell pension funds to be £380 million. Included within this figure is £25 million in respect of the AGB pension scheme. Some of the scheme trustees are in the process of updating their scheme records and refining their liability figures.

This Department is currently paying over £3 million per annum in guaranteed minimum pensions to Maxwell pensioners. The Maxwell Pensioners Trust has kept pensions in payment while assets recovery work continues.

Child Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to revise the current provisions in the Child Support Act 1991 to enable capital settlements to be taken into account in future in the assessments made to determine the financial liability of separated parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs Prentice) on 6 December 1993 at column *109.*

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received to date complaining that capital settlements are not taken into account in determining the liability of separated parents in the child support legislation.

Mr. Burt: Ministers have received representations from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public about various aspects of the child support scheme. Information about how many refer to a particular aspect is not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Elderly Population

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change is projected in the population of those aged *(a)* over 65 years, *(b)* over 75 years and *(c)* over 85 years in each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Hague *[pursuant to his answer 11 February 1994, col. 499]:]* The information provided contained two errors. The estimate of the number of people aged 75 and over in 1994 should read 3,892,000 and the estimate of the number of people aged 85 and over in 1994 should read 1,002,000.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people receiving invalidity benefit or previous comparable benefits for each of the present parliamentary constituencies in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Dafydd Wigley, dated 21 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of people receiving Invalidity Benefit or previous comparable benefits for the parliamentary constituencies in Wales and for Wales as a whole.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because the Agency's District boundaries do not correspond with parliamentary constituencies.

However, the information for Wales as a whole is available. The number of customers in receipt of Invalidity Benefit in Wales at 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, was approximately 159,000. The statistics are based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

Within the Wales Area Directorate there are 11 Districts. Appendix 1 shows the number of people claiming Invalidity Benefit at the last working day of April 1992 within each District in Wales. The figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in each office within each District and include a small number of people who have claimed but are not receiving Invalidity Benefit, eg. because there is underlying entitlement which has been extinguished by the payment of a higher overlapping benefit.

I have attached at appendix 2 a list of Districts within the Wales Area Directorate and the parliamentary constituencies which fall within each Districts area.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix 1

Number of people claiming invalidity benefit at the last working day of April 1992

Benefits agency district	*Number*
Gwyneddigion	8,720
North Wales Coast	11,375
Mid Wales and Maelor	8,575
West Wales	17,543
Swansea	15,362
Ogwr Afan Nedd	19,505
South Glamorgan	13,915
South Gwent and Islwyn	12,432
Cynon, Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	21,063
Taff Rhondda	16,229
North Gwent and Brecon	14,844
Total	159,563

Appendix 2

Benefits agency district	*Parliamentary constituencies*
Gwyneddigion	Ceredigion and Pembroke North
	Caernarfon
	Conwy
	Meirionnydd Nant Conwy
	Ynys Mon
North Wales Coast	Alyn and Deeside
	Clwyd North West
	Clwyd South West
	Delyn
	Conwy
	Meirionnydd Nant Conwy
Mid Wales and Maelor	Alyn and Deeside
	Clwyd South West
	Delyn
	Wrexham
	Brecon and Radnor
	Montgomery
	Meirionnydd Nant Conwy
West Wales	Carmarthen
	Ceredigion and Pembroke North
	Llanelli
	Pembroke
	Gower
	Neath
Swansea	Gower
	Neath
	Swansea East
	Swansea West
	Brecon and Radnor
Ogwr Afan Nedd	Bridgend
	Ogmore
	Aberavon
	Neath
South Glamorgan	Cardiff Central
	Cardiff North
	Cardiff South and Penarth
	Cardiff West
	Vale of Glamorgan
South Gwent and Islwyn	Islwyn
	Monmouth
	Newport East
	Newport West
Cynon, Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	Caerphilly
	Cynon Valley
	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Taff Rhondda	Cynon Valley
	Ogmore
	Pontypridd
	Rhondda
North Gwent and Brecon	Blaenau Gwent
	Monmouth
	Torfaen
	Brecon and Radnor

Bronchitis and Emphysema

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims have been submitted for disablement benefit for chronic bronchitis and emphysema;

(2) how many claims for disablement benefit for chronic bronchitis and emphysema have been allowed in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* by region and *(c)* by social security district.

Mr. Scott: The administration of industrial disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Allan Rogers, dated 21 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking about the number of claims received nationally for disablement benefit for chronic bronchitis and emphysema and how many have been allowed.

Firstly, I would like to explain that there are two stages to the take on of claims for disablement benefit for prescribed disease D12 (chronic bronchitis and emphysema) which has been available since 13 September 1993 for people who have worked at least 20 years underground in a coal mine.

Stage 1 was restricted to claims from people who were aged 70 or over on 13 September 1993 or who had an award of higher rate Disability Living Allowance Care component or higher rate attendance allowance and will end shortly; stage 2 will commence on 1 March 1994 and is open to anybody to claim. All claims will be considered for payment from 13 September 1993.

As of 13 February 1994, the number of claims received by the Benefits Agency was 23,477 (In addition, there were claims received which were not proceeded with for various reason for example the claim was not appropriate to Stage 1, where the claimant would be advised to reclaim at the proper time).

The attached tables show the number of medical assessments which had been carried out at 6 February 1994. The table breaks the assessments of disablement down by 13 per cent. or less, 14-24 per cent., 25-34 per cent., and 35 per cent. or more; and the total number of assessments. It should be noted that there are a number of the claims stated above which have not reached the assessment stage so the total number of assessments shown will increase in time.

As with most prescribed occupational diseases, disablement benefit for chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema is not paid for assessments under 14 per cent. The very few assessments of 13 per cent. or less therefore did not attract an award of disablement benefit, unless it was possible to aggregate them with existing assessments.

The Benefits Agency is organised into Areas, each consisting of a number of Districts. In some parts of the country claims for chronic bronchitis or emphysema have been handled at special Centres covering a number of Districts. The tables show totals for each Area and for each Centre or District within the Area.

I hope you will find this information helpful.

	1-13 per cent.	*14-24 per cent.*	*25-34 per cent.*	*35-100 per cent.*	*Total*
South East Area[1]	0	1	1	18	20
South Yorkshire and Humberside Area[1]	0	27	50	270	347
Tyne Tees Area					
Blyth	0	5	7	35	47
Sunderland North	0	0	3	11	14
Bishop Auckland	0	0	4	12	16
Eston	0	0	0	0	0
Houghton-Le-Spring	0	1	4	29	34
Jarrow	0	0	10	26	36
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0	0	2	10	12
North Durham	1	3	19	121	144
North Tees	0	0	0	0	0
North Tyneside	0	0	0	4	4
Sunderland South	0	0	3	15	18
Total	1	9	52	263	325
Wales Area					
Ammanford	1	6	15	64	86
Cynon Merthyr and Rhymney Valley	9	35	35	127	206
Gwyneddigion	0	0	0	1	1
Mid Wales and Maelor	0	3	2	12	17
North Wales Coast	0	0	0	0	0
Ogwy Afan Nedd	3	18	23	79	123
Pontypridd	3	17	19	71	110
South Glamorgan	0	0	0	1	1
South Gwent and Islwyn	0	11	1	43	55
Swansea	0	5	9	38	52
Cwmbran	1	8	6	20	35
Total	17	103	110	456	686
West Country Area					
Barnstaple	0	0	0	0	0
Bath	0	1	0	0	1
Gloucester	0	0	0	0	0
Bournemouth	0	0	0	0	0
Bridgewater	0	0	0	0	0
Severnside	0	0	0	0	0
Torbay	0	0	0	0	0
Truro	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	1	0	0	1
West Mercia Area					
Cannock	0	2	2	39	43
Walsall	0	0	0	3	3
Dudley	0	0	0	0	0
Ilkeston	1	0	1	11	13
North Staffordshire	0	11	10	86	107
Shropshire	0	0	0	2	2
Smethwick	0	0	0	0	0
South Derbyshire	0	1	1	12	14
West Bromwich	0	0	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0	0	0	0

	1-13 per cent.	14-24 per cent.	25-34 per cent.	35-100 per cent.	Total
Total	1	14	14	153	182
Grand Total	23	200	295	1,603	2,121

[1] Covered by one centre.

	1-13 per cent.	14-24 per cent.	25-34 per cent.	35-100 per cent.	Total
Greater Manchester Area[1]	0	02	3	14	19
Lancashire and Cumbria Area					
Accrington	0	0	0	1	1
Barrow	0	0	0	0	0
Blackpool	0	0	0	2	2
Bolton	0	2	0	6	8
Burnley	0	0	0	1	1
Preston	1	0	0	1	2
Whitehaven	0	0	0	3	3
Wigan/Leigh	0	5	8	35	48
Total	1	7	8	49	65
Merseyside Area					
Crewe	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool Edgehill	0	0	0	0	0
Liverpool Kirby	0	0	0	0	0
South West Lancashire	0	2	4	13	19
Southport	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	2	4	13	19
Midlands South West Area					
Birmingham Edgbaston	0	0	0	0	0
Birmingham Handsworth	0	0	0	0	0
Coventry	0	1	0	4	5
Nuneaton	0	2	0	23	25
Redditch	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	3	0	27	30
North and West Yorkshire Area[1]	1	21	25	134	181
North, Central and West Scotland Area					
Ayr	0	0	1	8	9
Kilmarnock	0	0	0	1	1
Clyde Valley	0	0	5	5	10
Coatbridge	0	0	0	0	0
Highlands and Islands	0	0	0	0	0
Stirling	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	6	14	20

[1] Covered by one centre.

Assessments for chronic bronchitis and/or emphysema (prescribed disease D12)

	1-13 per cent.	14-24 per cent.	25-34 per cent.	35-100 per cent.	Total
Hertford	0	0	0	0	0
Lowestoft	0	0	0	0	0
Northampton	0	0	0	0	0
Norwich Chantry	0	0	0	0	0
Watford	0	0	0	0	0
Total Anglia area	0	0	0	0	0
Euston	0	0	0	0	0
Luton	0	0	0	0	0
Oxford Tyndale	0	0	0	0	0
Total Chilterns area	0	0	0	0	0
Chesterfield and Worksop	0	6	7	55	68
East Nottinghamshire	0	0	2	12	14
Grantham	0	0	0	0	0
Leicester Tower Hill Street	0	0	0	0	0
Loughborough	0	2	1	3	6
North Nottinghamshire	1	2	5	67	75
Skegness	1	0	0	2	3

	1-13 per cent.	14-24 per cent.	25-34 per cent.	35-100 per cent.	Total
Nottingham David Lane	0	0	1	10	11
Total East Midlands area	2	10	16	149	177
Kirkcaldy	0	0	4	19	23
Lothian West	0	0	0	7	7
Lowland East	0	0	2	14	16
Total Midlands area	0	0	06	40	46
East Kilbride	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow Anniesland	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow City	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow East	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow Springburn	0	0	0	1	1
Total Glasgow area	0	0	0	1	1

Child Support Agency

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many male and female employees of the Child Support Agency there are at each of its regional offices.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Mr. D. Brown to Mr. David Jamieson, dated 22 February 1994:

In Mrs. Hepplewhite's absence I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about staffing levels in the Child Support Agency's regional offices.

At 31 January 1994, the six regional Child Support Agency Centres have a total of 1,039 male, and 2,308 female employees, distributed as follows:

Centre	Male	Female
Belfast	155	305
Birkenhead	209	380
Dudley	177	436
Falkirk	151	401
Hastings	206	387
Plymouth	141	399

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Crisis Loans

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for crisis loans made at Jubilee house, Stratford, have been refused in the last two years.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Tony Banks, dated 21 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of Crisis Loan (CL) applications refused at Stratford Benefits Agency Office in the last two years.

The Newham Benefits Agency District is made up of Stratford, Canning Town and Plaistow benefit offices. Statistics are collected on a District basis and so I am unable to give you figures in isolation for Stratford.

Details of the number of new CL applications received and refused in the Newham District during the last two financial years (1991-92 and 1992-93) are shown below.

Number of Crisis Loan Applications Received and Refused at Newham District.

	April 1991 to March 1992	April 1992 to March 1993
Number of Crisis Loan applications	3,088	4,447
Number refused	48	78

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of individuals who have transferred their assets from one personal pension plan to another provided by a different company.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The estimated number of people who transferred protected rights from one appropriate personal pension plan to another, whether provided by a different company or not, between the financial years 1987-88 and 1991-92 was 16,400.

(Figure based on 1 per cent. sample of the national insurance record system records).

DEFENCE

Reserve Forces

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to use members of the reserve forces in support of current operations.

Mr. Hanley: A need has been identified for a further small number of specialist Royal Air Force volunteer reserve personnel to serve on photographic interpretation duties in the United Kingdom in support of operations in Bosnia. One volunteer will be deployed immediately, and additional support will be required as the tasking develops. A maximum of four people will be required. These personnel are all volunteers; they are being called out under section 11(1) of the Reserve Forces Act 1980. This will be in addition to the seven reserve personnel already called out in support of operations.

HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the state of readiness of HMS Intrepid; and how long it will take to make the vessel operational;

(2) what is the state of readiness of HMS Fearless; and how long it will take to make the vessel operational.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Intrepid is at present held in a state of extended readiness at Portsmouth. For operational security reasons, we would not discuss how long it would take to reactivate her from this state, but the planned response time would be consistent with our new assumptions about warning times. HMS Fearless is currently fully operational.

Military Bands

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *485*, what is his policy towards the attendance of military bands at events organised by political parties; and if he will list the occasions of such performances over the last two years showing the costs charged to the organisers and the total cost of attendance by military personnel in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Military bands are not permitted to perform at events organised by, or on behalf of, a political party. Individuals may, however, accept engagements in their spare time, provided civilian clothes are worn.

On the occasion referred to in my answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *485*, members of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (Volunteers) Band did appear at Alton castle in uniform but they were not aware this was a politically sponsored event. However, this was still in breach of regulations and a reminder of the regulations is being sent to all bands as a result.

I am not aware of any other occasion on which members of a military band have attended such an event in uniform.

Britannia Royal Naval College

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much extra public money is being spent to garage the captain of the Britannia royal naval college's car and on building kennels for three dogs at the college in Dartmouth, Devon.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of relocating the commanding officer's garage at Britannia royal naval college will be met from within the existing property maintenance budget. This work has been made necessary by a security audit which recommended that the garage must be more than 75 ft away from the residence. The cost of the work undertaken to prepare the site and to house the five Ministry of Defence police guard dogs at Britannia royal naval college was given in my answer to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *118*.

Arms Sales

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what publications have so far been made under the United Nations agreement to compile a register of arms sales; and when such publications are expected in future.

Mr. Aitken: The United Nations Secretary-General issued last year a report on the 1992 national returns to the United Nations register of conventional arms. We expect that he will report on the 1993 returns later this year. A copy of the United Kingdom's 1992 return to the United Nations register was placed in the Library of the House in May 1993.

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total public funding provided under all the provisions of the memorandum of understanding with Malaysia.

Mr. Aitken: There is no net cost to public funds of services provided under the memorandum of understanding with Malaysia.

EDUCATION

Ethnic Minority Funding

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment was made in the standard spending assessment for 1994-95 for educational purposes arising from the reduction of section 11 funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: When the additional educational needs index within education standard spending assessments was reviewed, allowance was made for the proposed reduction in section 11 funding in two ways. The weight accorded to the index was increased and, within the index, the weight accorded to the ethnicity factor was increased.

Nursery Education

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to make any changes in the standard spending assessment for education purposes for the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: As part of his consideration of future policy for under-fives, my right hon. Friend will bear in mind possible implications for standard spending assessments.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about membership of the Funding Agency for Schools.

Mr. Patten: I appointed Sir Christopher Benson as chairman-designate of the Funding Agency for Schools on 14 October 1993. I am announcing today the appointment of the following 12 members:

Shailendra Adwalpalkar—Finance Director, Gillette International, AMEE Group.

Sir Robert Balchin—Chairman, Grant-Maintained Schools Foundation.

Canon Gerald Greenwood—Director of Education, Southwark Diocesan Board of Education.

Dr. Arthur Hearnden OBE—General Secretary, Independent Schools Joint Council.

Stanley Kalms—Chairman of the Dixons Group.

Lee Karu—Barrister.

Mrs. Jacqueline E. Kearns MA FRSA—Headteacher, Homewood GM School, Tenterden, Kent.

Mrs. Lesley King—Headteacher, St. Joseph's RC GM Primary School, Aldershot.

Mrs. Pauline Latham—Chairman of Governors, Ecclesbourne GM School, Derbyshire.

Councillor Edward Lister—Leader of Wandsworth Council.

Brother Francis Patterson—Headteacher, St. Francis Xavier's College, GM School, Liverpool.

Peter Turner OBE—Recently retired Head, Whitefield Schools and Centre, Waltham Forest.

The task of the funding agency in supporting the successful development of the self-governing—grant-maintained—school sector is a vital one. The chairman and the members whom I am appointing today will bring an impressive breadth of experience to that task. I intend to appoint two additional members in due course in the light of the needs of the funding agency as the work develops and as the self-governing—grant-maintained—school sector grows.

From its formal establishment on 1 April, the funding agency will assume responsibility for two key functions: first, the payment and monitoring of grants to grant-maintained schools; and, secondly, a progressively increasing share in the planning and provision of school places across the country, as the number of grant-maintained schools grow.

I am writing today to the chairman and members setting these functions in the context of the Government's overall policies to secure the realisation of our vision of mainly self-governing schools; to increase choice and diversity in our schools; and to improve standards of education in this country.

I am sending copies of the letter to all self-governing schools and placing copies in the Library.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much the Funding Agency for Schools cost to set up; how much it will cost to run; and what role it will take on in Calderdale.

Mr. Robin Squire: The direct costs of establishing the Funding Agency for Schools will amount in the current financial year to some £1·5 million. The running costs of the funding agency will depend on a number of factors, including growth in the number of GM schools, but on the basis of current forecasts will be of the order of £12 million in 1994-95, subject to parliamentary approval of the main estimates.

The first main function of the funding agency will be to calculate and pay grant to grant-maintained schools, including those in Calderdale, on the basis of regulations made by my right hon. hon. Friend who announced on 14 February his intention to introduce a common funding formula for funding GM secondary schools in Calderdale and four other LEAs in 1994-95.

In addition, under section 12 of the Education Act 1993 the Secretary of State may make an order giving shared responsibility for the provision of sufficient school places in primary or secondary schools to the funding agency, in areas where between 10 per cent. and 75 per cent. of pupils attend GM schools in the relevant phase. Calderdale is one such area and we are presently consulting with the intention of making an order.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list local education authorities according to the date on which the first parents' ballot in favour of grant-maintained status in each authority took place.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables show local education authorities in which there have been parental ballots in favour of grant-maintained status, listed in order of the date of the earliest yes vote.

LEAs with schools voting in favour of GM status, in order of first "Yes vote".

LEA	*Vote date*
Lincolnshire	2 November 1988
Bolton	7 November 1988
Tameside	5 December 1988
Sutton	16 December 1988
Bedfordshire	21 December 1988
Kent	21 December 1988
Kirklees	22 December 1988
Hammersmith	29 December 1988
Barnet	30 December 1988
Southwark	9 January 1989
Bromley	17 January 1989
Derbyshire	17 January 1989
Cheshire	26 January 1989
Hertfordshire	30 January 1989
Northamptonshire	3 February 1989
Birmingham	6 February 1989
Devon	10 February 1989
Dorset	18 February 1989
Lancashire	24 February 1989
Dudley	27 February 1989
Liverpool	27 February 1989
Wigan	6 March 1989
Avon	13 March 1989
Kensington	13 March 1989
Surrey	23 March 1989
Gloucestershire	28 March 1989
Leicestershire	31 March 1989
Brent	3 April 1989
Hillingdon	20 April 1989
Berkshire	30 May 1989
Solihull	30 May 1989
Wolverhampton	12 June 1989
Newham	26 September 1989
Shropshire	9 November 1989
Calderdale	18 December 1989
Buckinghamshire	2 January 1990
Essex	9 May 1990
Norfolk	8 June 1990
Hampshire	27 June 1990
Sandwell	17 September 1990
Bradford	22 October 1990
Warwickshire	23 October 1990
Somerset	16 November 1990
Cumbria	4 December 1990
Wandsworth	4 December 1990
Wiltshire	4 December 1990
Ealing	4 February 1991
Cambridgeshire	21 February 1991
Humberside	1 March 1991
Waltham Forest	1 March 1991
Rochdale	2 March 1991
Tower Hamlets	18 March 1991
Lewisham	25 March 1991
Nottinghamshire	14 May 1991
Croydon	20 May 1991
Wakefield	20 May 1991
Barnsley	30 May 1991
Cornwall	7 June 1991
Lambeth	26 June 1991
Walsall	7 November 1991
Sheffield	12 November 1991
Bexley	26 November 1991
Kingston-upon-Thames	29 May 1992
Staffordshire	6 July 1992
Havering	11 September 1992
Hereford and Worcester	20 October 1992
Trafford	21 October 1992
Hackney	27 October 1992
Hounslow	27 October 1992
Doncaster	2 November 1992
Oxfordshire	16 November 1992

LEA	*Vote date*
Enfield	4 December 1992
Wirral	14 December 1992
Salford	15 December 1992
Knowsley	24 December 1992
Redbridge	28 December 1992
Camden	11 January 1993
Harrow	28 January 1993
North Tyneside	2 March 1993
Bury	16 March 1993
Greenwich	18 March 1993
St. Helens	22 March 1993
Northumberland	2 April 1993
Leeds	26 April 1993
West Sussex	31 January 1994
North Yorkshire	11 February 1994

Tuition Fees

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure in respect of tuition fees for undergraduate courses in institutions of higher education in 1992-93; and how much of this was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance award on grounds of high parental income.

Mr. Boswell: Figures for total expenditure in the academic year 1992-93 by local education authorities in England and Wales on fees paid by them as part of mandatory awards for students attending first degree courses are not yet available. However, final data for the academic year 1991-92 are now available. Total expenditure in that year was £1,012 million. It is not possible to estimate how much of this expenditure was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance award on grounds of high parental income. However, 27 per cent. of all first degree students in receipt of a mandatory award received no maintenance grant as a result of means testing.

Surplus Places

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the estimated cost of a surplus place in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: The average cost of maintaining a school place in terms of premises alone is estimated to be £179 a year for primary school and £298 a year for a secondary school at 1994-95 prices.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest information regarding the number of surplus places in each local education authority in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) on Monday 31 January, *Official Report*, columns *517-21.*

Primary Schools

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how he defines open enrolment in primary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: All parents have the right to state a preference for their choice of primary school. The more open enrolment provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 mean that schools must admit pupils on demand until they are full. Each primary school has a standard number for admissions, or an approved admission number in the case of grant-maintained schools, which reflects the school's previous levels of intake or its physical capacity as measured against a prescribed formula.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: Prior to October 1992, the Department operated a special scheme agreed with the Treasury to deal with a small number of financial hardship cases involving large bridging loan shortfalls. The terms of the scheme were:

(i) that the Department would meet the first £5,000 of any shortfall;

(ii) that individual members of staff would contribute, either in cash or through an advance of salary, up to the value of one year's salary, reduced by 10 per cent. for each year by which an officer exceeded 50 years of age;

(iii) the Department met the balance.

Any advance of salary was interest free, repayable over 15 years with the option of deferring the first payment for two years.

Advances were made to eight staff under this scheme in 1992-93 totalling £112,337 and to four staff in 1993-94 totalling £70,471. These staff and one other benefitted from the arrangements in respect of shortfalls. Payments totalling £258,384 were written off in 1992-93, with a further £25,703 written off under the scheme in 1993-94. The expenditure was variously met by the Department and, following its creation in September 1992, by the Office for Standards in Education in respect of former members of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools.

Since October 1992, the Department has used the services of a relocation company which eliminates the need for bridging finance. However to assist staff with negative equity shortfalls, it may offer an interest bearing loan up to the limit of the mortgage shortfall, repayable over 12 years. In those cases where staff would face extreme financial hardship as a result of being asked to pay interest on the loan, the advance may be made interest free. No staff in the Department have yet received a loan under this scheme.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1010.*

LEA Schools

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue money has been spent by local education authority schools; and how many pupils attended a local education authority school in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest available information on spending and pupil numbers at LEA-maintained schools is given in the table.

	Recurrent spending (£ million)	*Capital spending (£ million)*	*Pupil numbers (Thousands)*
1982-83	6,543	291	7,641
1983-84	6,864	316	7,457
1984-85	7,128	330	7,688
1985-86	7,519	355	7,180
1986-87	8,277	364	7,056
1987-88	9,070	432	6,930
1988-89	9,853	565	6,856
1989-90	10,726	688	6,831
1990-91	11,728	648	6,853
1991-92	12,714	670	6,869
1992-93	—	640	6,867

Notes:

1. Information on recurrent spending since 1991-92 is not yet available.
2. Information on capital spending since 1992-93 is not yet available.
3. Recurrent spending figures represent net institutional spending in LEA-maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools as recorded on returns made to the Department of the Environment. Figures exclude spending on LEA administration and support services, and provision funded through central government specific grant.
4. Capital figures represent spending on capital projects at LEA-maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.
5. Pupil numbers, in full-time equivalents, are taken from returns made to DFE in January each year—annual schools' census—form 7.

School Leavers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many school leavers there were in each of the past 10 years from the maintained and independent sectors; and what percentage in each category were intending to enter degree or teacher training courses.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated numbers of school leavers over a recent 10-year period from the maintained and independent sectors are shown below, together with the percentage in each category intending to enter degree or teacher training courses. The latest year for which the information is available is 1991-92.

	Maintained schools		*Independent schools*	
	Number of school leavers (000s)	*Percentage intending to enter Degree or Teacher Training*	*Number of school leavers (000s)*	*Percentage intending to enter Degree or Teacher Training*
1981-82	706·7	6·7	44·4	36·9
1982-83	721·8	6·4	43·7	33·3
1983-84	708·6	6·3	44·2	33·9
1984-85	691·0	6·2	45·2	33·2
1985-86	673·6	6·2	44·6	32·7
1986-87	671·2	6·3	44·8	30·1
1987-88	614·8	7·2	41·2	37·4
1988-89	571·0	8·1	46·7	34·9
1989-90	535·0	9·9	43·1	46·5
1990-91	494·1	11·4	47·7	45·7
1991-92	474·4	13·0	44·8	53·6

WALES

Overseas Visits

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many visits abroad the Minister of State made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Redwood: During 1993 the Minister of State for Wales made six visits abroad, as set out in the table.

Date and purpose	*Cost (£)*
4 to 9 January	
To lead an inward investment mission to Taiwan and Singapore	5,242
9 to 10 June	
To lead an overseas trade mission to Zurich	404·40
17 to 25 August	
To lead an overseas trade mission to Singapore and Malaysia	4,255
12 to 24 September	
To lead an overseas trade mission to Canada	4,243·30
12 to 13 November	
To take part in a European Ministers' meeting in Belgium	236·90
20 December	
For a meeting with a Minister of the Republic of Ireland Government in Dublin	243

Note: Costs are those for the Minister's own travel and subsistence, not for officials.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the conditions under which children and young people are entitled to be provided with the most appropriate hearing aid whether or not this is part of the national health service range of hearing aids;

(2) which agency is responsible for monitoring the provision and maintenance of hearing aids for *(a)* pre-school children, *(b)* children at school and *(c)* young people aged 16 years and above who are in full-time education; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement;

(3) which agency monitors the provision of insurance on hearing aids for children and young people; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Hearing aids are available under the national health service for anyone who needs one. It is for the clinician concerned to decide which aid is most appropriate in each case, whether it is from the standard range or purchased by hearing aid centres from a commercial source. As hearing aids are provided on loan there is no requirement for the patient, or in the case of a child under 16, the child's parent, to insure the aid. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Health Service Commission

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what services the Welsh Health Service Commission has decided, or is proposing, not to purchase in 1994-95 which it did purchase in 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This is a matter for the authority to determine.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified speech therapists were employed by *(a)* each health authority and *(b)* each local education authority in Wales in each of the past five years; what are the latest figures; and how many vacancies there were for speech therapists in each of these categories at the most recent available date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The whole-time equivalent numbers of speech therapists directly employed by the NHS, who would also treat school children, is given in the table. Information is not held centrally on the number of speech therapists directly employed by local education authorities.

	Qualified speech therapists in post as at 30 September				
Health Authority area	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[1]1992*	*[1]1993*
Clwyd	24	29	27	34	32
East Dyfed	15	15	14	16	17
Gwent	15	16	21	23	25
Gwynedd	12	11	11	15	14
Mid Glamorgan	18	18	22	19	27
Pembrokeshire	5	5	5	5	5
Powys	9	8	8	7	8
South Glamorgan	31	33	31	32	34
West Glamorgan	21	18	14	19	17
Wales	150	154	153	168	177

[1] Includes staff employed by NHS trusts.

Note:

The use of locally devised payscales from 1991 may affect the comparability of figures as these staff cannot be allocated centrally to a specific staff group and are not, therefore, included in the table.

Information on recent vacancies is not available centrally.

Heliports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines have been issued by the Welsh Office to local planning authorities with regard to the considerations which should be born in mind, and consultations undertaken, prior to granting planning permission for the establishment of heliport facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No specific guidance has been issued on heliports. Local planning authorities should however have regard to the planning policy guidance note on general policy and principles.

NHS Administration

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will conduct a review of the growth of top managerial appointments within national health service trusts and health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The growth in the numbers of general and senior managers since 1989 can be accounted for primarily by reclassification from other staff groups and additional staff employed as the result of the establishment of NHS trusts. Health authorities and NHS trusts have been asked to take measures to contain numbers of managerial and also administrative and clerical staff at September 1993 levels for three years and to seek reductions wherever possible.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to Welsh health authorities in relation to *(a)* the filling of administrative and clerical vacancies and *(b)* the creation of new administrative and clerical vacancies; if he will publish that guidance; to what extent such guidance is applicable to NHS trusts; what consultations he has had with the Institute of Health Service Management in regard to that guidance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The director of the national health service in Wales has written to all health authorities asking them to submit, for approval, proposals for filling vacancies or the creation of new jobs in managerial and administrative and clerical grades. No consultation has taken place with the Institute of Health Service Management. Health authorities and NHS trusts generally will be ensuring that staff in these categories do not increase and wherever possible are reduced so that extra resources can be directed to patient care.

Community Hospital, Porthmadog

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimated date for starting construction work on the new East Dwyfor and North Meirionnydd community hospital at Porthmadog; and what is his target date for opening the new hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The planning time scale for this new hospital scheme is a matter for the Gwynedd community NHS trust—shadow. Subject to satisfactory completion of the health building procedures, the trust currently anticipates a construction start in October 1995 with the hospital opening towards the end of 1997.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the total cost in 1992-93 of management agreements between the Countryside Council for Wales and owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest to (i) compensate for profit forgone and (ii) facilitate positive conservation management.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1992-93 there were 358 agreements in force, costing £924,965. Only annual costs are readily identifiable in the form required and therefore the table does not include lump sum payments, arrears, interest and works. Seven complementary agreements of nominal cost are also excluded.

Type of agreement	*Number*	*Annual cost* £
i. Those which compensate for net profit forgone	62	47,223
ii. Those which facilitate positive conservation management	62	75,582
iii. Those which achieve both of the above	227	295,305
Total	351	418,110

Sheep Dips

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the lack of diagnostic treatment facilities in Wales for people fearing the effects of toxic exposure to organophosphorous sheep dips; and what steps he proposes taking to remedy this problem.

Mr. Redwood: I have not received any representations about the lack of diagnostic treatment facilities in Wales for people fearing the effect of toxic exposure or organophosphorous sheep dips.

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made by his Department of the total cumulative reduction in support to cereal growers in less-favoured areas in Wales in the current year following his announcement of such new boundaries for the arable aid scheme on 14 February.

Mr. Redwood: The payment rate in the LFA this year will be the same as last year, subject to any change in the green rate by 1 July 1994. Therefore, if the total area on which payments are claimed remains constant the total payments in the LFA will remain the same in 1994 as in 1993.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations his Department received following his original proposal in October 1993 for boundaries in respect of the arable aid scheme in Wales based on local parish boundaries; and how many were in favour of the non-LFA decision announced by him on 14 February.

Mr. Redwood: Two hundred and ninety-seven. Seven expressed support for an LFA/non-LFA split, although producers were not specifically asked about that possibility. Most sought an England and Wales region which was not possible.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made by his Department of the total cumulative reduction in hill livestock compensatory allowance support to livestock producers in the less-favoured areas in Wales in the current year, following this year's cut in hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Mr. Redwood: Based on projected animal numbers eligible for payments and the reductions in individual rates, the reduction in hill livestock compensatory payments for the 1994 scheme year is estimated to be £5·5 million. This will be more than offset by increases in other forms of support.

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the population of Wales, were registered with dentists for continuing care in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993, in each of the age group: (i) 18 to 64 years, (ii) 65 to 74 years and (iii) 75 years or more.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information available, which relates to the percentage of the relevant age group registered with an NHS dentist at 30 September, is given in the table.

	Percentage registered with a dentist	
People aged:	*1992*	*1993*
18 to 64	63	63
65 to 74	42	43
75 and over	30	30

Consultants

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1987 the number of occasions on which management or other consultants have been engaged *(a)* by his office and *(b)* by non-departmental public bodies in Wales; what were the total amounts of authorised payments for those consultants in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Details of management consultants engaged by the Welsh Office are as follows:

	Number of occasions	Total payments (£000s)
1987-88	n/a	345
1988-89	20	479
1989-90	8	342
1990-91	24	229
1991-92	38	1,109
1992-93	74	1,416
[1]1993-94	75	1,238

[1] Year to date.

n/a = not available.

Information for non-departmental public bodies is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that a programme of research is carried out into the incidence of breast cancer affecting women in the county of Gwynedd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office is already aware of the incidence of breast cancer in Gwynedd.

A considerable body of research has been undertaken into the causes of breast cancer. This has revealed a number of factors which are consistently related to the development of breast cancer. It appears that there may be an important genetic component in some cases. Other important risk factors may include early menarche, no pregnancies or a late first pregnancy and late menopause. Dietary habits may also play a part.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of the number of women suffering from breast cancer in the last year for which figures are available for each of the health authority areas in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates of the number of women who currently have breast cancer are not readily available centrally. The numbers of new breast cancer cases registered for Welsh residents in 1988, the latest available year, are given in the table:

Numbers of new registrations of female breast cancer (ICD-9 code 174), 1988

Health authority area of residence	Number
Clwyd	314
East Dyfed	185
Pembrokeshire	82
Gwent	273
Gwynedd	172
Mid Glamorgan	302
Powys	60
South Glamorgan	230
West Glamorgan	238
Wales	1,856

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what statistics are available on the provision of infertility treatment in Wales; and what proposals he has to collect further data.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on centres and the number of events is collected centrally by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which is responsible for the licensing of centres. The authority is supported in part from public funds and its information on centres and statistics are available to all. In addition, limited information on in-patient and day case episodes in NHS hospitals is available centrally from the patient episode database for Wales.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of national health service trusts in Wales in relation to *(a)* contracts of employment for chief executives and *(b)* conditions in relation to pensions, severance and early retirement on sickness grounds of such executives; and what guidelines he has issued in relation to the pay and severance terms for such chief executives.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 18 February 1994]*: My right hon. Friend has not had consultation with national health service trust chairmen on these issues.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend on 20 January 1993, *Official Report*, column 277, about guidance issued to national health service trust chairmen about the pay of chief executives. General guidance, pertaining to all staff, on the formulation of settlements on termination of employment was issued on 22 December 1993. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons (Suicides)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column 263, why it is considered that publication of internal prison investigations into suicides might undermine the effectiveness of the reports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Bob Cryer, dated 22 February 1994]:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about publication of reports of internal investigations into prison suicides.

May I begin by putting this in the wider context of how we respond to deaths in custody.

The Prison Service is committed to dealing openly with the often painful aftermath of deaths by prisoners in our care. The responsibility for conducting a public inquest into the death lies with the Coroner. The Service seeks to give the Coroner every possible assistance with his enquiries. Prison governors are instructed to provide any factual information which may be relevant. The Coroner is able to ask for further information and to call witnesses. Close relatives are entitled to attend the inquest and may themselves ask questions of witnesses. The inquest is therefore a full and public investigation into the circumstances of a death. All inquests into prison deaths are conducted before a jury.

We have recently reviewed our policy on the disclosure of information to the deceased prisoner's family. It has been decided that documents made available to the Coroner may, subject to certain conditions, be given to the next of kin on request in advance of the inquest. This may include, for example, the medical records and other documents which contain evidence relevant to the purpose of the inquest. I enclose a copy of an extract from the Report of the Feltham Working Group, published last December, which explains our policy in more detail, including other steps we have taken to ensure families are treated with care and understanding in these circumstances.

It is not our practice, however, to publish the reports of internal investigations into incidents in prison, including suicides or other deaths in custody. Now would such reports be available to the Coroner. The internal investigation is a separate review of the facts which the Prison Service carries out for its own management purposes. As a matter of policy we reserve the right to do so in confidence for two reasons.

First, given the closed and potentially volatile nature of the prison environment publishing reports into prison incidents could cause problems for the day to day management of a prison. Knowledge within the prison of their contents and conclusions could, for example, lead to reprisals or disruption in the working relationships between staff. Second, the prospect of publication could discourage witnesses from co-operating with the inquiry and from being totally candid in the information they give to it. If they knew their identities were to be revealed, they might be at risk of being treated as informers. This could make it more difficult for the Prison Service to discover the truth, learn the appropriate lessons and take prompt and effective follow-up action, including the possibility of disciplinary action against members of staff.

I should stress again that it is our policy to make all relevant factual information available both to the Coroner and to next of kin for the purpose of the public inquest, which will run parallel to the Prison Service's own investigation.

As you know Christine Madden has written separately to Mr. Pearson, the Prison Service Director with operational responsibility for Leeds Prison, about the death of her brother. Mr. Pearson has replied enclosing a copy of Anthony Madden's medical records and offering to meet with her to go through some specific questions she has raised about his death, and to discuss any other concerns she may have. You would of course be welcome to attend the meeting if Miss Madden wishes. A member of the Senior Management Team at Leeds Prison would also be present.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* suicides, *(b)* attempted suicides and *(c)* instances of self-injury there have been at Hindley prison in each year since 1989; what were the ages of those who committed suicide; and what were the offences or alleged offences of those who committed suicide;

(2) how many *(a)* suicides, *(b)* attempted suicides and *(c)* instances of self-injury there were at Cardiff prison in 1992 and 1993;

(3) how many *(a)* suicides, *(b)* attempted suicides and *(c)* instances of self-injury there have been at Moorland prison in each year since it opened; what were the ages of those who committed suicide; and what were the offences or alleged offences of those who committed suicide.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Gerald Bermingham, dated 22 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions on suicides, attempted suicides and self-injury at Cardiff, Hindley and Moorland Prisons.

Information about suicides includes all apparent self-inflicted deaths, not only those which resulted in verdicts of suicide at the Coroner's inquest.

National monitoring of self-injury commenced in 1991, and no information is available for earlier years. The figures collected nationally include all incidents of deliberate self-injury by prisoners, and do not distinguish between apparent attempted suicides and other acts of self-injury. Determining the level of suicidal intent is too subjective to produce reliable data about attempted suicide.

HM Prison Cardiff

Self-inflicted deaths

1992	Nil
1993	Nil

Incidents of self-harm

1991	29
1992	18
1993	10

HM Prison Moorland

Self-inflicted deaths

1992	Nil
1993	Nil
1994	2

Self-inflicted deaths: details

Karl Tout, 19, a remand prisoner charged with assault and theft.

Brendan Tremble, 18, a remand prisoner, charged with aggravated taking and driving away a motor vehicle.

Incidents of self-harm

1992	246
1993	334

HM Prison Hindley

Self-inflicted deaths

1989	1
1990	3
1991	Nil
1992	1
1993	1
1994	Nil

Self-inflicted deaths: details

1989: John McGowan, 19, a remand prisoner charged with rape.

1990: Jonathan Curry, 18, a remand prisoner charged with motoring offences.

Ian McKinlay, 18, a remand prisoner charged with rape.

Anthony Hook, 18, a remand prisoner charged with assault.

1992: Lee Davies, 18, sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for burglary and taking and driving away a motor vehicle.

1993: Darren Taylor, 19, sentenced to 4 months' imprisonment for theft.

Incidents of self-harm

1991	70
1992	76
1993	28

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what number and percentage of detainees at Campsfield house have had their applications for asylum determined; what percentage of these have been granted; what percentage have been deported; and to which countries and on what grounds;

(2) how many asylum seekers and illegal entrants have been held since January 1993 in prison and detention centres *(a)* before the opening of Campsfield house and *(b)* subsequently, categorised by ethnic origin;

(3) how many of those who have been granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom without detention as *(a)* asylum seekers and *(b)* illegal entrants have absconded in the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available and that which might be gathered could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number and percentage of detainees at Campsfield house have had their applications for bail heard; what percentage have been granted; and what percentage refused and on what grounds.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by country of origin, how many visitors have been refused entry to the United Kingdom since the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The available statistics relate to calendar months and are given in the tables. Separate data for persons seeking entry as visitors who were refused and removed at ports in the United Kingdom are not available, but visitors are likely to comprise the majority of the total.

Table 1. Persons refused leave to enter and removed at ports in the United Kingdom, in the period August to November 1993.

Geographical region and nationality	*Number of persons*
All nationalities	5,742
European Community	81
Belgium	1
Denmark	—
France	40
Germany	1
Greece	—
Italy	16
Luxembourg	—
Netherlands	10
Portugal	12
Spain	1
Other Western Europe	341
Austria	18
Cyprus	50
Finland	22
Malta	10
Norway	23
Sweden	48
Switzerland	20
Turkey	69
Former Yugoslavia	81
Eastern Europe	921
Bulgaria	5
Former Czechoslovakia	100
Hungary	47
Poland	623
Romania	49
Former USSR	97
Americas	935
Argentina	15
Barbados	11
Brazil	81
Canada	33
Chile	11
Colombia	135
Guyana	30
Jamaica	144
Mexico	19
Peru	43
Trinidad and Tobago	24
USA	372
Venezuela	17
Africa	1,509
Algeria	66
Angola	11
Egypt	6
Ethiopia	10
Ghana	142
Kenya	110
Libya	10
Mauritius	52
Morocco	36
Nigeria	426
Sierra Leone	134
Somalia	23
South Africa	255
Sudan	11
Tanzania	52
Tunisia	3
Uganda	57
Zaire	30
Zambia	23
Zimbabwe	52
Indian sub-continent	245
Bangladesh	50
India	107
Pakistan	88
Middle East	183
Iran	47
Iraq	13
Israel	51
Jordan	7
Kuwait	1
Lebanon	46
Saudi Arabia	13
Syria	2
Yemen	3
Remainder of Asia	364
China	38
Indonesia	8
Japan	58
Malaysia	137
Philippines	23
Singapore	14
South Korea	16
Sri Lanka	33
Thailand	7
Hong Kong[1]	30
Australasia	110
Australia	70
New Zealand	40
Others	1,053
British Overseas citizens	32
Other countries not elsewhere specified	527
Stateless and nationality doubtful	494

[1] British dependent territories citizens and British nationals (overseas) only.

Table 2

Persons refused a visit entry clearance in selected countries[1], in the period August to December 1993

Country of application	*Number of persons*
Bangladesh	1,350
India	2,780
Pakistan	3,400
Hong Kong	[2]20

[1] Corresponding data for other countries are not available centrally.
[2] Including July 1993.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers whose applications were made since the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 are currently held in detention;

(2) how many asylum seekers whose applications were made before the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 are currently held in detention.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The table relates to asylum seekers in detention on 17 February 1994. The date of application is not recorded centrally in illegal entry cases and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	Applied before 26 July 1993	*Applied on or after 26 July 1993*	*Total*
Port cases	38	322	360
Deportation cases	22	49	71
Illegal entrants	—	—	289
			720

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the decision was taken that it was safe to return unsuccessful asylum seekers to Sudan; from what date the new policy is to take effect, and what internal circumstances have changed in Sudan to justify this change of policy.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have been prepared since August 1993 to consider returning to Sudan unsuccessful asylum seekers who do not qualify for refugee status and where there are no strong compassionate or other grounds for granting them exceptional leave to remain. This decision was made after a careful assessment of circumstances in both northern and southern Sudan and of the position of the different ethnic and religious groups in the country.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, by country of origin, how many asylum seekers have been refused entry to the United Kingdom, detained and deported since the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between 26 July 1993 and 16 January 1994, 334 passengers who had sought asylum on arrival were removed from the United Kingdom following refusal of entry. Their countries of nationality are listed in the table. Of these passengers, 225 remained in detention for the whole period of their stay, and the remainder may have spent some time in detention.

	Number
Afghanistan	1
Algeria	9
Angola	14
Bangladesh	2
Bulgaria	1
Burkina Faso	1
Brazil	1
China	3
Colombia	5
Congo	1
Czechoslovakia	1
Ethiopia	2
Former Yugoslavia	8
Former Soviet Union	7
Ghana	40
Hungary	2
India	11
Iran	3
Ivory Coast	12
Jamaica	1
Jordan	1
Kenya	4
Kuwait	1
Lebanon	5
Liberia	3
Malawi	1
Niger	4
Nigeria	31
Pakistan	9
Peru	1
Poland	8
Romania	30
Saudi Arabia	1
Sierra Leone	10
Somalia	11
South Africa	1
Sri Lanka	16
Sudan	2
Tanzania	3
Turkey	26
Uganda	8
USA	1
Nationality Doubtful (Palestine)	6
Nationality Doubtful	10
Zaire	16

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to which countries asylum seekers rejected on third country grounds have been removed; and how many have subsequently been returned to the United Kingdom by the authorities of the third country since 26 July 1993;

(2) how many asylum applications have been refused on safe third country grounds since 26 July 1993; and how many asylum seekers have subsequently been removed from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the six complete months—1 August 1993 to 31 January 1994—since 26 July 1993 there were 459 refusals on third country grounds—431 in port cases and 28 in in-country cases. During the same six months, 177 port asylum applicants refused on third country grounds were removed or departed voluntarily. Corresponding information on in-country cases is not available.

Information on the destination of third country removals is not readily available.

In the period 1 August 1993 to 21 January 1994, 28 port asylum cases, who had been removed on third country grounds, were returned to the United Kingdom.

Immigration Advisory Service

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current level of funding for the immigration appeals advisory service and the refugee legal centre; and what plans he has to increase it.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1993-94 provision of £4·924 million has been made for grants made under section 23 of the Immigration Act 1971, under which funding is provided for both the immigration advisory service—formerly IASS—and the refugee legal centre. The provision for 1994-95 is £5·522 million.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to appoint the members of the independent panel which will consider appeals under the revised arrangements for paying criminal injuries compensation—the tariff scheme—which come into force on 1 April.

Mr. Howard: The Secretary of State for Scotland and I have appointed Mr. Michael Lewer QC, an experienced member of the present Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, to be the first chairman of the new appeals panel. Our aim now is to appoint a nucleus of about a dozen panel members within the next few weeks to deal with any early appeals under the new scheme. We would like some of those posts to be filled by other members of the present board. The full complement of appeals panel members will be appointed over the coming months as the number of appeals builds up.

Royal Commission on Criminal Justice

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to issue a response to the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed in the Library of both Houses a paper which provides an interim Government response to the report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Of the royal commission's 352 recommendations, we identified 308 as intended for action by Government. Some 130 of these recommendations have already been accepted and virtually all the remainder are still under active and careful consideration.

I hope that I will shortly be in a position to make available a further important response to the report of the royal commission by publishing a paper setting out how the Government propose to give effect to the royal commission's recommendations about the powers of the Court of Appeal, and new arrangements for considering alleged miscarriages of justice.

South Wales Police

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the letter dated 30 December 1993 from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth regarding the South Wales police.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 16 February.

War Crimes

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much police time is being devoted to investigating war crimes in accordance with the provisions of the War Crimes Act 1991;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of investigations under the War Crimes Act 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is staffed by 11 police officers and is supported by seven civilians. It was set up specifically to investigate allegations against war criminals arising from the War Crimes Act and it is dedicated full time to that task. As with other criminal offences, such investigations are entirely the responsibility of the police. I anticipate, though, that the unit's work should be completed by the end of the next financial year.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many dog-handlers and dogs were used to police the protest against the construction of the M11 link road in Wanstead on Saturday 22 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that no dogs were used to police the protest. Six handlers and their dogs were deployed once the site had been cleared of protesters, to prevent any further incursions.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police personnel were used to police the protest against the construction of the M11 link road in Wanstead on Saturday 22 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that a total of 130 officers were deployed.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the total costs of policing protests against the construction of the M11 link road since September 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the total manpower costs since September 1993 are £470,075. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of policing the protest against the construction of the M11 link road in Wanstead on Saturday 22 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the additional manpower cost of policing the protest on 22 January was £9,240. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Bosnians

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Bosnians are now resident in Britain outside the quota system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The numbers of people who many apply for or be granted asylum, or be admitted to the United Kingdom in other capacities under the immigration rules, are not subject to quotas. Each case is considered on its merits under the relevant rules.

The available information is as follows. Between 1 January 1992 and 31 January 1994 some 7,590 nationals of the former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. The large majority of these cases are under consideration and the applicants are being allowed to stay in the meantime.

In addition, under arrangements announced in November 1992 and June 1993, the Government have offered to receive 1,000 particularly vulnerable individuals from Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, and their close dependants: an estimated total of 4,000 people. As at 21 February 1994, 568 particularly vulnerable individuals and 781 dependants had arrived under these arrangements. Prior to this, 68 sick and wounded ex-detainees from Bosnia arrived in September 1992.

Information on Bosnians who have entered the United Kingdom in another capacity is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Assisted Prison Visits

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the prison service is now in a position to make a decision on when it will implement its business plan commitment to honour the payment of travel costs on second visits to prisoners.

Mr. Peter Loyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 22 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the proposed extension of the assisted prison visits scheme to cover the second statutory monthly visit.

In line with the commitment, given in the Prison Service's Business Plan for 1993-94, the assisted visits scheme for England and Wales will be increased from 5 April 1994 to enable prisoners' close relatives on income support to visit once every 14 days.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to carry out a review of the legislation and procedures governing the use of animals in laboratories; whether he will list the changes made in respect of animal experiments since 1979; and if he will make a statement of Government policy on this matter.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 represented a major reform in the law regulating the use of laboratory animals. The Government are committed to the underlying principle of the legislation, which is to prevent all avoidable animal suffering and unnecessary animal use, while recognising the legitimate needs of science.

The Animal Procedures Committee, established under the 1986 Act, is required to monitor the working of the legislation and advise my right hon. and learned Friend on ways of improving its operation. It is the practice for the committee's annual report, which is laid before Parliament, to describe any significant changes that have occurred in these arrangements. The annual reports also describe the results of the committee's deliberations on particular areas of research or concern.

Wheel Clamps

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vehicles were clamped by private contractors employed by the Metropolitan police in each of the past five years; what were the fees charged for removal of clamps in each of the past five years; and what are the criteria for assessing increases in these fees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The figures for the numbers of vehicles clamped and the charge made for each of the past five years are given in the table. The charge is set at a level to recover the full cost to the police of the clamping operation. The charge is subject to annual review.

Year	*Number of clamps*	*Charge £*
1988-89	130,353	25
1989-90	156,747	30
1990-91	152,881	30
1991-92	128,180	32
1992-93	93,541	38

Kenya (Immigration Officers)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the function of the British and Dutch immigration officers stationed at Nairobi and Mombasa airports; how long they have been there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Two chief immigration officers from the immigration service and three Dutch immigration officials were in Kenya at various times between 15 August and 6 November 1993 to train and advise airline staff at Nairobi and Mombasa airports in the identification of inadequately documented passengers. Two of the officers concerned are currently in Kenya for 10 days to assess the effectiveness of the earlier training.

Teachers, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of teachers employed in schools in each of the London boroughs whose salaries are paid in full or part from section 11 funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 17 February to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), *Official Report*, columns *904-906).*

Death Penalty

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the Lord Chancellor since 17 December 1990 concerning the continued existence of the death penalty for the crimes of treason, treason felony and piracy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There were a number of exchanges between my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the Lord Chancellor on this subject after 17 December 1990. I understand that the law relating to treason, treason-felony and piracy remains on the Law Commission's agenda for codification of the criminal law.

Immigration

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are given to immigration officers at ports of entry to assist them in considering the cases of those seeking to re-enter the United Kingdom after a trip abroad, during the period of a valid visa.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Passengers whose stay in the United Kingdom was subject to a time limit and who return after a temporary absence abroad are considered under paragraph 60 of the immigration rules—HC251. The same time limit and any conditions attached will normally be reimposed if the requirements of the rules are met, unless admission is sought in a different capacity from the one in which leave to enter or remain was last given.

Visas

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current position within the European Community concerning the harmonisation of visa arrangements; what effect this will have on the current United Kingdom visa arrangements; what representations he has received concerning the effect of such changes on trade and other relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The European Commission recently put forward proposals to give effect to article 100c of the treaty of Rome, which provides for the determination of the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external frontiers of the member states. In accordance with the procedures for parliamentary scrutiny of European Community documents, the Commission document was deposited on 18 January, and the Government submitted their explanatory memorandum on 1 February. My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations concerning the possible effect of the Commission's proposals on trade and other relations.

Police (Protective Clothing)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he intends to introduce legislation to make it compulsory for police authorities to provide individual head gear for firearms teams in their police forces; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he intends to provide the necessary finance to police authorities to enable them to purchase individual head gear for firearms teams in their police forces; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when he intends to provide the necessary finance to police authorities to enable them to purchase knife-proof vests for their police forces; and if he will make a statement;

(4) when he intends to introduce legislation to make it compulsory for police authorities to provide knife-proof vests for members of their police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have no plans to introduce such legislation. It is for chief officers of police to decide how to equip their officers. Police protective equipment is purchased out of normal police funds.

Children's Services

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time employers currently have to wait for clearance through the police vetting procedure of prospective employees who wish to work with children.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The last full year for which comprehensive figures are available is the year to 31 March 1993. Not all forces provided an average response time and it is, therefore, not possible to give an overall average.

Where a force only needs to consult records which are available within the force, the majority respond in 14 days or less, with just over half responding in seven days or under. Where inquiries have to be made of other police forces, an extra delay of three weeks or more can be incurred.

A few forces, though have average response times significantly longer than these, with one force responding within an average of 70 days where internal inquiries only were needed and 75 days where inquiries of other forces were required.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests for vetting of prospective employees wishing to work with children each police authority received in the last year for which figures are available from *(a)* education authorities, *(b)* the independent education sector, *(c)* social services departments, *(d)* health authorities and *(e)* the voluntary sector.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The last year for which figures are available is the year to 31 March 1993, when the total number of child protection checks carried out by police forces in England and Wales was 663,103. The number of child protection checks carried out by each force, excluding checks made for the voluntary organisations consultancy service, was as follows:

	Number
Avon and Somerset	16,641
Bedfordshire	7,847
Cambridgeshire	10,589
Cheshire	15,965
City of London	119
Cleveland	5,716
Cumbria	3,901
Derbyshire	9,944
Devon and Cornwall	17,951
Dorset	12,973
Durham	9,179
Dyfed-Powys	12,198
Essex	17,725
Gloucestershire	[1]7,500
Greater Manchester	30,653
Gwent	4,319
Hampshire	27,463
Hertfordshire	12,588
Humberside	9,040
Kent	17,239
Lancashire	18,555
Leicestershire	19,653
Lincolnshire	7,128
Merseyside	25,078
Metropolitan	82,875
Norfolk	10,702
Northamptonshire	7,499
Northumbria	15,325
North Wales	9,701
North Yorkshire	6,019
Nottinghamshire	14,910
South Wales	12,915

	Number
South Yorkshire	16,313
Staffordshire	7,414
Surrey	12,337
Suffolk	5,003
Sussex	15,460
Thames Valley	29,562
Warwickshire	10,772
West Mercia	17,485
West Midlands	33,282
West Yorkshire	14,812
Wiltshire	12,122

[1] Approximate.

In the same period the voluntary organisations consultancy service made 8,631 requests to police forces for checks to be made on behalf of certain national voluntary child care organisations. In addition, some of the checks requested by local authorities may have been made on behalf of voluntary organisations.

A further breakdown in the way sought is not available.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to require the voluntary sector to use the police vetting service of prospective employees wishing to work with children.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. However, the current review by the Home Office of arrangements for access to criminal records for vetting purposes may result in checks being made more widely available to the voluntary child care sector, should it wish to use them.

National Lottery

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to prevent rivals to the national lottery from establishing themselves.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provided that the competitors operate within the law, there are no grounds for the Government to take such steps.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the length of time that should elapse before a person with a serious criminal conviction can successfully apply for a shotgun or firearms certificate.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Section 21 of the Firearms Act 1968 provides that a person who has been sentenced to imprisonment, including detention in a young offenders institution, for a term of three years or more is prohibited at any time from having a firearm or ammunition in their possession. A person sentenced to a term of three months or more but less than three years is prohibited from having a firearm or ammunition in his or her possession at any time for a period of five years from the date of his or her release.

The issue of firearm and shotgun certificates is a matter for the local chief officer of police.

Notwithstanding the expiry of a person's prohibition, a chief officer may grant a certificate only if he is satisfied that the applicant can be permitted to possess a firearm without danger to public safety or the peace. An applicant aggrieved by the decision of a chief officer may appeal to the Crown court.

Sentencing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to order an examination into disparity of sentencing by judges.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The Government have no such plans. Decisions on sentencing in individual cases are for the courts to determine in the light of all the circumstances of the offence and the offender. There is an avenue of appeal against sentence in all cases.

Dog Fouling

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to increase the maximum penalty for dog fouling to bring it into line with the maximum penalty for dropping litter.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to change the maximum level of penalty which can be adopted by local authorities and others, in their dog fouling byelaws. However, dog fouling legislation is being looked at by the advisory group on litter as part of its review of litter legislation. Its report is expected in the spring.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to introduce a national register of individuals identified as unsuitable for employment involving close contact with children.

Mr. Bowis: I have been asked to reply.

My Department already runs the consultancy service which advises prospective employers in the child care system about people who may be unsuitable to work with children. The consultancy list includes the names of those on the Department for Education's list 99 debarred from teaching by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the Government's proposal to end their funding of the Commonwealth Institute after March 1996; what consultation there has been with the Commonwealth secretariat about the proposal; if he will reconsider the proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd; I refer the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe to the answers I gave the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 14 February 1994, *Official Report,* columns *569-70.*

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current annual funding of *(a)* the Commonwealth Institute and *(b)* the military training assistance scheme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The current annual funding of the Commonwealth Institute is £3 million. An additional funding of £2·4 million between now and March 1996 has been allocated for redundancies. The military training assistance scheme funding in 1993-94 is £13·4 million.

Balkans Customs Corridor

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Commission's initiative, under the PHARE programme, for a Balkan customs corridor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his reply, 15 February 1994, c. 685]:* The European Commission has recently announced that support for a Balkans customs corridor will form part of a proposed wider initiative for transit improvement in the Balkan region for which up to 100 million ecu—around £77 million—could be made available. Firm proposals for assistance using PHARE programme funds have yet to be finalised and presented to member states for opinion.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Early-day Motions

Mr. Steen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the average number of signatures added to early-day motions per week; and what is the total annual cost to public funds of early-day motions.

Mr. Newton: The average number of hon. Members' signatures added to early-day motions in each sitting week in calendar year 1993 was 3,091; the total cost to public funds of printing and publishing early-day motions during 1993 is estimated by Her Majesty's Stationery Office to have been £2,290,000.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column 78, how many early-day motions were tabled in 1992-93; and how many early-day motions have been debated since 1979.

Mr. Newton: There were 2,574 early-day motions tabled in Session 1992-93.

There is no definitive list of motions debated in the House which first appeared on the Order Paper as early-day motions. The majority of such motions are prayers against statutory instruments. The number of motions to annul or revoke an instrument debated on the Floor of the House from 1979 to 1980 Session to date is 208. Other than prayers, it seems that there have not been more than four motions debated in the House since 1979 which began as early-day motions.

PRIME MINISTER

Russia

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy towards Russia's application to join the Group of Seven.

The Prime Minister: I believe that there is a strong case for building a closer political dialogue between Russia and the Group of Seven, by creating a political Group of Eight, although it would not be appropriate in current circumstances for Russia to join the economic G7. I shall be taking this up with my G7 colleagues.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 22 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

10 Downing Street

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of items on loan to 10 Downing street which have been mislaid since 1979.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of all items of works of art, furniture, china, gold and silver artefacts currently on loan in 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which paintings and other works of art on display in 10 Downing street in October 1990 have subsequently been removed.

The Prime Minister: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas Visits (Media)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of amounts outstanding from media organisations for costs arising from using official transport on overseas visits.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to give details of outstanding accounts.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which official gifts were retained by his predecessor at the end of her period of office.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven would have retained those gifts of small value that she wished to keep, and those gifts of higher value that she had chosen to purchase.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which countries he has visited in an official capacity since November 1990.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Country	*Dates*
Italy	13-15 December 1990
United States of America	20-22 December 1990
Saudi Arabia	6-8 January 1991
Oman	8-9 January 1991
Egypt	9 January 1991

Country	Dates
France	14 January 1991
France	20 January 1991
Germany	11 February 1991
Soviet Union	4-5 March 1991
Germany	11 March 1991
Bermuda	15-16 March 1991
Luxembourg	8 April 1991
France	24 June 1991
Luxembourg	28-29 June 1991
Spain	2-13 June 1991
Spain	2 August 1991
United States of America	27-30 August 1991
China/Russia	1-6 September 1991
France	11-12 September 1991
Netherlands	18 September 1991
Zimbabwe	14-22 October 1991
Italy	7-8 November 1991
Germany	10 November 1991
Italy	27 November 1991
Germany	27 November 1991
Netherlands	1 December 1991
Republic of Ireland	4 December 1991
Netherlands	8-10 December 1991
United States of America	30-31 January 1992
Poland	25-26 May 1992
Czechoslovakia	26-28 May 1992
Hungary	28-29 May 1992
Germany	5 June 1992
USA	6-9 June 1992
Colombia	9-10 June 1992
Brazil	10-12 June 1992
Portugal	25-27 June 1992
Germany	6-8 July 1992
Finland	9-10 July 1992
Spain	7-9 August 1992
Spain	16-17 September 1992
France	30 September 1992
Egypt	23-25 October 1992
Belgium	23 November 1992
Italy/Greece	27-28 November 1992
Luxembourg	30 November 1992
Spain	30 November 1992
	1 December 1992
Portugal	1 December 1992
Denmark	2 December 1992
Netherlands	6-7 December 1992
Republic of Ireland	7 December 1992
France	15-16 December 1992
Canada	17-18 December 1992
USA	18-20 December 1992
Bosnia	22 December 1992
India	23-28 January 1993
Oman	28 January 1993
Saudi Arabia	28 January 1993
USA	23-25 February 1993
Switzerland	5-6 April 1993
Austria	6 April 1993
France	27-28 May 1993
Denmark	20-22 June 1993
Japan	5-9 July 1993
Sweden	11-13 August 1993
Portugal	23 August 1993
Japan	18-21 September 1993
Malaysia	21-22 September 1993
Monaco	23 September 1993
Cyprus	21-25 October 1993
Belgium	28-29 October 1993
Germany	25 November 1993
Republic of Ireland	3 December 1993
Belgium	9-11 December 1993
Belgium	9-11 January 1994
Russia	14-16 February 1994

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Co-operatives

Mr. McMaster: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage the development of retail, wholesale and manufacturing co-operatives.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 8 February, *Official Report, column 121.*

Petroleum Coke

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will require coal merchants selling petroleum coke to issue to all purchasers pamphlets on the dangers of the fuel.

Mr. McLoughlin: Section 10—the general safety requirement—of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 already makes it an offence to supply consumer goods which are not reasonably safe, having regard to all the circumstances. These circumstances include the manner in which the goods are marketed and any instructions or warnings given with the goods concerning their use. Accordingly, my Department has advised known suppliers of petroleum coke that failure to provide consumers with written instructions about the safe use of this fuel and the precautions that should be taken could render themselves liable to prosecution under section 10 of the Act.

My Department has also notified local authority trading standards departments, which are responsible for the day-to-day enforcement of the safety provisions of the Act, of this advice.

Australian House Coal

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek from his counterparts in France and Belgium details of deaths in 1992 and 1993 attributed to fumes from defective Australian house coal.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has requested this information from the relevant authorities in France and Belgium, and I will write to the hon. Member when a response is received.

Post Offices

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which post offices in Ayrshire are still under the direct authority of the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that there are five—Ayr, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Kilwinning and Saltcoats.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post offices throughout the United Kingdom have been franchised in each year since introduction of the policy.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the numbers are as follows:

	Number
1989-90	153
1990-91	164
1991-92	147

	Number
1992-93	108
[1]1993-94	56

[1] To January.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has received from the Post Office of the financial benefits of franchising as opposed to maintaining post offices under its direct control.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the financial benefits are as follows:

	Net recurring benefit of each year's conversions
	£ millions
1989-90	4·4
1990-91	3·9
1991-92	4·1
1992-93	3·4

Over the same period, one-off income from fees has exceeded one-off costs associated with conversions by £13·1 million.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has received from the Post Office to franchise the operating of Kilwinning and Irvine main post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: None.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures are used by the Post Office to monitor the performance of agency post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that Post Office Counters Ltd. monitors the performance of agency post offices across the generic areas of financial accounting, customer service and accuracy of transactions. It does so directly through regular financial and procedural audits and the support of retail network managers, and indirectly through customer research and "mystery shopper" surveys.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post and sub-post offices have been given agency status in Ayrshire; and if he will list them.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the following 13 post offices in Ayrshire have been converted from directly managed to agency status:

Ardrossan
Beith
Brodick
Burns Statue Ayr
Cumnock
Dalry
Girvan
Largs
Maypole
Prestwick
Stevenson
Troon
West Kilbride

In addition, there are 101 sub-post offices in Ayrshire.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement indicating how many people are employed at *(a)* Kilwinning and *(b)* Irvine main post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that Kilwinning Crown post office employs eight staff, of whom four are full time and four are part time, and that Irvine Crown post office employs 12 staff, of whom eight are full time and four are part time.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many jobs have been lost throughout the United Kingdom as a result of the introduction of agency status for post offices;

(2) how many jobs have been lost in Scotland as a result of the introduction of agency status for post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: None that I am aware of. Since the full range of services is maintained and the agency offices are frequently open for longer hours, they need to employ similar or even greater numbers of staff.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many post offices in Scotland have been given agency status during each year since the introduction of the franchising policy; and if he will list them.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that the numbers are as follows:

	Number
1989-90	32
1990-91	29
1991-92	40
1992-93	11
[1]1993-94	5

[1] to January

The post offices in Scotland converted to agency status between April 1989 and January 1994 are:

Alexandria
Anstruther
Arbroath
Banchory
Banff
Barrhead
Bearsden
Beith
Bishopbriggs
Bo'ness
Blairgowrie
Brechin
Brodick
Broughty Ferry
Broxburn
Bruntsfield Edinburgh
Buckhaven
Buckie
Burns Statue Ayr
Burntisland
Campbeltown
Carnoustie
Cathcart Glasgow
Coldstream
Cowdenbeath
Crieff
Cumnock
Cupar
Dalbeattie
Dalmuir Glasgow
Dalry
Dingwall
Dunbar
Dunblane
Dunoon
Duns
Ellon
Forfar

Forres
Forrest Road Edinburgh
Fraserburgh
George Street Aberdeen
Girvan
Glasgow Airport
Glasgow Road Ardrossan
Gourock
Grangemouth
Grantown on Spey
Hawick
Helensburgh
Hillhead
Huntly
Invergordon
Inverurie
Jamaica Street Glasgow
Jedburgh
Johnstone
Kelso
Kelvinbridge Glasgow
Kilmacolm
Kilsyth
Kinross
Kirkcudbright
Kirriemuir
Kyle of Lochalsh
Lairg
Larkhall
Lanark
Largs
Leith
Leith Walk Edinburgh
Leven
Lochee Dundee
Lochgelly
Lochgilphead
Lockerbie
Lossiemouth
Maryhill Glasgow
Maybole
Melrose
Moffat
Montrose
Musselburgh
Nairn
Newton Stewart
Newlands Glasgow
North Berwick
North Park Edinburgh
Oban
Parkhead Glasgow
Peebles
Penicuik
Pitlochry
Pollock Glasgow
Port Ellen
Port Glasgow
Portobello Edinburgh
Portree
Prestonpans
Prestwick
Rothesay
Selkirk
Shawlands Glasgow
Shotts
St. George's Cross Glasgow
St. Rollox Glasgow
Stevenston
Stonehaven
Strathaven
Stromness
Tain
Tollcross Edinburgh
Tranent
Troon
Turriff
Uddingston
West Kilbride

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on criteria used by the Post Office for considering post offices for agency status and the extent to which the criteria vary for rural post offices.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that directly managed post offices, wherever located, are considered for conversion to agencies on the following criteria:

the service benefit of changing—longer opening hours, better location;
financial benefits;
ability to redeploy/reduce staff numbers voluntarily;
availability of a suitable partner to become agent.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what safeguards are used by the Post Office to ensure the rights of existing staff in post offices which are transferred to agency status.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that all conversions have been achieved without compulsory redundancy. When a conversion occurs, staff are offered alternative jobs within the organisation or the opportunity to leave the business on voluntary redundancy terms.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation procedures are adopted by the Post Office when considering franchising a post office.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand from the Post Office that consultation is carried out in accordance with the code of practice agreed between Post Office Counters Ltd. and the Post Office Users National Council, and involves the local Member of Parliament, local government authorities and the appropriate post office advisory committee or chamber of commerce.

Tourism

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure that the implementation of the EU directive on forward selling will not prevent hoteliers and others involved in the tourism industry in the counties of Britain from requiring a deposit when accepting bookings; and if he will make a statement on the Government's position on this issue.

Mr. McLoughlin: Negotiations on the proposed directive on distance selling are continuing in Brussels. The Government have made it clear that they will not support this directive while it contains provisions which would prevent payment in advance for goods or services.

Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to inform those of Her Majesty's civil servants currently occupied in the Departments, agencies or other bodies named in any part of his explanatory memorandum to the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill of the liability of those organisations for partial or complete contractorisation of their services under the powers he seeks in clauses 57 to 64 of that Bill.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The explanatory guide to the Bill contains examples of areas where statutory obstacles to market testing or contracting out exist which could in principle be addressed using provisions in part II of the Bill. The list is illustrative and does not represent firm plans to market test or contract out particular functions except as indicated. In many cases further review would be required, taking into account all relevant considerations.

It is the responsibility of individual Ministers to manage the market-testing programmes in their Departments, including anouncements relating to any intention to use the provisions in the contracting-out part of the Bill if enacted.

In respect of my Department the heads of the management units concerned informed their staff about the implications for them of the Bill, and the explanatory material, when the Bill was introduced to Parliament.

Product Development Awards

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what British standards awards have been established for product development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The British Standards Institution has published a guide—BS 7000 part 1—to managing product design which offers guidance on product development. However, there are no specific British standards setting out detailed specifications against which companies' product development expertise can be measured or against which certificates may be awarded.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received on the project co-sponsored by the European Commission's research directorate-general to gain support in Cumbria for the planned radioactive waste repository near Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the project concerned relates to the provision of factual information in various forms to the public regarding the possible development of a radioactive waste repository near Sellafield and to assessments of the impact of those information flows on public opinion.

Bestwood Pension Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department's investigation into the theft of money from the Bestwood pension fund was completed; when it was made available to the Department of Social Security; and what were the reasons for the interval.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The inspectors appointed under sections 432 and 442 of the Companies Act 1985 to investigate and report on the affairs and membership of the Bestwood plc and on the affairs of Atlanta Fund Managers Ltd. submitted their report on 26 March 1991. The inspectors' report was disclosed to the DSS shortly before the report was published earlier this year.

At the time the report was submitted, the Serious Fraud Office has already commenced a criminal investigation into certain matters revealed by the report. Publication of the report did not take place until after the conclusion of the criminal proceedings.

Markets

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* opposed to deregulating town centre markets.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department has received 40 representations from individuals, local authorities, trade associations and businesses on the Government's proposals to deregulate market charter rights, of which eight express support. However, many of those opposed to the proposal do so under the misapprehension that charter rights provisions may be used to halt generally by way of permanent injunction other markets which may cause local nuisance. This is, only so in limited circumstances—where the rival market is held on the same day as the charter market or where, if not held on the same day, it can be demonstrated that direct financial loss has occurred thereby.

Deregulation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will identify for each of the proposals put forward to Government by the business deregulation task forces, and represented by numbers 96, 99, 193, 196, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 229, 264, 273, 283, 287, 292, 309, 314 in the publication "Deregulation Task Forces Proposals for Reform" *(a)* which the Government have already taken action on, *(b)* which are under further consideration and *(c)* which are not being considered further.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Government policy on the issues raised by business deregulation task force proposals 96 and 99 is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the remainder are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the letter sent to him on 10 December by the Campaign for Freedom of Information on the disclosure of information on THORP under the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Eggar: A reply was sent on 10 February 1994.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *946*, what is the reason for details of CFC exports from the United Kingdom being confidential only since 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: Trade in any particular commodity may be dominated by one or two manufacturers or traders. In such a case, the companies concerned may request Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to suppress publication of detailed figures on the grounds of commercial sensitivity. In the case of CFC exports, suppression has been invoked since 1991.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1010.*

Insolvency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to use bankruptcy and winding-up orders only as a last resort, and to negotiate payment by instalment of those affected, wherever possible.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Where my Department is a creditor I would expect every effort to be made to effect recovery, including consideration of accepting payment by instalments, prior to commencing insolvency proceedings. I am sure that most creditors adopt this same, practical approach.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of bankruptcies and company winding-up orders for each year since 1987; and what percentage of these were carried out at the instigation of petitions by *(a)* the Inland Revenue, *(b)* Customs and Excise and *(c)* other Government Departments or official body.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The number of bankruptcies and company winding-up orders for each year since 1987 is set out in table 1.

The number of bankruptcy or company winding-up orders obtained by various Government Departments since 1987 is set out in tables 2 to 5:

Table 1

Number of Bankruptcies and Company Winding-Up Orders 1987-93

England and Wales

	[1]*Bankruptcies*	*Company Winding-up Orders*
1987	6,994	4,116
1988	7,717	3,667
1989	8,138	4,020
1990	12,058	5,977
1991	22,632	8,368
1992	32,106	9,734
1993	30,958	8,361

Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

[1] Bankruptcies covers bankruptcy orders and administration orders on bankrupt estates.

Table 2

Bankruptcies following Petitions brought by Government Departments 1987-93 (where statistics recorded by calendar year)

England and Wales

	Inland Revenue	*Percentage of total*	*Department of Social Security*	*Percentage of total*
1987	992	14·18	n.a.	n.a.
1988	1,363	17·66	n.a.	n.a.
1989	1,349	16·58	n.a.	n.a.
1990	1,394	11·56	190	1·58
1991	1,865	8·24	252	1·11
1992	2,003	6·24	467	1·45
1993	2,347	7·58	219	0·71

Source: Board of Inland Revenue; Department of Social Security.

n.a.=not available.

Table 3

Company Winding-Up Orders following Petitions brought by Government Departments 1987-93 (where statistics recorded by calendar years)

England and Wales

	Inland Revenue	*Percentage of total*	*Department of Social Security*	*Percentage of total*
1987	254	6·17	n/a	n/a
1988	237	6·46	n/a	n/a
1989	314	7·81	n/a	n/a
1990	463	7·75	221	3·70
1991	786	9·39	162	1·94
1992	986	10·13	190	1·95
1993	812	9·71	289	3·46

n/a = not available

Source: Board of Inland Revenue; Department of Social Security.

Table 4

Bankruptcy Orders following Petitions brought by Government Departments 1987-93 (where statistics recorded by fiscal years)

England and Wales

	Bankruptcy Orders	*Customs and Excise*	*Percentage of total*
1987-88	7,365	778	10·56
1988-89	7,597	1,010	13·29
1989-90	8,680	1,047	12·06
1990-91	14,379	1,394	9·69
1991-92	26,186	3,025	11·55
1992-93	33,152	3,726	11·24

Source: Department of Trade and Industry; Board of Customs and Excise.

Table 5

Company winding-up orders following petitions brought by Government Departments 1987-93 (where statistics recorded by fiscal years)

England and Wales

	Company winding-up orders	*Customs and Excise*	*Percentage of total*	*Department of Trade and Industry*	*Percentage of total*
1987-88	3,952	690	17·46	18	0·56
1988-89	3,554	552	15·53	14	0·39
1989-90	4,289	1,172	27·33	19	0·42
1990-91	6,786	1,649	24·30	30	0·40

	Company winding-up orders	*Customs and Excise*	*Percentage of total*	*Department of Trade and Industry*	*Percentage of total*
1991-92	8,911	2,098	23·54	16	0·19
1992-93	9,542	3,434	35·99	12	0·14

Source: Board of Customs and Excise; Department of Trade and Industry.

Iron and Steel Exports

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will produce a table to show the value of United Kingdom iron and steel exports and the proportion thereof exported to the rest of the EC single market for each of the last 10 calendar years.

Mr. Needham: The information is provided in the table.

United Kingdom exports of iron and steel

Year	*EC total (£ millions)*	*World total (£ millions)*	*Proportion exported to the EC percentage*
1983	531·9	1,330·7	40·0
1984	636·8	1,528·9	41·7
1985	824·2	1,856·2	44·4
1986	917·9	1,866·5	49·2
1987	994·3	2,153·4	46·2
1988	1,230·3	2,392·0	51·4
1989	1,679·3	2,893·8	58·0
1990	1,805·1	3,036·0	59·5
1991	1,771·5	3,011·3	58·8
1992	1,857·4	3,004·4	61·8

Source: Business Monitor MA20, overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the report on the Accounts Services Agency by the consultants PA Consultancy Group.

Mr. Eggar: The report by the PA Consulting Group "Options for the Accounts Services Agency" contains a considerable amount of commercially sensitive information whose publication could affect the tendering process. It has been decided, therefore, not to publish the report.

Regional Funding

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library a copy of the list of United Kingdom objective 5(b) areas recently decided by the European Commission.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. A copy of the Commission's list has been placed in the Library today.

Batteries Directives

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Government will introduce regulations to implement the batteries directives.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Batteries and Accumulators (Containing Dangerous Substances) Regulations 1994—SI 1994/232—have been made and were laid in the House on 7 February 1994. They are now available from HMSO.

These regulations relate to primary and secondary batteries which contain specified amounts of lead, mercury or cadmium, and implement certain provisions in directives 91/157/EEC and 93/86/EEC. Regulations, which prohibit the marketing of certain alkaline manganese batteries with specified mercury levels, and which relate to the design of certain kinds of appliances so that the battery or accumulator can be readily removed, are due to come into force in Britain on 1 March 1994. The regulation appertaining to the marking of the relevant batteries or accumulators is due to come into force on 1 August 1994. A consultation paper on these regulations was issued in October 1993—DTI press notice P/93/617.

British Coal Pensions

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the Government's proposals for British Coal pensions after privatisation.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 2 December 1993, c. 739-41]:* On arrangements for British Coal pensions after privatisation, I am today placing copies of drafts of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme (Modification) Regulations, British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme (Modification) Regulations, Industry-Wide Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Regulations, Industry-Wide Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme Regulations and Coal Industry (Protected Persons) Regulations in the Libraries of both Houses, together with copies of drafts of the modified MPS and BCSSS schemes, rules and guarantee deeds and drafts of industry-wide MPS and SSS trust deeds and rules.

These are working drafts which are under discussion with the trustees of the MPS and BCSSS and with British Coal. Copies are being made available to the Standing Committee of the House that is considering the Coal Industry Bill.

Energy Efficiency Week

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution his Department has made in terms of publications, lectures, video tapes or other promotional material in support of energy efficiency week from 12 February.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has organised energy advice week under the banner of its "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign. Local authorities, voluntary groups and the local energy advice centres—run by the Energy Saving Trust—have been involved in a variety of promotional activities including exhibitions, radio and press advertisements and special features, leaflets and posters. My Department has produced the material in conjunction with the Central Office of Information.

Patent Office

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *815*, what are the commercial reasons for his refusal to give particulars of the fees paid to the consultants carrying out the review of the Patent Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* I do not intend to disclose the fees paid to the consultants working on the Patent Office review because this might set a benchmark for other consultants bidding for similar work. This could affect future competitive tenders and so constrain my Department's ability to achieve best value for money for taxpayers.

Private Medical Services

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what role his Department has in the regulation of private medical services.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is responsible for those decisions which fall to him under the Fair Trading Act 1973 in respect of reports by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. One recent report concerned private medical services.

Korea

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the time scale envisaged for the implementation by Korea of legislation to outlaw pirating of trade marks by the Korean Government under the general agreement on tariffs and trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* Trade marks are protectable by registration in Korea, as in other countries. Registration gives the right to take action against pirate marks. In addition, Korea plans to strengthen the powers of the customs authorities to impound imports or exports of goods which infringe trade mark rights.

As a developing country, Korea will have five years from entry into force of the agreement establishing the world trade organisation, which will replace the general agreement on tariffs and trade, to make such changes as might be necessary in its trade mark and other intellectual property laws and procedures to comply with the agreement. The WTO agreement is expected to enter into force at the earliest at the beginning of 1995.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Care in the Community

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many assessments were carried out in each unit of management within the health and social services boards in the last year for which figures are available; and, of those assessed, how many were not referred for further care and how many were referred to institutional care in *(a)* the statutory sector, *(b)* the voluntary sector and *(c)* the private sector.

Mr. Ancram: Information in the form requested is not available. Figures for assessments of individual need for community care were not routinely collected prior to April 1993. In the six-month period from April to September 1993, 3,521 assessments were completed in Northern Ireland. Of those assessed, 2,258 had been provided with community care packages at 30 September 1993. One thousand and sixty-two—47 per cent.—of these were referred for domiciliary care, 483—21 per cent.—for residential care, and 713—32 per cent.—for nursing home care. One hundred and eighty-eight clients were placed in board-managed residential homes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many additional staff have been recruited by each of the health and social services boards; and how many staff have been transferred to the community care role in the last year.

Mr. Ancram: There has been a reduction in the number of staff employed in each health and social services board over the period September 1992 to September 1993. The percentage reductions are as follows:

	Per cent.
Eastern health and social services board	9·56
Northern health and social services board	6·01
Southern health and social services board	4·67
Western health and social services board	7·74

Information on the transfer of staff to the community care role is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Notes:

1. Directly managed units and HSS trusts within each board area are included in the calculations.
2. The Eastern ambulance trust, blood transfusion service, provider support unit and supplies distribution centre are excluded from Eastern board calculations.
3. Traditional nurse students who are employees of the boards are included. Project 2000 nurse students are not employees and are therefore excluded.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the reasons for deciding not to meet the Northern Ireland Care Homes Association and Crestacare to discuss the implications of the way community care has been introduced in the Province; if he will now meet them; and what role he sees for Northern Ireland Care Homes Association and Crestacare in the future management of community care.

Mr. Ancram: My noble Friend is to meet the chief executive of Crestacare in the near future. Although any future requests for meetings will be considered on their merit, it is not possible for my noble Friend to accede to every request for a meeting. Many issues are more usefully discussed with Department officials or health and social services boards.

My noble Friend believes that both Crestacare and the northern Northern Ireland Care Homes Association have an important contribution to make in providing residential and nursing home care to people for whom such care is purchased by boards. It is also expected that they will have an increasing role to play in the provision of domiciliary services.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the extent to which current care provisions in the community need to be altered to comply with new EC requirements on lifting and handling; and what funds he is making available for this.

Mr. Ancram: None. Health and social services boards are expected to comply with current EC regulations on lifting and handling within existing resources.

Hospital Beds

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what data he has on the current occupancy of hospital beds in all general medical units, geriatric units and psycho-geriatric units; how many additional patients have been accommodated outside these wards; how these have changed since 1 April 1993; and what are the budgetary implications of these figures.

Mr. Ancram: The occupancy rates for the hospital specialties requested for the two quarters from April 1993 to 30 September 1993, the latest dates for which information is available, is as follows:

Consultants main specialty[1]	*Average occupancy*	
	Per cent (1 April 1993-30 June 1993)	*Per cent. (1 July 1990-30 September 1993)*
General medicine	81·4	78·3
Geriatric medicine	83·2	83·5
Old age psychiatry	86·2	82·7

[1] All patients under the care of the consultant are included in the above figures regardless of ward location.

The other information requested is not available.

Down and Lisburn Unit of Management

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect on parity of treatment of the secondment of officers from the Down and Lisburn unit of management to a new private company.

Mr. Ancram: No officers from the Down and Lisburn unit of management have been seconded to a new private company.

NHS Trusts

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for training managers of trusts in entrepreneurial skills.

Mr. Ancram: Significant additional funds have been set aside specifically to support the development of managers in the purchasing and providing roles, including HSS trusts, to ensure an excellence of delivery of Northern Ireland health and personal social services.

The assessment of individual training needs within HSS trusts is a matter for the trusts themselves, but where specific requirements are indentified, the HPSS management executive is empowered to co-ordinate or facilitate the provision of suitable packages. HPSS managers participate in a range of local and national training programmes.

Staff at director level in HSS trusts are eligible to participate in the top management development programme, an integral part of which is the formulation of a personal development plan. The plan aims to identify specific gaps in skills which can then be filled with appropriate training and development packages.

Care of the Elderly

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has available on the development of community care structures which would meet the needs of the elderly, with particular reference to day care, respite care, outreach and provision of meals.

Mr. Ancram: The Department regularly monitors health and social services boards' community care structures and services to ensure that they are capable of delivering the residential and non-residential care required by their resident populations. The social services inspectorate is also engaged in monitoring the development and quality of community care services.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 18 February at column *1010*, by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Professor D. Rea
Mrs. M. A. Adams
Mrs. M. Connolly
Professor P. Daws
Mr. R. Frost
Mrs. R. Greene
Dr. W. Hylands
Miss R. Jarman
Mr. J. G. Kelly
Mr. P. McConnellogue
Mrs. A. McFerran
Miss D. McNamee
Ms G. Pettigrew
Mr. J. Quinn
Miss R. Weir
Dr. B. Scott
Mr. R. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Ulster Folk and Transport museum.

Mr. Ancram: Membership of the Ulster Folk and Transport museum is as follows:

Professor F. D. W. Harkness (Chairman)
Alderman Mrs. H. E. Bradford (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs. P. Farren
Mr. J. C. Henry
Mr. M. McSparran
Mr. H. Faulkner
Mr. J. Irvine
Miss R. Ni Bhaoill
Councillor J. Stephenson
Councillor N. McCausland

Professor R. H. Buchanan
Mr. B. Crooks
Councillor N. Mulligan
Alderman S. Semple
Councillor Mrs. T. Black.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Council for Catholic maintained schools.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed are:

Bishops and bishops' nominees
Bishop Walsh
Bishop Daly
Bishop Brooks
Monsignor McEntegart
Monsignor Cahill
Rev. J. Mullan

Trustee representatives
Monsignor M. Dallat
Rev. I. McQuillan
Rev. C. O'Byrne
Archdeacon Hamill
Mr. E. McGrade
Mr. J. Smyth
Mr. F. Magee
Mrs. M. Pederson
Mrs. P. Carville
Mr. S. Doherty
Dr. A. Moran
Brother Carroll
Mr. B. Curran
Sister O. McConville

Head of department representatives
Mrs. M. R. Cooper
Mr. G. J. Murray
Mr. O. Corrigan
Mr. J. V. Simpson
Mr. T. Donaghy
Mr. J. Simpson
Mrs. M. McAvoy
Mrs. E. Waterson, MBE

Parent representatives
Four vacancies

Assistant teacher representatives
Four vacancies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Ulster museum.

Mr. Ancram: Membership of the Ulster museum is as follows:

Mr. M. Solomon (Chairman)
Mr. C. Ward CBE (Vice-Chairman)
Professor R. A. McLaughlin
Ms C. Nicholl
Mrs. M. K. Mooney
Miss C. Dickson
Cllr. I. Adamson
Cllr. J. Alderdice
Cllr. H. Smith
Professor P. Compton
Professor E. Thomas
Ald. Mrs. H. E. Bradford
Cllr. J. Ramsay
Cllr. R. A. McIlroy
(One Vacancy)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council.

Mr. Ancram: Membership of the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council is as follows:

Professor D. McCloy
Mr. F. Adair
Mrs. M. T. Breslin
Mr. S. Costello
Mrs. D. Fraser
Professor S. Fulton
Mr. E. Gamble
Sr. Genevieve O'Farrell
Miss Aileen Graham
Mr. D. E. McElroy
Mr. N. McLaughlin
Mrs. F. MacMahon
Mr. T. Nolan
Dr. R. Rodgers
Mrs. J. Ruddock
Mr. J. Thompson
Mr. J. Young

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland citizens charter panel.

Sir John Wheeler: The members of the Northern Ireland citizens charter panel are as follows:

Mr. P. Killen, OBE JP *(Chairman)*
Mrs. M. Elliott
Mrs. A. Hailes
Lady Anne McCollum
Mr. M. Murphy, OBE
Mr. A. Sherrard
Mr. J. V. Simpson

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Thames Cockle Industry

Mr. Channon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about progress towards deciding on the proposed regulating order for the Thames cockle industry.

Mr. Jack: As I indicated in my reply of 17 December 1993, column *1070*, this is now in the hands of the Kent and Essex sea fisheries committee, which is seeking to resolve the concerns of objectors to the proposed order.

Sheep Meat Quotas

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to compensate those sheepmeat farmers who have had to lease quotas but who at a future date receive quotas from an increased national reserve.

Mr. Jack: The Government have already put in place special measures to help sheep farmers who have chosen to acquire quota by release. Such producers will not have quota withdrawn if they underuse their leased quota. Nor will the leased quota reduce their entitlement to quota from the national reserve. The Government have no plans to reimburse the costs involved in commercial decisions to acquire quota by lease.

New Forest

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will give details of fees payable to any outside consultants together with details of those projects on which consultants have been employed by the New Forest Committee and details of the duration of any projects;

(2) if she will publish details of the current level of funding received by the New Forest Committee, indicating

the source of such funding together with details of the projects on which this money has been expended since the committee's inception.

Mr. Jack: Consultants were employed on the following projects:

1. Definition of boundary of New Forest heritage area, January to June 1991, £20,000—land use consultants.
2. Advice on proposed West Wellow bypass, September to October 1991 and June to July 1993, £4,500—land use consultants.
3. New Forest heritage area boundary: representation at New Forest local plans inquiry, January to July 1992, £2,625—land use consultants.
4. Research into recreational use of horses in the New Forest heritage area, January to September 1994, £17,000—Royal agricultural college—75 per cent. of cost to be met by the Department of the Environment.

The New Forest Committee's 1993-94 budget of £110,800 is funded by the following bodies:

	£
Department of the Environment	20,000
Forestry Commission	18,160
Countryside Commission	18,160
English Nature	18,160
Hampshire County Council	18,160
New Forest District Council	18,160

In 1993-94, in addition to the projects carried out by consultants which are listed above, the committee granted £2,500 to establish the New Forest common housing trust, £550 towards management work on common land adjacent to the forest, £1,350 towards the publication of an outdoor education providers leaflet and £150 towards the publication of a student factfile.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the current and projected administrative budget of the New Forest Committee, inclusive of staffing levels.

Mr. Jack: The New Forest Committee's administrative budget is currently £93,400 and will be £95,100 in 1994-95. The budgets include provision for a New Forest officer, an assistant New Forest officer and a New Forest clerk.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish a list of the statutory bodies currently responsible for environmental protection, forestry, animal welfare, administration and planning within the New Forest.

Mr. Jack: The primary statutory bodies are the Forestry Commission, English Nature, New Forest verderers, MAFF, Hampshire county council and New Forest district council.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the proposed projects and their estimated costs which are under consideration by the New Forest Committee.

Mr. Jack: The information is given:

1. A contribution of about £14,000 over three years to the Countryside Commission's all parks survey.

2. £3,500 in 1993-94 for the preparation of a public transport timetable.

3. A contingency sum of £4,800 in 1994-95 for consultancy work associated with major road schemes and other major infrastructure schemes which may affect the forest.

4. £4,600 in 1994-95 for the publication of a consultation paper, arising from the proposed management strategy.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cows in Cheshire herds recently tested proved bovine immunodeficiency virus positive; what effects have been observed in the cows; what precautions have been taken to protect consumers; whether their milk is still being sold; whether the infected cows are to be destroyed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Limited serological evidence of bovine immunodeficiency virus has recently been found in one herd in Cheshire where two animals gave positive results to two or more of three different serological tests for BIV. Investigations into the herd continue. We understand that, at present, the milk from this herd is not being taken by the Milk Marketing Board. I refer the hon. Member to my answers to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), on 18 February, *Official Report, columns 1057-58*, and the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), on 10 February, *Official Report*, column *430*. One animal is being purchased for detailed investigation but we have no plans for compulsory slaughter of the cattle.

Banned Beef and Dairy Products

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the countries that currently ban imports of British *(a)* bovines, *(b)* beef and *(c)* dairy products.

Mr. Soames: The countries for which we are aware such import bans exist are as follows:

(a) *Bovines*

Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Finland, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Japan, Malaya—Sarawak only—Mexico, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Syria, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, United States of America and the former USSR;

(b) *Beef*

Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Libya, Mexico, Paraguay, Poland Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Taiwan, UAE and former Yugoslavia;

(c) *Dairy Products*

Argentina, China, Jordan, Libya, Syria.

Stolen Equipment

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish a list of the equipment stolen from her Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The following table covering the years 1990-1993 are extracted from the departmental losses register which records theft, fraud and arson as a single category.

Details of equipment stolen	*Approximate value £*
1990-91	
Office Equipment	3,009
Photographic Equipment	2,913
Agricultural Equipment	76
Depot Equipment	4,568

Details of equipment stolen	*Approximate value* £
Vehicles and Accessories	4,550
General Equipment under £1,000	450
1990-91 Total MAFF	15,566
1991-92	
Office Equipment	13,882
Agricultural Equipment	2,133
Depot Euipment	376
Laboratory Equipment	91
Vehicles and Accessories	13,500
General Equipment under £1,000	1,142
1991-92 Total MAFF	31,124
1992-93	
Office Equipment	58,770
Photographic Equipment	8,003
Agricultural Equipment	2,040
Depot Equipment	7,144
Laboratory Equipment	6,306
Vehicles and Accessories	15,755
General Equipment under £1,000	2,205
1992-93 Total MAFF	100,223

SCOTLAND

Wick River Piers

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what technical appraisal his officials have made of the condition of the north and south piers of the Wick river basin; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The condition of the north and south piers at the Wick river basin is a matter for Wick harbour trust. I understand that the trust's consultants appraised the piers in question and that their report is being considered by the trust.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to assist Wick harbour trust to protect riparian property owners on the Wick river from structural damage due to the threatened collapse of two piers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Any remedial work to prevent the collapse of the piers is a matter for Wick harbour trust. Central Government assistance for the harbour at Wick is confined to the fishery interest. Protection of property is the owner's responsibility.

A7

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now publish the route action plan carrying the A7 trunk road south of Hawick.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A public information leaflet is presently being prepared setting out the route action plan for the A7 trunk road south of Hawick. It is my intention to publish this shortly. A copy of the A7 route action plan summary report will also be placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made towards the extension of compulsory competitive tendering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Since we announced in November 1992 our intention further to extend CCT and to set up an internal accounting framework for corporate services, we have been in discussion with local authority associations and the Accounts Commission. We are now in a position to consult more widely and are today issuing two separate consultation documents: one on construction and property services and the other on the statement of support service costs, which is the proposed name for the internal accounting framework.

The consultation document on construction and property services includes a definition of those services, indicates how much of this work authorities will be required to subject to CCT and gives details of modifications which we intend to make to the statutory framework for competitive tendering. We propose that local authorities be required to subject to competition 65 per cent., by value, of all construction and property work. In addition, the Government propose that authorities will be allowed to retain £450,000-worth of work in-house without going out to tender. This recognises that certain construction and property work should be retained in-house both to enable an authority to fulfil its democratic responsibilities and to act as an intelligent client for bought-in services.

The consultation document on the statement of support service costs, SSSC, includes worked examples to show how the SSSC will work in practice. Under those proposals, local authorities will be required to show how their support costs are allocated to front-line services. This will enable internal customers to have more information about the costs they are incurring and will ensure greater transparency of financial information.

We propose to extend CCT to new services in three tranches between October 1997 and April 1998. The proposed implementation date for the SSSC is 1 April 1997.

Copies of both consultation documents will be placed in the House Library.

Damp Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will release dedicated funding to enable Scottish local authorities to eradicate dampness in their housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources totalling some £405 million were made available to local authorities for capital investment in public sector housing in 1993-94. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities themselves to determine their own policies and priorities for meeting local housing needs including projects to deal with dampness. However, as part of the new housing plan system all local housing authorities have been asked to develop a strategy for tackling damp housing in their areas.

I will announce the allocations for 1994-95 shortly.

Sheltered Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many senior citizens are currently living in local authority sheltered housing complexes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures are held centrally only on the number of sheltered dwellings in Scotland and this was 32,202 at 31 March 1992. This figure is included in the publication "Housing Trends in Scotland: Quarter ended 30 June 1992—Table 19, HSG/1992/8" which is available in the Library.

Care in the Community

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will grant additional dedicated funding to Scottish local authorities to enable them to adapt more local authority houses to suit the needs of persons released into community care; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources totalling some £405 million have been made available to local authorities for capital investment in public sector housing in 1993-94. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities themselves to determine their own policies and priorities for meeting local housing needs.

I will announce the overall allocations for 1994-95 shortly. These will include additional resources to enable local housing authorities to increase their contribution to the implementation of the community care policy.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Community Education Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following current members of the Scottish Community Education Council were appointed by the Secretary of State:

Mrs. Barbara Vaughan, *Chairman*
Mr. Robert Copleton
Mrs. Astrid Ritchie
Mr. Garth Morrison, CBE
Mrs. Maureen Reid
Mr. Fraser Patrick
Mr. Derek McGinn
Mr. Alan Blackie
Mr. Ian Graham
Councillor Mrs. Valerie MacIver

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise are set out in the table:

Chairman
A. F. Morrison, CBE

Members
J. Goodlad
J. A. D. Harrison, OBE
Dr. J. Hunter
A. S. Macdonald, CBE
Ms V. MacIver
J. A. Mackay
N. A. McAndrew
J. D. M. Robertson, CBE
J. Shaw-Stewart
P. Timms, MBE

Chief Executive (ex-officio member)
I. A. Robertson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Irvine development corporation.

Mr. Lang: From 1 January 1994 members of Irvine development corporation board are as follows:

Maurice Crichton, CBE *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Jeanette Mason *(Deputy Chairman)*
Councillor Jack Carson
David Jerdan
Alan Jones
Archibald Walker
William B. Miller, OBE
Councillor Thomas H. Colyer
Charles Maclean

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) who are the members currently appointed to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to the Pensions Appeal Tribunal for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Appointments to the Lands Tribunal for Scotland and the Pensions Appeal Tribunal for Scotland are matters for the Lord President of the Court of Session.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish tourist board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current members of the Scottish tourist board are:

Ian D. Grant, CBE *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Philippa Grant
Scott Grier, OBE
Mrs. Barbara Kelly, CBE
John F. Loughray
Ian Milton
Iain A. Robertson

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the East Kilbride development corporation.

Mr. Lang: From 1 January 1994 members of East Kilbride development corporation board are as follows:

Mr. J. A. Denholm CBE *Chairman*
Harley Marshall JP *Deputy Chairman*
Mrs. Elaine McDonald
James R. Mowat
Iain J. A. Dyer MBE
Councillor Stewart Crawford
Councillor Colin Robb
Dr. David M. Sanderson JP
Mrs. Marilyn M. Orcharton

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish transport group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Scottish transport group are:

Ian S. Irwin CBE *Chairman*
Ronald S. McNeill CBE
Robert S. Temple

John Stark
Archibald Douglas

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

Mr. Lang: The members who are currently appointed to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council are:

Professor John C. Shaw, CBE, Chairman
Professor John Sizer, CBE, Chief Executive and ex-officio member
Professor Michael Bond
Dr. Christopher Carter
Professor John Darby
Eileen Dunning, OBE
Professor Robert Jack, CBE
John McClelland
Sir Ronald Miller, CBE
Professor Janet Sprent
Professor David Wallace
Sir Ian Wood, CBE
James Wright

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Conveyancing and Executry Services Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members are:

Professor Philip Love, CBE, Chairman
Duncan White, OBE
Mrs. Joyce Simpson, LLB
Councillor Ian Buchanan
Lieutenant-Colonel John Murray
R. Gavin Burnett
Hugh Torrance

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Horse Race Betting Levy Appeal Tribunal for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members are:

Mr. Colin N. McEachran, QC, Chairman
Mr. Peter C. Brown, CA
Mr. William S. Linkie, CBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Sports Council.

Sir Hector Monro: The current membership of the Scottish Sports Council is:

Chairman
Graeme M. Simmers, OBE

Vice-Chairman
Alan Grosset

Members
Michael Barron
Alan Blackshaw, OBE
John N. M. Frame
Miss Lesley Grant, MBE
John Loughray
G. Malcolm Murray
Fred Nelson
Dr. Myra Nimmo
Mrs. Evlyn Raistrick
J. Neil Stevenson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Glenrothes development corporation.

Mr. Lang: From 1 January 1994 members of Glenrothes development corporation board are as follows:

Professor C. Blake, CBE *Chairman*
David B. B. Smith, OBE *Deputy Chairman*
Mrs. Frances Havenga
Councillor John MacDougall, JP
Iain A. McCrone, CBE
Douglas C. Mason
James A. G. Fiddes
Mrs. Jane Buchanan, JP
Robert J. Taylor

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Scottish Film Council.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is as follows:

Appointed by the Secretary of State
Mr. Allan Shiach (Chairman)
Ms Maggi Allan
Mr. Trevor Davies
Mr. Kenneth MacQuarrie
Mr. Fraser Campbell
Mr. David Hutchison
Ms Margaret Matheson
Mr. Stephen Foster
Co-opted Members
Ms Seona Robertson
Ms Mary Picken
Mr. Simon Perry

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is not responsible for the appointments of the three co-opted members of the Scottish Film council.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the advisory committee on Scotland's travelling people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The committee's membership is as follows:

Mr. H. M. Garland, MBE (Chairman)
Mr. J. E. D. Cormie, OBE (Deputy Chairman)
Mrs. J. Cameron, MBE, JP
Mr. P. Collier, MBE
Mr. C. Douglas, MBE
Mr. A. Harper, BEM
Miss M. Hendry
Mr. R. A. J. Moodie
Mr. J. Pollock

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the terms of the Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965 the Secretary of State may nominate four persons to the General Teaching Council for Scotland. The current nominees are:

Jack D. Denny
Mrs. Angela Gardner
Alexander D. Nicol
Mrs. Barbara Steele

Of the remaining 45 members of the council, 30 are elected by registered teachers and 15 are appointed by relevant bodies such as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Cumbernauld development corporation.

Mr. Lang: From 1 January 1994 members of Cumbernauld development corporation board are as follows:

David M. Mitchell, CBE *Chairman*
Tom M. Barrie, JP *Deputy Chairman*
Professor John A. Dawson
Mrs. Rose Mary McKenna, JP
James Burnett

John S. Moreland, OBE
Mr. P. G. Lockett
Robert R. C. Taylor
Ian R. Young

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Livingston development corporation.

Mr. Lang: From 1 January 1994 members of Livingston development corporation board are as follows:

Robert S. Watt, CBE *Chairman*
Councillor Brian A. Meek, OBE, JP *Deputy Chairman*
Mrs. Isobel Brydie, JP
Charles A. Boyle
Councillor William R. V. Percy
John S. Young
Ian Ivory
Councillor Keith Geddes
Gordon S. Milne

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current membership of the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum comprises:

Mr. Neil Galbraith, *Chairman*
Miss May Barclay
Mrs. Elizabeth McGill
Mrs. Anna Smith
Mr. Alistair MacLachlan
Mr. Patrick Tobin
Mr. Bart McGettrick
Mr. Tom Burness
Dr. Ruth Jonathan
Dr. Richard Dennis
Dr. Mary Simpson
Mr. Richard Cummings
Mr. Hamish Ross
Miss Rosemary McDonald

M8 Kingston Bridge

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the safety of the M8 Kingston bridge in Glasgow; what recent studies have been carried out; what is the estimated cost of repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Strathclyde regional council has responsibility for the Kingston bridge as local roads authority. The council has kept the Scottish Office informed over the last few years of the emerging problems of the bridge. The council has undertaken investigations into all aspects of the bridge and the approach roads. To date some £8·6 million has been spent on repairs, investigations and monitoring. The estimated cost of repairs to the bridge is £11·3 million with a further estimate of £25·7 million for repairs to the north and south approach roads.

Forestry

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the forestry review group's report.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Forestry Ministers expect to receive the review group's advice soon.

Homosexual Offences

Dr. Godman: To ask the secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the number of prosecutions of cases since December 1991 of consensual homosexual acts where *(a)* both of the participants were aged under 16 years, *(b)* where one of the participants was aged under 16 years and the other aged between 16 years and 18 years and *(c)* where one of the participants was aged under 16 years and the other aged between 18 years and 21 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *180*, since December 1991, how many prosecutions have been taken out of cases of consenting homosexual acts where both of the participants were over 16 years but one or both were under 18 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Information is not held centrally on the ages of the participants involved in consensual homosexual acts involving one or more parties aged below 21 which have been the subject of a prosecution.

Salmon

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and the Norwegian Fisheries Minister to discuss the state of the European farmed salmon market.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* My honourable Friend the Minister for Agriculture and the Environment in Scotland had a very constructive meeting on Friday 18 February with Mr. Jan Olsen, the Norwegian Fisheries Minister. They agreed that the present market situation for salmon is a source of concern, and that outlook is also worrying due to the mismatch between production and what the European market can absorb. They also agreed that these problems ought to be addressed urgently by the respective industries.

In the light of these constructive exchanges my Department is taking steps towards bringing the respective industries together, initially on an informal basis. I hope that this will mark the start of a process aimed at addressing the imbalance between supply and demand.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if Her Majesty's Government formally requested an extension of the minimum import price for salmon prior to the expiry of the safeguard action on 31 January;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government have formally requested the European Union for a reimposition of a minimum import price of salmon since the expiry of the previous minimum import price on 31 January.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* No; but on 5 February 1994 the European Commission reintroduced minimum import prices for salmon at slightly higher rates than those which had applied up to 31 January.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration the Forestry Review Group gave to the assertions and recommendations made in "Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme" (Cm. 2429) when coming to its conclusions.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Ministers set up the Forestry Review Group to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, to review options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands, and to make proposals which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to our other economic and environmental policies.

Our forestry policy objectives are set out in "Forestry Policy for Great Britain" which we published in September 1991. "Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme" provides a comprehensive account of these objectives and of the action we are taking to achieve them.

Touche Ross

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department or any agencies for which he is responsible has engaged the services of the firm Touche Ross or any of its partners since 1 July 1993.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 February 1994]:* The information requested by the hon. Member is lengthy and will take some time to prepare. I shall write to the hon. Member when the information is compiled and arrange for copies of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which appointments since 1979 to public bodies or posts for which he is responsible have included candidates nominated by the Chief Whip's office; if any nominees by this source have been appointed; and if he will give details.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his question of 3 February 1994, *Official Report*, column 775.

Forestry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details of the names and business interests of all the current forestry commissioners; how many hours each commissioner works each week on behalf of the commission; and what is the salary of each commissioner.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The information is as follows:

Chairman:

Sir Raymond Johnstone, CBE
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary: £34,060
Business interests:
President, Murray Johnstone Holdings Ltd.
Non-Executive Director, Murray Enterprise plc
Non-Executive Director, Murray Income Trust plc
Non-Executive Director, Murray International Trust plc
Non-Executive Director, Smaller Markets Trust plc
Chairman, Murray Split Capital Trust plc
Non-Executive Director, Murray Ventures plc
Also Non-Executive Director or Chairman of various companies wholly owned by the above Investment Trusts
Non-Executive Director, Alva Estates Ltd.
Chairman, Dominion Insurance Holdings Ltd.
Also Chairman of its wholly owned subsidiaries
Non-Executive Director, Glasgow Cultural Enterprise Ltd.
Also of its wholly owned subsidiary
Chairman, Randotte (1992) plc.
Non-Executive Director, Scottish Amicable Life Assurance Society
Non-Executive Director, Southpark Flats Ltd.
Chairman, Summit Group plc

Director General and Deputy Chairman: Mr. Robin Cutler
Full-time Commissioner
Annual salary: In the range £64,307-£75,328 (Grade 2)
No business interests

Mr. Roger Bradley
Full-time Commissioner
Annual salary: In the range £51,360-£59,599 (Grade 3)
No business interests

Mr. David Foot
Full-time Commissioner
Annual salary: In the range £51,360-£59,599 (Grade 3)
No business interests

Mr. David Grundy
Full-time Commissioner
Annual salary: In the range £51,360-£59,599 (Grade 3)
No business interests

Miss Bridget Bloom OBE
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary: £6,320
Business interests:
Commissioner, Meat and Livestock Commission

Mr. Robin Grove-White
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary: £6,320
Business interests:
Director, Centre for the Study of Environmental Change, Lancaster University
Director, Greenpeace UK

Mr. Gavin Laird CBE
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary: £6,320
Business interests:
General Secretary, Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union
Governor, Atlantic College
Non-executive Director, Bank of England
Non-executive Director, Britannia Life
Non-executive Director, GEC Scotland
Member, London Committee of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry
Non-executive Director, Scottish Television
Non-executive Director, The Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Mr. Terence Mallinson
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary £6,320
Business interests:
Non-executive Director, Suffolk Apple Juice and Cider Company Ltd.

Sir Michael Strang Steel Bt.Part-time Commissioner; annual salary £6,320
Business interests:
Chairman and Non-executive Director, Alba Trees plc
Manager, Philiphaugh Trust Estate

Mr. Charles Woosnam CBE
Part-time Commissioner; annual salary £6,320
Business interests:
Consultant, Woosnam and Tyler, Chartered Surveyors and Land Agents

Full-time commissioners work standard civil service conditioned hours of 42 hours per week, including lunch breaks. Part-time Commissioners work irregular hours with no fixed number of hours per week.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many forests in the United Kingdom are owned by Forestry Commission commissioners; and whether such commissioners are in a position to benefit financially themselves from forestry privatisation.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The following Forestry Commission commissioners own forests in the United Kingdom:

Sir Raymond Johnstone CBE: 34 hectares
Sir Michael Strang Steel Bt: 540 hectares
Mr. C. R. Woosnam CBE: 80 hectares

These forests are privately owned. Any changes in the future ownership of the Forestry Commission's forests would not therefore affect them and would not put these commissioners in a position to benefit financially.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which counties for England, Wales and Scotland, the largest area of Forestry Commission woodland has been disposed of in accordance with the terms of the Forestry Act 1981 in absolute terms and as a proportion of total Forestry Commission land.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The information is given below.

Country	*County/Region*	*Area sold (hectares)*	*Area as proportion of FC land in county/region (percentage)*
England	North Yorkshire	3,993	17
Wales	Dyfed	4,088	12
Scotland	Strathclyde	18,723	14

Prisons (Visiting Committees)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will continue the present practice of all regional councils and some district councils having representation on visiting committees for prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The draft revised Prison and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules issued for consultation last September included proposals to change the size of, and local authority representation on, the visiting committees for Scottish adult penal establishments. We are still considering all the comments received, but a draft will be laid before Parliament in the next few months.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will exempt Cornton Vale prison from his plans to confine prison visiting committees' local authority representation to those of the district council and the regional council in which the prison lies.

Lord James-Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The draft revised Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules issued for consultation last September included proposals to change the size of, and local authority representation on, the visiting committee for the adult penal establishment at Cornton Vale. We are still considering all the comments received, but a draft will be laid before Parliament in the next few months.

Development Corporations

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects each of Scotland's development corporations to cease letting their existing properties when they become vacant.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* In the period to their wind-up, development corporations will pursue their policies for letting vacant industrial and commercial properties and land until such time as there is an agreement for the sale or transfer of the property concerned. As to vacant housing, it is for each development corporation to decide in the period prior to the ballot of tenants whether to re-let the house or to sell it to a housing association or approved landlord as part of the corporation's initiatives to achieve diversification of tenure.

EMPLOYMENT

Fireworks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the importation of fireworks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Imported fireworks supplied in the United Kingdom must meet the same safety standards as those which are manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated value of fireworks imported into the United Kingdom annually for each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the importation of dangerous fireworks into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received representations from several sources expressing concern that a reduction in safety standards may result from the removal of import licensing for fireworks following the creation of the European single market. I have been given assurances by the Health and Safety Executive that controls are being maintained by the restrictions on supply introduced by the Placing on the Market and Supervision of Transfers of Explosives Regulations 1993.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he proposes to prevent the importation into the United Kingdom of fireworks that are dangerous to users and spectators or likely to be a fire hazard.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following the establishment of the single European market, import licence controls on all explosives, including fireworks were removed on 1 December 1993. These controls were replaced by a requirement under the Placing on the Market and Supervision of Transfers of Explosives Regulations 1993 for explosives supplied in the United Kingdom whatever their origin, to be authorised by the Health and Safety Executive. In the case of fireworks, this requires compliance with British standard 7114 or an equivalent standard.

Brixham Jobcentre

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the duties of the eight staff at the Fish Quay office in Brixham and the nature of their administration support to the Brixham jobcentre.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the duties of the eight staff at the Fish Quay office in Brixham and the nature of their administrative support to the Brixham Jobcentre.

The eight staff employed at the Fish Quay, Brixham are involved in the maintenance of claims to unemployment benefits of approximately 1,400 claimants and the payment of training allowances to 50 trainees on Training for Work. The office also maintains the claims to benefit made by Share Fishermen; is responsible for making referrals to the Benefits Adjudication Office; and for liaising with the local Benefits Agency.

However, because the premises are split, the ability of the staff at the Fish Quay to operate as part of the Back to Work Team linking with advisers and vacancy staff in the Jobcentre is reduced.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent on refurbishing the Brixham jobcentre in each of the financial years since 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secreary of State has asked me to reply to your question about how much was spent on refurbishing the Brixham Jobcentre in each of the financial years since 1989-90.

I repeat my earlier response to your Parliamentary Question No. 7067 that no funds have been spent on refurbishment in 1992 and 1993. During the period 1989 to 1991 a contract was awarded in October 1991 to the value of £19,259 for alterations and refurbishment and further amount of £22,895 was spent on furniture, telephone equipment and new signage.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out the obstacles preventing the Brixham jobcentre from offering a full service mentioned in the chief executive's letter of 9 February to the hon. Member for South Ham.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the obstacles preventing the Brixham Jobcentre from offering a full service mentioned in my earlier letter of 9 February 1994.

The main obstacle to providing a full service, is the space available within the two premises in Brixham. The space requirements calculations carried out in April 1993 indicated a total space requirement for both offices at Brixham of approximately 7,500 square feet. Currently the total space available in both Employment Service (ES) premises is 4,515 square feet. Such a deficit has an obvious detrimental effect to the range of customer services that can be provided, namely:

(a) virtually no privacy can be provided for clients discussing personal circumstances/problems whilst making their benefit claims or discussing their back to work plans with advisory staff;

(b) limitations on the siting of Information Technology (IT) equipment have reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the Jobcentre services. With such limited space the siting of equipment is also causing overcrowding problems reducing the effectiveness of contacts between staff and clients;

(c) the job display area is cramped and not conducive to calm consideration of job vacancy details;

(d) there are no facilities for employers to interview job seekers at the Jobcentre;

(e) operating a split site for such a small team (20 in total) reduces flexibility and effectiveness; with 12 staff at the Jobcentre and eight at the Fish Quay. There is a cost of approximately £70 per month in transporting claims and other paperwork between the two offices;

(f) in the integrated Jobcentre service currently provided by most Jobcentres now in South West Region the Benefit and Job broking activities work successfully together in a Back to Work Team concept that has proved very successful in terms of service to clients and employers. Such a model is not possible operating as Brixham does in split premises.

I hope this is helpful.

Employment Service

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the work of the Employment Service to help the unemployed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Service is an executive agency reporting to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It operates through a network of over 1,000 local offices throughout Britain.

ES operates a job-broking service, helping to fill employers' vacancies and placing unemployed people into jobs. In 1992-93, ES made 1·47 million placings of unemployed people; in this operational year up to December, it has made 1·26 million placings, 12 per cent. above its profiled target. ES aims especially to help long-term unemployed people, and others at a disadvantage in the labour market; 27 per cent. of the 1992-93 placings were of long-term claimants.

ES operates a comprehensive system of advisory interviews for unemployed clients. Around 8·5 million such interviews were carried out in 1992-93. At these interviews clients are given information about advisory, job search and training programmes which are available to help them back into work. As well as running programmes itself, ES acts as a gateway to those run by the training and enterprise councils.

ES has a particular duty to give employment help to unemployed people with a disability. To give support to its local offices in doing this, it has a network of 71 area placing assessment and counselling teams, staffed by disability employment advisers.

ES also helps unemployed people by income maintenance: by promptly and accurately paying unemployment benefit and income support to clients entitled to receive them.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to the ES chief executive to congratulate the agency on its performance in the first half of this operational year. There have been falls in unemployment at an earlier stage in the recovery than anticipated by most observers. The efforts of the ES have assisted in implementing a labour market policy fostering an environment for growth.

Earnings

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report,* column *494,* what is his Department's estimate of the relationship between employment levels and earnings.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the Treasury report "The Relationship between Employment and Wages" published in 1985. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Barnsley/Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ensure that Barnsley/Doncaster TEC uses its reserves to further local business; if he will publish a breakdown of the current unused reserves of the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC; how many training programmes are currently being undertaken; and how many employers are providing places for the unemployed within the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC area.

Miss Widdecombe: Efficiency savings made by training and enterprise councils are reinvested in their work to stimulate economic growth in their local communities. Questions about the reserves of any TEC are for each TEC to answer.

The training programmes operated by Barnsely and Doncaster TEC are: youth training; training for work; learning for work and business start-up. Although a significant number of youth training and training for work participants undertake work experience on employers' premises as part of their training programmes, information on the number of training places provided by employers is not available.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he intends to take to provide employment protection for part-time workers employed by their existing employer for less than five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Part-time employees already enjoy important statutory rights, regardless of their length of service or hours worked. The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 significantly added to these rights and I have no plans to extend them further.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the Barnsley, East constituency.

Miss Widdecombe: In January 1994, the level of unadjusted claimant unemployment in the Barnsley, East constituency was 3,872.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current unemployment figures for the north-west.

Miss Widdecombe: In the north-west region, seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment stood at 308,100 or 10·3 per cent. of the work force in January 1994. This is a fall of 26,400 compared with a year ago.

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the numbers of unemployed; and what was the corresponding figure in 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: On the consistent seasonally adjusted basis, claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom stood at 2,787,600 in January 1994 and 1,100,100 in January 1979.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures available for *(a)* Harrogate and Knaresborough and *(b)* Ripon and York travel-to-work areas.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures for unadjusted claimant unemployment in January 1994 are given in the table.

Travel-to-work area	*Level*	*Percentage rate*
Harrogate	2,786	5·6
Ripon	901	7·1
York	7,615	6·8

Knaresborough is covered by the Harrogate travel-to-work area.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *1010.*

Employment (Young People)

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures he has planned to help young people in the north-west to find employment.

Miss Widdecombe: The local employment service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help young people in the area find the best and quickest route to employment. In the north-west region, the number of young people in the guarantee group who have waited for more then eight weeks for a youth training place has fallen by 93 per cent. in the last year. The Government intend to improve the range of opportunities available to school leavers still further in the north-west and elsewhere by introducing modern apprenticeships in 1995.

Carnon Consolidated

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he was consulted by the President of the Board of Trade in regard to the employment effect of the decision not to grant Carnon Consolidated a further loan.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not the Department's policy to answer questions on discussions between Ministers.

Rail Projects (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the subject of maximising jobs for Londoners in work connected with the Jubilee line extension and other rail projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not the Department's policy to answer questions on discussions between Ministers.

Workstart Schemes, Norfolk

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the results of *(a)* North Norfolk action pilot scheme and *(b)* each of the four workstart schemes set up in 1993 after their first six months of operation showing in each case (i) the number of persons participating, (ii) the number of persons who have subsequently moved into full-time employment and (iii) the number of persons who have ceased to claim unemployment and related benefits after being called in for interviews for work on the schemes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to him in connection with North Norfolk Action on 18 February, *Official Report*, column 1024.

On 27 January the number of people in employment supported under workstart in each of the pilot areas was as follows:

Area	*Number*
South London	86
East Kent	57
Tyneside	42
Devon and Cornwall	4

All those participating in the scheme are in regular employment, and will therefore have ceased to claim unemployment and related benefits.

Remploy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last visited a Remploy factory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last visited a Remploy factory in June 1992. He visited the Swansea factory and was delighted to see at first hand the role Remploy is playing in providing employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the numbers of Remploy workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1993-94 Remploy Ltd. is employing an average of around 8,550 people with severe disabilities.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will visit the Remploy factory, Wrexham, Clwyd.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been advised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that he currently has no plans to visit the Remploy factory, Wrexham, Clwyd.

Earnings

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the average weekly earnings of (i) full-time males, (ii) full-time females and (iii) part-time females in 1978-79 and in the latest year for which data are available in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* England and *(c)* London; and what was *(c)* as a percentage of *(b)* in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on average weekly earnings of full-time males and full-time females can be found in tables 12 and 13 of part A of the new earnings survey for each of the years requested. The corresponding information on part-time females is in table 180 of part F. Copies of these are in the Library.

Work Permits

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each year since 1979 how many applications for work permits were made on behalf of Cypriot nationals; and what proportion were successful in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is available only at disproportionate cost. The number of work permits issued to Cypriot nationals recorded by the overseas labour service computer system, introduced in 1984, is as follows:

	Number
1984	49
1985	75
1986	83
1987	71
1988	110
1989	138
1990	120
1991	85
1992	70
1993	53

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for work permits were made, and what proportion were successful, in each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Information for the full period requested is not available. The number of applications for work permits recorded by the overseas labour service computer system, introduced in 1984, and the proportion which were successful in each year are as follows:

	Applications	*Proportion approved Per cent.*
1984	20,814	57·6
1885	24,999	66·3
1986	27,499	68·0
1987	28,877	70·5
1988	34,016	97·1
1989	41,629	91·0
1990	47,145	92·5
1991	[1]43,519	87·3
1992	56,192	67·5
1993	56,700	66·6

[1] Changes made to the arrangements for recording applications.

Job Link Programme

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department has taken since 1992 to extend customised training under the job link programme to include inner-city areas.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Customised training support for job link is provided by training and enterprise councils where appropriate through training for work and its predecessor, employment training. From April 1992 to August 1993 it is estimated that 140,000 inner-city residents in England were helped under those programmes.

Financial Sector Employees

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table setting out his Department's figures of the total number of people employed in banking, insurance and finance in Greater London in the latest quarter for which figures are available and the equivalent quarters of 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The available information is given in the table:

Numbers employed in Greater London in banking, finance, insurance and their business services (SIC 8)
(includes employees and self employed only)

Thousands

Quarter	*Numbers in employment*
Spring 1989	595
Spring 1990	637
Spring 1991	586
Spring 1992	523
Summer 1992	554
Spring 1993	603
Summer 1993	600

Source: Labour force survey—not seasonally adjusted.

HEALTH

Long-term Care

12. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the responsibility of the national health service for people requiring long-term care.

Mr. Bowis: The national health service has a responsibility to provide long-term care for people who need it for reasons of ill-health. In implementing the new arrangements for community care we have required health and local authorities to clarify their respective responsibilities for long-term care.

General Practitioner Fundholding

13. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the administrative cost of general practitioner fundholding; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management allowance is about 2 per cent. of the budgets set. This is more than offset by the improvements fundholders are achieving in waiting times and quality of care.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about differences in prescribing practices of general practitioner fundholders and other general practitioners; and from what sources that information has been derived.

Dr. Mawhinney: Prescribing analysis and cost and budget monitoring information provided by the Prescription Pricing Authority shows that fundholders prescribe drugs in generic form more often than non-fundholders—figures for 1992-93 are shown in the table—that the rate of growth of drug expenditure is about 4 per cent. below that of non-fundholders and that fundholders came in at around their budget levels in each of the last two years.

Preliminary results from a research study being undertaken by Keele university suggest that there is no evidence that fundholding leads to any reduction in the quality of prescribing and it may lead to improvements.

Percentage generic prescribing rate 1992-93

	Per cent.
GP Fundholders	49
Non-fundholders	43

Oral Health

14. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's negotiations with representatives of the dental profession.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have a statutory duty to consult representatives of the dental profession when it proposes changes to their remuneration. Officials of the Department of Health also meet representatives of the dental profession informally, frequently and as the need arises.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the response to the Bloomfield report on oral health strategy.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to publish her response to the Bloomfield report on oral health strategy.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February, at column *1042.*

Old People's Homes

15. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authority elderly persons homes have *(a)* opened and *(b)* closed within the last 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We do not yet have national information for the period from 1 April 1993 as the main statistics are collected on a financial year basis.

Patients

16. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average annual change in the number of patients treated between *(a)* 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service is treating record numbers of patients. The average annual increase between 1974 and 1979 was 1·3 per cent. The corresponding figure for the period 1979 to 1992-93 was 2·9 per cent.

22. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients were treated in *(a)* the latest year for which figures are available and *(b)* 1979.

Mr. Sackville: There were 7,829,403 episodes of care in 1992-93 compared with 5,400,120 in-patients in 1979. This represents an increase of 30 per cent.

Genetic Screening

17. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to respond to the report of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics in relation to the insurance consequences of genetic screening.

Mr. Sackville: The scope of the report's findings go beyond the interest of the Department of Health. Ministers in this and other Government Departments will want to consider the reaction of public and professional interests before deciding whether action by the Government is needed and I will write to the hon. Member.

Home Care

18. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the representations she has received regarding the registration and inspection of home care.

Mr. Bowis: We have received representations from a variety of organisations. We have no current plans to introduce compulsory registration of home care agencies, but we will review the position in 1995.

Surgical Operations

19. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many surgical operations were completed *(a)* in 1993 and *(b)* in 1979.

Mr. Sackville: Three and a half million in 1992-93 compared with 2·5 million in 1979. Although not directly comparable, the figures are indicative of the marked increase in national health service activity over the period, and in particular the more efficient use of hospital operating theatres.

Asthma

20. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she intends to modify "The Health of the Nation" to include asthma as a key medical condition to be tackled by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: No. We believe that further development and research is necessary before national targets in respect of asthma can be set. In 1992-93 the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spent over £1·5 million on research into asthma and areas which may be relevant to the condition.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence has been presented to her Department about the incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Sackville: A copy of the report "Health on the Waterfront" has been forwarded to the Department of Health and is receiving careful attention.

Personal Social Services

21. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was, or will be, available to councils for spending on personal social services *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Net expenditure by local authorities on personal social services in 1978-79 was £1,062 million. In 1994-95 total standard spending for personal social services, including the community care special transitional grant, will be £6,403·2 million, more than twice 1978-79 expenditure in real terms.

Pathology Services

23. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with UNI Clinical Laboratories, UCL, about the privatisation of NHS pathology services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In accordance with the Government's market-testing policy and private finance initiative trusts and health authorities are encouraged to contract with private health care providers where it can be shown that there are real benefits to patients in terms of quality and cost-effectiveness. In October 1993, I held a meeting with UNI Clinical Laboratories at the company's request, at which these principles were discussed, as part of a series of meetings with national health service and private sector providers regarding the PFI and market testing.

Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital Trust

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will make public all the documents relating to the future of the Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have already indicated that, following careful consideration of the advice received we made the judgment that proposals to concentrate patient services, over time, at the St. Thomas's site should be pursued by the trust. All information which is necessary for statutory public consultation will be made available before a final decision is made.

Multiple Sclerosis

25. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether her Department is now in a position to offer any additional advice for people suffering from multiple sclerosis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Advice to people suffering from multiple sclerosis will vary according to individual needs and is a professional matter for the doctors and consultants looking after them.

Health Service Reforms

26. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a further statement about the progress of the health service reforms.

Dr. Mawhinney: The separation of the purchasing and provider functions is now virtually complete. Four hundred and nineteen national health service trusts will be operational by 1 April 1994 and over 6,000 general practitioners are now fundholders. Overall these changes have produced dramatic changes in patient activity which is now growing at 5 per cent. per annum. Average waiting times have been reduced from nine months to five. The recent changes announced as part of the functions and manpower review will build on the success of the reforms by streamlining the central management of the NHS to create a simplified, sharper structure.

Hospital Day Cases

27. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the proportion of hospital day cases has changed since 1991-92; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In 1991-92 day cases represented 20 per cent. of the total number of finished consultant episodes. The corresponding figure for 1992-93 is 23 per cent.

Immunisation

28. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of children are now immunised against childhood diseases; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: At November 1993, according to figures provided by the public health laboratory service's "Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly" programme:

93 per cent. of children had received diphtheria, tetanus and polio immunisations;

91 per cent. had received pertussis—whooping cough—and,

90 per cent. had received Hib immunisation all at age 12 months, while

92 per cent. had received measles, mumps and rubella at age 24 months.

We are now well within reach of our target of 95 per cent. immunisation uptake by 1995. Doctors and nurses in general practice and in the community health service are to be congratulated on their achievements.

Tobacco

29. **Ms Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she has to discourage young people from using tobacco.

Dr. Mawhinney: On 7 February 1994 the Government launched "Smoke-Free for Health", an action plan to achieve "The Health of the Nation" targets on smoking. The action plan sets out the full range of measures being taken to reduce smoking, including smoking by young people.

Copies are available in the Library.

Birmingham Midland Eye Hospital

30. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposed replacement for the Birmingham Midland eye hospital.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities in Birmingham and Solihull have chosen Dudley Road general hospital to provide inpatient and day case ophthalmology services for Greater Birmingham. In support of these services, West Midlands health authority has approved a £7 million development for the hospital. The new development will replace the service currently provided at the Birmingham Midland eye hospital and is expected to open in spring 1996.

Doctors (Fraud)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to give family health service authorities the power to suspend doctors where there are strong suspicions of fraud.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are considering the need for legislation to provide, in extreme cases, for a power of suspension of general practitioners from provision of national health service services.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from family health services authorities seeking additional powers to enable them to prevent fraud by general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms exist within the national health service to deal with general practitioners who are suspected of fraud; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 18 February, at column *1046*.

Infertility Treatment

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department has taken to ensure adequate central monitoring of the level of infertility treatment provision in England.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what inquiries she has made into the level of awareness among general practitioners as to the availability of infertility provision in their area;

(2) if she will list the centres throughout the United Kingdom which provide treatment for infertility, together with the type of treatment provided, the number of centres which provide infertility treatment for men and the number of centres which provide infertility treatment on the national health service;

(3) if she will list the district health authorities which provide infertility treatment under the national health service, together with the treatment centre with which they are contracted for such treatment;

(4) what statistics are collected on the level of provision of infertility treatment; and what plans she has to increase the amount of data collected.

Mr. Sackville: Information on centres which provide regulated treatment services under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 is collected by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. This covers both private and national health service provision. Details of centres licensed by the HFEA are included in their annual reports, copies of which have been placed in the Library. In addition, limited information on in-patient and day case episodes in NHS hospitals is available centrally from the hospital episodes statistics, copies of which are available in the Library. District health authorities and general practitioner fundholdess are responsible for identifying the health needs of their local population and for commissioning the appropriate services.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the reasons for the decision to exclude provision of infertility treatments from the coverage of the local GP fundholding contracts.

Dr. Mawhinney: Infertility treatments on an out-patient basis are already included within the scope of the fundholding scheme. High cost in-patient procedures are not included, as fundholding covers only treatments up to £5,000.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department to district health authorities with regard to the provision of infertility treatments.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on 14 January, at column *315*.

General Practitioners

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been commissioned into the different *(a)* prescribing and *(b)* referring practices of female as opposed to male GPs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is not aware of any specific studies on this issue.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the changes in the workload of general medical practitioners since the introduction of the new general practitioner contract in 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: A year-long survey of general practitioners' workload began in November 1992, carried out jointly by the Health Departments and the British Medical Association. A report of the final results will be presented to the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists Remuneration later in the year. An interim report, based on the first seven months' results, was made to the DDRB in October 1993, to inform its 23rd report—Cm 2460.

Mentally Ill People

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for health whether arrangements have now been made for a national conference to establish an agreed approach to the training of key workers for mentally ill people accepted by the specialist psychiatric services.

Mr. Bowis: The conference will be held on 3 March.

Regional Health Authority Headquarters

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the tenure of the North West regional health authority headquarters premises, Gateway house, Piccadilly, Manchester;

(2) what is the tenure of the Merseyside regional health authority headquarters premises, Hamilton house, Pall Mall, Liverpool.

Mr. Sackville: Gateway house is the freehold property of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Hamilton house is held on lease until February 2010.

Lewisham and Southwark FHSA

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount, recipient and date of all the grants made by Lewisham and Southwark family health services authority since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham family health services authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Jeremy Fraser, the chairman, for details.

Homelessness

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), of 8 December, *Official Report*, columns *249-50*, whether homeless mentally ill people in London not moved into potentially permanent accommodation by community psychiatric teams are *(a)* sleeping rough or *(b)* what accommodation they are living in; and if she will specify the accommodation.

Mr. Bowis: The table, based on active clients of the community psychiatric teams established under the homeless mentally ill initiative, indicates the proportion of that group who are sleeping rough and in a variety of types of temporary accommodation. It also specifies the types of accommodation.

Percentage of unresettled clients (sample = 369)

	Percentage
(a) Sleeping rough	16
(b) Temporary accommodation	84
Total	100
Type of accommodation	
Direct access hostel	33
HMI specialist hostel	15
Other hostel—providing care	2
Other hostel—not providing care	9
Hospital	8
Staying with friends/family or Squatting	3
Adult fostering	less than 1
Bed and breakfast	8
Prison	1
Not known	4
Total per cent.	84

Notes:

1. This information is based on data about active clients with whom the five community psychiatric teams set up under the homeless mentally ill initiative were working at a particular date.
2. The category "direct access hostel" includes the Department of the Environment's cold weather shelters.

Children

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what her Department is doing to ensure that local authorities have the time and the resources to publicise their services to children in need and fulfil their obligations to compile a register of children with disabilities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Time is, alas, not in my gift. The level of resources needed to implement the Children Act 1989 was taken into account in the local government settlements for 1991-92 and 1992-93, the first full year of the Act. In 1992-93 standard spending for children's services was 15 per cent. above the level for 1990-91 in real terms. It is, however, for local authorities to decide on the allocation of resources of the various services for which they are responsible.

Epilepsy

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether epilepsy is regarded by the NHS as a chronic ailment.

Mr. Bowis: The national health service does not categorise any illness or condition as being a chronic ailment. This is because of the degree of variation in individual cases.

Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research she has commissioned or undertaken into diagnosis and treatment of Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy.

Mr. Bowis: None directly, but I would refer the hon. Member to the research undertaken at the St. James's hospital, university of Leeds, by Professor Roy Meadow.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave him on 18 February, at column *1010*.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dates and amounts of each increase that has been made in prescription charges since 1979.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is in the table.

Prescription charge increases from 16 July 1979 to 1 April 1994

Date	*Prescription charge (£)*	*Increase (£)*
16 July 1979	0·45	0·25
1 April 1980	0·70	0·25
1 December 1980	1·00	0·30
1 April 1982	1·30	0·30
1 April 1983	1·40	0·10
1 April 1984	1·60	0·20
1 April 1985	2·00	0·40
1 April 1986	2·20	0·20
1 April 1987	2·40	0·20
1 April 1988	2·60	0·20
1 April 1989	2·80	0·20
1 April 1990	3·05	0·25
1 April 1991	3·40	0·35
1 April 1992	3·75	0·35
1 April 1993	4·25	0.50
1 April 1994	4·75	0.50

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount she expects to award in grants to voluntary organisations in 1994-95 under the section 64 general scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We expect to make grants totalling £19,525 million, an increase of £765,000 over the corresponding figure for 1993-94. This increase, despite current financial pressures, underlines the Government's commitment to the important role of the voluntary sector. It represents a rise of £1·675 million—or well above 9 per cent. between 1992-93 and 1994-95.

General scheme grants go to voluntary organisations working with a wide range of people and coinciding with involving the policy responsibilities of several Department of Health Ministers. These include children, elderly people, carers, and people from ethnic minorities, as well as those having to cope with mental illness, physical disabilities, learning difficulties, or the effects of HIV/AIDS or of the misuse of alcohol or drugs.

To provide some stability in funding and to help voluntary organisations to plan ahead, most departmental grants are for three years. So for many, 1994-95 will be the second or third year of their grant. Others will be having their grant renewed for a further term. But there will be new grants, too.

We are determined to provide room for core and project grants for organisations which have not previously benefited from departmental funding. Among the new grants beginning in April will be £15,000 a year to Changing Faces, a project at Frenchay hospital, Bristol, concerned with remedying facial disfigurement; a core grant of £15,000 a year to invalid childrens aid network; and a core grant of £25,000 a year to action on elder abuse.

Young Carers

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to establish the specific needs of young carers.

Mr. Bowis: The Government take a close and active interest in the needs of children and young people who undertake responsibility at home for the well-being of a relative with a disability or chronic illness. The Department is funding, through the family support initiative, work in this field by Barnado's in Liverpool and, through core funding, is supporting the Carers National Association, which is conducting a young carers project.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is currently being spent by her Department on care in the community of psychiatrically disturbed people; what the figure was 20 years ago; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: In 1991-92 expenditure on mental health services totalled over £2 billion, this includes £179·7 million which local authorities spent on services for the mentally ill and £29·8 million which health authorities spent on projects funded under the care in the community arrangements. No figures are held for 1971-72, but in 1978-79 personal social services expenditure on mental illness was £24·8 million.

Accident and Emergency Units

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current ratio of accident and emergency units to district general hospitals in Greater London; and what the ratio was in 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information available centrally is shown in the table. From 1991-92 the accident and emergency services have been recorded by provider units which may provide accident and emergency services on more than one site within the unit. Information for earlier years is not therefore comparable.

	Inner London	*Outer London*	*Total*
Number of hospitals providing A and E services			
1988-89	27	31	58
1989-90	27	31	58
1990-91	29	31	60
Number of NHS provider units providing A and E services			
1991-92	18	25	43
1992-93	18	16	36

Source: KHO3 return.

Stolen Equipment

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a list of the equipment stolen from her Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The tables show the official equipment that has been stolen from the Department of Health's buildings together with its approximate value. Three buildings are jointly occupied by Department of Social Security staff but where the Department of Health, the major occupier, has building management responsibility, the tables include equipment from those buildings belonging to both Departments. One incident of theft in 1993 accounted for a large percentage of the total loss for that year. Measures intended to combat these thefts have been taken, including the branding of equipment to show ownership.

Description of items	*Approximate value £*
Period 1 January to 31 December 1991	
2 battery chargers	120
Computer software	100
2 Computers (no software)	2,000
3 Computers and software	5,360
Thermo Anemometer	100
Mobile Telephone	220
Extension lead and adaptor	170
Camera and accessories	2,200
5 Answerphones	200
Dictaphone	230
2 Paperweights	5
	10,705
Period 1 January to 31 December 1992	
2 Computer file servers	1,700
9 Computers and software	24,010
	25,710
Period 1 January to 31 December 1993	
45 Computers and software	80,120
5 Printers	6,250
Disks	6,410
3 Keyboards	300
Software	650
4 Mobile Telephones	350
Video Recorder	400
17 Answerphones	650
	95,130

Advertising

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of publications from her Department and the expenditure on advertising in 1993 excluding the cost of routine correspondence.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated costs for publications and advertising in 1993-94 are:

Publications	£7·5 million
Advertising	£4·7 million

National Care Deficit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the national care deficit.

Mr. Bowis: The question presupposes that it is possible to quantify the total health and social care needs of the population in an objective way. I do not believe that this can be done in a way which would be meaningful.

British Health Care Association

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of donations were received by the NHS from the British Health Care Association in 1993.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the British Health Care Association.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the current health risk to humans from bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 16 February at column *866*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what expenditure was committed by her Department to research into the health implications of bovine spongiform encephalopathy to humans in 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The Department and the Scottish Office fund research carried out at the national Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance unit at Edinburgh. This includes examination of occupational and dietary exposure of cases of CJD for possible links with bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The unit will receive a total of £161,000 from the Department of Health in the current financial year.

The Department is also funding a series of studies at the Institute for Animal Health, Edinburgh into the time-temperature combinations required to inactivate scrapie agencies. The studies began on 1 January 1994 with funding of £64,000 in the current financial year.

Research into the human health implications of BSE is also being undertaken by the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds there were in *(a)* the largest residential care home and *(b)* the largest nursing home in each year since 1983 in (i) the voluntary sector and (ii) the private sector.

Mr. Bowis: The largest nursing home is a dually registered home with 385 beds at March 1993, 270 of which were dedicated to nursing care. Figures for nursing care beds are not available for previous years.

The information for residential care homes has only been available centrally from 1987 to 1992 and is as shown in the table. These figures will include some beds dedicated to nursing care.

Number of beds available in largest private and voluntary residential care homes

As at 31 March	*Voluntary*	*Private*
1987	415	114
1988	400	114
1989	432	114
1990	432	144
1991	432	144
1992	394	105

Source: RACS returns.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has received from the chief executive of the West Midlands regional health authority on the employment of Mr. Manders, an NHS employee by a health care-purchasing consortium; if she will publish the information; what action she intends to take; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for West Midlands regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Bryan Baker, the chairman, for details.

Family Health Services Authorities

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are issued on the commercial activity of chairmen of family health services authorities; and if he will make a statement on the case of Mr. Athelston Sealey.

Mr. Sackville: There is no limitation on the freedom of chairmen of family health services authorities to pursue private interests provided that they observe scrupulously the regulations governing the disclosure of any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, in any matter under consideration by their authorities. They may not take part in the consideration or discussion of that matter or vote on any question related to it.

Codes of conduct and accountability will be issued to national health service boards with effect from 1 April 1994, reaffirming these regulations. It is proposed that relevant interests should be declared and recorded in board minutes, that directorships and other significant interests held by NHS board members should be declared on appointment, kept up to date and set out in the annual report, and that all declared interests should be drawn to the attention of auditors.

Photorefractive Keratectomy

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, in what circumstances myopia may be treated by excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy at the expense of the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Treatment of myopia by laser is available on the national health service only as part of a clinical trial.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, regarding excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy, for each hospital during the period of the clinical trials, how many *(a)* NHS patients and *(b)* private patients have undergone one operation; how many (i) NHS patients and (ii) private patients have undergone both operations; how many (1) NHS patients and (2) private patients have completed their course of treatment; and how many *(x)* NHS patients and *(y)* private patients will not have completed their course of treatment by the end date of the clinical trials;

(2) pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, regarding excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy, what is the start and end date of the clinical trials at *(a)* St. Thomas's and *(b)* Moorfields eye hospitals;

(3) pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, what is the current size of the NHS waiting list for excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy; and what is the average monthly rate of operations for *(a)* NHS patients and *(b)* private patients in (i) St. Thomas's hospital and (ii) Moorfields eye hospital;

(4) pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, what is the cost per operation of excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy; and what is the total cost of treating a patient under this programme at *(a)* St. Thomas's hospital and *(b)* Moorfields eye hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Member may wish to contact Lord Hayhoe, chairman of Guy's and St. Thomas's hospital trust, and Mr. Hugh Peppiatt, chairman of the Moorfields eye hospital special health authority, for details.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, regarding excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy, if this procedure is undergoing clinical trials in any other national health service hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: As far as we are aware, no.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to her answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *670*, regarding excimer laser photorefractive keratectomy, to what use the equipment will be put at the end of the clinical trials.

Dr. Mawhinney: One excimer laser is leased from the manufacturers and will revert to them. The other, purchased by a charitable fund for use in research at St. Thomas's, will continue to be used for that research.

Employees (Screening)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many times the NHS has bid for a screening programme of Government employees; and what was the value of each contract and who won the contract in each case;

(2) if she will make a statement on the outcome of the bid for the NHS for a contract for health checks for social security staff.

Mr. Sackville: Contracts for health checks on Government employees are the responsibility of the relevant employing organisation.

Hospitals (Patients Charter)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which hospitals within the London initiative zone are to be fined for failure to meet patients charter standards; and how much each fine will be;

(2) which hospitals in each of the regional health areas are to be fined for not meeting patients charter standards; and how much each fine will be.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no central policy which imposes financial sanctions on hospitals failing to meet patients charter standards. District health authorities are, however, at liberty to negotiate sanctions through the contracting process.

Allocations through the national health service management executive's waiting times fund, for the last few years, have been linked to regions' performance on waiting times objectives. Some regions pass on any fines to district health authorities and hospitals. The hon. Member may care to contact the regions directly for more detailed information.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, for each of the non-departmental bodies sponsored by her Department, whether the public has a statutory right to attend all board or committee meetings and to inspect *(a)* minutes of meetings, *(b)* the annual reports and *(c)* the annual accounts.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The meetings of regional health authorities, district health authorities and family health services authorities are governed by the Public Bodies (Admissions to meetings) Act 1960. This requires any full meeting of the authority, at which specific action is required, to be open to the public. The public may be excluded from the whole or part of a meeting when confidential business is to be discussed. The 1960 Act also requires authorities to supply the press, on request, with a copy of the agenda for each full meeting. These authorities are not required to publish annual reports and accounts, but many do so, and their audited accounts are publicly available on request.

National health service trusts, and their committees or sub-committees, are not subject to the 1960 Act. Trusts are required to have one public meeting per year, in accordance with the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. They are required to publish annual reports, business plans and accounts.

Other non-departmental bodies sponsored by the Department of Health are not required to hold meetings in public, or to allow the public to inspect minutes of those meetings.

Executive bodies are not required to produce reports but all do so either annually or biennially. Annual accounts are usually published either as part of the annual report, or as a separate document.

Many advisory bodies produce some form of annual report, although they are not required to do so. Most do not produce accounts as they do not have any executive function, and therefore no budget.

"Public Bodies 1993" gives full details of non-departmental bodies publishing annual reports.

Of the tribunals sponsored by the Department, the mental health review tribunal rules state that hearings must be in private, unless the patient requests a public hearing. The decision of the tribunal is confidential, and is made available only to the patient and other parties directly concerned with the patient; the registered homes tribunals are held in private, but the decision of each hearing is published; the NHS tribunals are held in private, and minutes of meetings, annual accounts and reports are not available to the public.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 23 February 1994

DEFENCE

Army (Redundancies)

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about planned redundancies in the Army.

Mr. Hanley: As indicated in my answer to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 20 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *191*, the Army invited applications from volunteers for the third phase of its redundancy programme which implements the reduction in the size of the Army under proposals first announced in 1990. These applications have now been considered against the requirement to achieve the required size of the Army for the nineties while retaining the right age and skill structure for the future, taking account of the manpower addback announced by the Secretary of State on 1 December last year. A total of 720 officers and 6,295 soldiers have now been selected for redundancy in 1994-95. Some 85 per cent. of these have volunteered for redundancy, but it will be necessary to select 142 officers and 953 soldiers for compulsory redundancy. All those selected for redundancy will be notified on 24 February 1994.

Belize

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to gift equipment to the Belize defence force as part of the future plan for British forces in Belize.

Mr. Hanley: As part of our continuing programme of assistance in Belize, my Department has identified a substantial package of equipment which we plan to hand over to the Government of Belize, once it is no longer needed by British forces based there. We expect the provision of this equipment will greatly assist in the development of the Belize defence force. In accordance with normal practice, my Department has today laid before the House a departmental minute giving notice of our intention to make this gift.

Landing Platform Dock Replacements

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will invite tenders for the landing platform dock replacements; and when he expects to place the contract.

Mr. Aitken: Project Definition studies for the landing platform dock—replacement—are due to complete this spring when we will make a decision on the issue of an invitation to tender for the design and build of the first of class. A contract has recently been awarded for further project definition work on the command system for the vessel.

Frigates

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many common new generation frigates he plans to order.

Mr. Aitken: The Government plan to replace the type 42 destroyer with the common new generation frigate around the turn of the century and intend to replace fully the capability currently provided by the type 42 destroyers.

Aircraft Carrier Replacements

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to commence the project definition phase for the replacement of the Invincible class aircraft carriers; and when these replacements will come into service.

Mr. Aitken: Under current plans, the Royal Navy's Invincible class aircraft carriers will continue in service well into the next century. Although concept studies for a replacement have commenced, project definition work is unlikely to begin before the end of the decade.

HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the present locations of HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Fearless is currently engaged in amphibious exercises off the Scottish coast. HMS Intrepid is at present held in a state of extended readiness at Portsmouth.

Fleet Auxiliary Vessels

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the *(a)* RFA O class, *(B)* T class and *(c)* Rover class fleet auxiliaries have been in service with the Royal Navy; and what plans he has to procure new fleet auxiliary vessels.

Mr. Aitken: The information is as follows:

(a) The RFA O class consists of two fleet tankers, one of which came into service in 1965, the other in 1966;

(b) The RFA T class are no longer in service with the Royal Navy;

(c) The RFA ROVER class consists of three fleet tankers, one of which came into service in 1970, the other two came into service in 1974.

In addition to the two new auxiliary oiler replenishment ships, Fort George and Fort Victoria, which are due to enter service in the next few months, we expect to invite tenders shortly for a feasibility study for the replacement of the O class front-line tankers. The study will look at a wide range of procurement options, with the replacement ships currently planned to enter service around the turn of the century. Additionally, a suitable tanker taken up from trade is planned to enter service before the end of the decade.

HMS Ark Royal

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Ark Royal will commence refit.

Mr. Aitken: HMS Ark Royal is not scheduled for her next refit for some years.

Operational Vessels

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the vessels in the Royal Navy that are currently operational, including fleet auxiliaries; and what was the date of construction of each vessel.

Mr. Hanley: As construction dates are not readily available, the attached list of vessels currently operational gives either the date vessels were accepted from builders by the Royal Navy or the royal fleet auxiliary—new build vessels—or the date ships were commissioned—vessels taken up from trade.

Ship	*Date of acceptance*
Invincible Class Carrier (CVS)	
Invincible	March 1980
Illustrious	June 1982
Ark Royal	June 1985
Assault Ship (LPD)	
Fearless	November 1965
Intrepid	March 1967
Type 42 Destroyer	
Birmingham	November 1976
Newcastle	February 1978
Glasgow	March 1979
Cardiff	September 1979
Exeter	August 1980
Southampton	August 1981
Nottingham	December 1982
Liverpool	May 1982
Manchester	November 1982
Gloucester	May 1985
Edinburgh	July 1985
York	March 1985
Leander Class Frigate	
Andromeda	December 1968
Type 21 Frigate	
Active	June 1977
Avenger	April 1978
Type 22 Frigate	
Broadsword	February 1979
Battleaxe	December 1979
Brilliant	April 1981
Brazen	June 1982
Boxer	September 1983
Beaver	July 1984
Brave	February 1986
London	February 1987
Sheffield	March 1988
Coventry	July 1988
Cornwall	February 1988
Cumberland	November 1988
Campbeltown	February 1989
Chatham	November 1989
Type 23 Frigate	
Norfolk	November 1989
Argyll	April 1991
Lancaster	November 1991
Marlborough	March 1991
Iron Duke	July 1992
Monmouth	April 1993
Montrose	September 1993
Westminster	November 1993
Resolution Class SSBN	
Resolution	October 1967
Repulse	October 1968
Renown	February 1969
Vanguard Class SSBN	
Vanguard	September 1993
Valiant Class SSN	
Valiant	July 1966
Swiftsure Class SSN	
Sovereign	July 1974
Superb	November 1976
Sceptre	March 1978
Spartan	October 1979
Splendid	May 1981
Trafalgar Class SSN	
Trafalgar	July 1983
Turbulent	August 1984
Tireless	October 1985
Torbay	March 1987
Trenchant	February 1989
Talent	May 1990
Triumph	November 1991
Upholder Class SSK	
Upholder	December 1990
Unseen	July 1991
Ursula	June 1992
Unicorn	July 1993
Hunt Class MCMV	
Brecon	December 1979
Ledbury	March 1981
Cattistock	March 1982
Cottesmore	May 1983
Brocklesby	October 1982
Middleton	July 1984
Dulverton	October 1983
Bicester	February 1986
Chiddingfold	July 1984
Atherstone	November 1986
Hurworth	June 1985
Berkeley	November 1987
Quorn	January 1989
Sandown Class MCMV	
Sandown	March 1989
Inverness	February 1991
Cromer	November 1991
Walney	August 1992
Bridport	June 1993
Island Class OPV	
Orkney	January 1977
Shetland	May 1977
Guernsey	September 1977
Lindisfarne	January 1978
Anglesey	April 1979
Alderney	August 1979
Castle Class OPV	
Leeds Castle	August 1981
Dumbarton Castle	March 1982
Bird Class Patrol Craft	
Redpole	August 1967
Kingfisher	October 1975
Cygnet	July 1976
Peacock Class Patrol Craft	
Peacock	October 1983
Plover	April 1984
Starling	June 1984
River Class Patrol Craft	
Blackwater	June 1985
Itchen	June 1985
Orwell	November 1985
Spey	April 1986
Arun	May 1986

Ship	*Date of acceptance*
Ton Class Patrol Craft	
Wilton	June 1973
Archer Class Patrol Craft	
Archer	August 1985
Example	September 1985
Explorer	January 1986
Biter	February 1986
Smiter	February 1986
Pursuer	February 1988
Blazer	March 1988
Dasher	June 1988
Express	February 1988
Puncher	July 1988
Charger	July 1988
Exploit	July 1988
Ranger	August 1988
Trumpeter	February 1988
Survey Flotilla	
Hecla	September 1965
Herald	October 1974
Bulldog	March 1968
Beagle	March 1968
Roebuck	August 1986
Gleaner	December 1983
Britannia	January 1954
Endurance	[2]November 1991
RFA	
Landing Ships Logistic	
Sir Bedivere	May 1967
Sir Geraint	June 1967
Sir Tristram	September 1967
Sir Percivale	March 1968
Sir Galahad	November 1987
Aviation Training Ship	
Argus	[2]March 1988
Fleet Replenishment Ships	
Resource	June 1967
Fort Grange	April 1978
Fort Austin	June 1979
Fort Victoria	March 1993
Fort George	March 1993
Large Fleet Tankers	
Olwen	October 1965
Olna	April 1966
Small Fleet Tankers	
Grey Rover	April 1970
Gold Rover	March 1974
Black Rover	August 1974
Support Tankers	
Brambleleaf	[2]April 1980
Bayleaf	[1]March 1982
Orangeleaf	[1]May 1984
Oakleaf	[1]August 1986
Forward Repair Ship	
Diligence	[2]March 1984

[1] Vessel on long-term charter—date given is commissioning date.

[2] Vessel taken up from trade—date given is commissioning date.

Contracts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts were placed by his Department in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93; and how many were subject to increases in cost caused by delays.

Mr. Aitken: The number of headquarters contracts placed by my Department is as follows:

Financial year	*Number*
1991-92	73,326
1992-93	79,593

Information as to the numbers of contracts subject to increases in cost caused by delays is not held centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Arctic Warfare Exercise

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the annual Royal Marine arctic warfare exercise is not to be held in Norway this year; where it will be held: at what saving to public funds; whether he plans to resume Royal Marine exercising in Norway in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The annual Royal Marine arctic warfare training exercise is currently taking place in north Norway: 42 Commando Group is participating, with Sea King helicopters from 846 Naval Air Squadron, and the royal fleet auxiliary ships, Sir Tristram, Sir Galahad and Sir Bedivere. The training will culminate in 42 Commando Group participating in the Norwegian Brigade North exercise Arctic Express. On current plans, the annual training will continue in 1994.

Adriatic Operations

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *112*, what further delay has arisen to the deployment of HMS Birmingham to the Adriatic as a result of the failure of her Sea Dart system; what are the operational implications for the carrier group of the continued detachment of HMS Coventry to embargo operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: HMS Birmingham's departure for the Adriatic was delayed by a further six days because of problems relating to her Sea Dart missile system. HMS Coventry will continue to fulfil her Stanavforlant duties until HMS Birmingham's imminent arrival in theatre. HMS Coventry's continuing detachment has no operational implications for the carrier group as she would be released for national tasks if required.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *112*, what has been the outcome of the discussions between the United Nations, Croatian customs authorities and the master of RFA Sir Geraint over the error in the ship's manifest relating to munitions; whether any costs fall to be paid by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: This matter was resolved following discussions between United Nation's officials and the Croatian Government; no blame has ben attributed to the Master of RFA Sir Geraint. The incident did not result in any costs being incurred by Her Majesty's Government.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to send additional British troops to Vitez; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to send additional British Troops to Vitez.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to discuss the deployment of additional military forces in Bosnia with his NATO and UN counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley : My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will continue to discuss the possible deployment of additional forces in Bosnia with his NATO and UN counterparts. It remains our view that contributions to the United Nations force in Bosnia should be drawn from a wide range of countries.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *519*, what requests he has received from the United Nations for the provision of mortar-locating radar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The United Kingdom, together with a number of other nations, has received a request from the UN to provide military personnel and equipment to help support the demilitarisation of Sarajevo. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 17 February 1994, the British Government has agreed, a part of its assistance package, to provide a 60-strong Cymbeline mortar-locating troop. The troop deployed from the United Kingdom, through Vitez to arrive in Sarajevo on 22 February 1994.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *519*, what detailed information he has relating to the deployment of Dutch, Malaysian and Pakistani forces in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We understand that the Dutch, Malaysian and Pakistani troop deployments in support of UNPROPOR in the former Yugoslavia are as follows:

(a) Dutch

1 × Signals Battalion at HQ Bosnia-Herzegovina Command, Kiseljak, Bosnia.
Role: Communications and HQ Support.

1 × joint Dutch/Belgian transport battalion at Santici near Vitez, Bosnia.
Role: Secondary Distribution of humanitarian aid.

50 × UN Military Observers.
TOTAL=632.

Plus[1]*:*
2 × Companies and Battalion HQ at Srebrenica, Bosnia.
1 × Company at Zepa, Bosnia.
1 × Logistic Support Company at Lukavac, Bosnia.
Role: Monitoring safe areas and supporting the provision of humanitarian aid.
ADDITIONAL TOTAL=1,020.

[1] The deployment of these troops is due to commence on 24 February and should be complete by 15 March. An advance party is already in place.

(b) Malaysian
1 × Company at Sarajevo, Bosnia.
1 × Company at Konjic, Bosnia.
1 × Company and Battalion HQ at Medugorje, Bosnia.
Role: Support for provision of humanitarian aid.
20 × UN Military Observers.
TOTAL=858.

(c) Pakistani
30 × UN Military Observers[1].

[1] Pakistan is planning to send a battalion group in support of UNPROFOR in April/May. Details of numbers and locations are still to be confirmed.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *519*, if he will give details of all of the contacts he has had with his NATO counterparts relating to the situation in Bosnia in the last 14 days; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has had a number of contacts with his counterparts during the last 14 days to discuss the situation in Bosnia. In particular, on 21 February he met the Defence Ministers of the United States, France, Italy, and the Netherlands in Aviano, Italy, to review the operational readiness of their forces, the rules of engagement, and the plans for co-ordination between NATO air units and UNPROFOR ground units.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date and at what time he first learned of the offer by the Russian Government to deploy additional troops to the Sarajevo area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: During the visits of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to Russia, they held discussions with Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Grachev at which the Russian administration indicated its willingness to co-operate with the United Nations and assist UNPROFOR in its task. The possibility of contributing Russian troops to maintain the ceasefire and assist with the demilitarisation of Sarajevo was also discussed, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence was informed of these discussions on their return.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any weapons-grade nuclear material is stored or stockpiled at any defence establishment on behalf of an overseas ally.

Mr. Hanley: No weapons-grade nuclear material is stored or stockpiled at any defence establishment in the United Kingdom on behalf of an overseas ally.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lenient Sentences

Mr. Enright: To ask the Attorney-General how many appeals have been made concerning unduly lenient sentences on people convicted in race-related cases.

The Attorney-General: Sentences imposed for offences involving the incitement of racial hatred contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986 are not subject to my power of review under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Ms Eagle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimates his Department has made of the money saved by the recent changes to eligibility for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It was estimated that in the current year expenditure would be £43 million lower than it otherwise would have been as a result of the eligibility changes. Volumes of legal aid certificates issued and green form bills paid are in line with estimates.

Children

Miss Lestor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many children aged nine years or above were represented in proceedings by the Official Solicitor in the latest year for which figures are available; how many of them are known to have requested alternative representation; and what were the results of their requests.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Between 1 January and 31 December 1993 the Official Solicitor represented 537 children aged nine years or above in family proceedings. Although the precise number who sought alternative representation could be established only at disproportionate cost, it is known that 15 children made such requests. Of these, eight were accepted and separate representation approved by the court, four were not proceeded with, two are still pending and one was rejected by the court on the grounds that the child was not competent to instruct his own solicitor.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 21 February; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Agriculture Council, which concluded its business on 21 February.

The Council had a first discussion of the 1994 farm price proposals. The discussion was televised and relayed direct to representatives of the press. I expressed the United Kingdom's initial reaction to the proposals, noting in particular the need for the Council's decisions to accord with budgetary discipline. The Council will examine the proposals in greater detail at its next session.

The Council adopted unanimously two decisions permitting France and Italy to pay national aids for wine distillation in the 1993-94 marketing year. I took the opportunity to obtain confirmation from Commissioner Steichen that the Commission had initiated the procedure to confirm that one of the French national aids to the pig sector was incompatible with the treaty, and I pressed him to act quickly on the other.

Special Conservation Areas

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to ensure that additional resources will be made available to the nature conservation agencies for monitoring the special interest of special areas of conservation under the EC habitats and species directive.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 21 February, *Official Report*, column 77.

Comfrey

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of poisoning from *(a)* comfrey and *(b)* comfrey products have occurred for each year since 1983 and until the end of 1992; and if she will list the number of cases of poisoning reported each month during 1993 and the latest available figures for 1994.

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

There have been no reports of poisoning attributed to comfrey or comfrey products in England. However, comfrey contains substances known to cause liver damage and there have been reports in international literature of disease associated with its consumption. The national poisons information service has recorded 16 inquiries about the possible effects of exposure to comfrey or its products since 1983.

EMPLOYMENT

Financial and Business Sector

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the financial and business sector in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each region in each year between 1983 and 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: This information can be obtained from the NOMIS database which is accessible in the Library.

Employment Protection

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect on companies in receivership of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The regulations give effect to the EC acquired rights directive. The directive and the regulations are both capable of applying to transfers of businesses or parts of businesses in receivership as well as to solvent undertakings. Insolvency practitioners have made many representations about the adverse effect of the regulations on the prospects for the sale of all or part of an insolvent business, whereby businesses which might otherwise have been rescued have been liquidated and jobs have been lost. The Government believe that this is a clear example of EC legislation having a detrimental effect on employment and have brought this to the attention of the European Commission.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what studies his Department has undertaken of the scope and effect of minimum wage legislation in the United States of America.

Mr. David Hunt: None. In the United States of America individual states are free to set minimum wage rates above those provided under the Fair Labor Standards Acts 1938. This arrangement has resulted in a range of different minimum rates being set. Therefore, there is no single statutory minimum rate in the United States of America.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal Privatisation

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of the 1990 Rothschild report on coal privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: The contract with N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd. for the provision of financial advice on coal privatisation commenced in May 1991. On grounds of commercial confidentiality, the cost of individual pieces of work in not released. Total expenditure by the Department of Energy in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry in 1991-92 was £3·3 million.

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated total cost of preparing the coal industry for privatisation.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry in 1991-92 and 1992-93 was £3·3 million, including VAT, and £3·5 million, including VAT, respectively. Provision for 1993-94 is £14·3 million, including VAT. The privatisation budget for 1994-95 has still to be decided.

British Coal Redundancy Scheme

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the cost of the British Coal redundancy scheme from October 1992 to date.

Mr. Eggar: The cost of redundancy arrangements is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Barron: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the enhanced redundancy payments currently paid by British Coal will continue beyond the end of March 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* I have informed British Coal that the Government are prepared to fund the current redundancy terms for miners until 30 April 1994 and, where redundancies are proposed before 30 April, for so long as the consultations with the unions on any such proposal continue.

Steel Industry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the prospects for the British steel industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom steel industry is now one of the most efficient in the world. Strict implementation of the state aids package and monitoring arrangements agreed at the 17 December Industry Council is essential to eradicate illegal subsidies and to ensure the prosperity and growth of efficient EC producers, including the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning price fixing in the steel industry in the European Union as it affects the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave in the House to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 16 February 1994, *Official Report,* column 945.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received concerning the ending of the iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme arrangements for redundant steel workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* I received representations from a range of interested parties including the steel industry and its representative bodies, trades unions, local authorities and hon. Members and Members of the European Parliament. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the then hon. Member for Eastleigh on 27 January 1994, *Official Report,* column *369.*

Overseas Investment

Mr. Lewis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the level of overseas investment into the United Kingdom for each year since 1970 at constant prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: Reliable price deflators for overseas investment are not available. Figures for gross investment into the United Kingdom are also not available. Information is available only for net investment at current prices.

This information up to 1991 is contained in the Pink Books 1973, 1983 and 1993, United Kingdom balance of payments, published by the Central Statistical Office; copies are available in the Library of the House.

The information for 1992 and the first nine months of 1993 is as follows:

Net overseas investment in the United Kingdom[1] current prices

£ million

	Direct	*Portfolio*	*Total*
1992	10·3	20·5	[2]30·9
[3]1993	8·5	29·1	37·6

[1] Net of disinvestment in the United Kingdom by overseas investors.

[2] Discrepancy between total and its constituent elements due to rounding.

[3] January to September.

Source: Balance of payments press release, CSO (93) 190, 20 December 1993.

Electrical Appliances (Plugs)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study he has made of *(a)* excessive costs to consumers, *(b)* costs to the plug manufacturers and *(c)* safety problems arising from the imposition in Britain of the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation—CENELEC—standards for electrical plugs and wiring.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has commissioned an independent analysis of the costs and benefits for the United Kingdom, including consumers and plug manufacturers, of the proposed harmonisation. The final report from the consultants will be published shortly to form a basis for wider consultation. My Department is participating in the CENELEC discussions to ensure that United Kingdom consumer safety is not compromised.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to revise plug and socket safety regulations; what representations he has received from the EC Commission about the proposal to require all electrical appliances to be sold with plugs; what evidence he has of safety hazards if they are not so sold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The announcement last year by the then Minister for Consumer Affairs of the intention to introduce regulations that would require most domestic appliances to be fitted with a plug before they are supplied to a consumer has been welcomed, although the European Commission has sought clarification on the possible impact on intra-Community trade. I am hopeful that these matters will be resolved shortly.

Each year an average of three people die because of an incorrectly fitted plug and 300 people require hospital treatment for injuries received from fitting plugs to electrical appliances.

Motor Cars

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what effect the change in the terms of trade for finished manufactures has had on (i) imports and exports of motor cars and (ii) output and unemployment in the United Kingdom car industry since 1973; and what has been the import penetration into the United Kingdom car market in *(a)* 1973, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no detailed information on the effect that the change in terms of trade for finished manufactures has had on the motor car industry. Information on the terms of trade and overseas trade is regularly published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 16 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *829-30*.

Enterprise Initiative (London)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been spent in the Greater London region on the enterprise initiative since its inception.

Mr. McLoughlin: Total payments on enterprise initiative consultancy projects in the London region from the launch of the consultancy scheme in 1988 to the end of 1993 amounted to £24·9 million.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of domestic manufacturing industry was owned by foreign companies, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: The percentages of United Kingdom manufacturing industry owned by overseas companies are given in the table. It shows the percentages of industry accounted for by overseas registered companies and by United Kingdom subsidiaries of overseas registered companies. Such subsidiaries are defined as companies where the composition of the board of directors is controlled by an overseas registered company or where an overseas company holds more than 50 per cent. of the equity share capital.

	Gross value added at factor cost	*Total sales and work done*	*Employment*
1979	21·4	22·8	15·0
1980	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1981	18·3	19·4	14·9
1982	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1983	18·6	20·4	14·5
1984	20·2	21·3	14·8
1985	18·7	20·3	14·0
1986	17·3	19·4	13·0
1987	18·8	21·0	13·4
1988	18·2	20·7	13·1
1989	21·1	24·1	14·9
1990	21·8	25·2	16·1
1991	21·7	25·5	17·2

[1] Prior to 1984 these data were collected biennially: consequently, information for 1980 and 1982 is not available.

Sources: Derived from table 18—table 19 in 1979—of the annual summary volumes of the report on the census of production—Central Statistical Office—"Business Monitor" PA 1002.

Household Insurance

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the number of people who have been refused insurance or reinsurance because of claims arising from river flooding.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None. This is a matter for the commercial judgment of insurance companies, with which the Government cannot interfere. However, I understand that the Association of British Insurers, to which the hon. Member has also written, is investigating these concerns.

Deregulation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many copies of the document deposited in the Vote Office of the House entitled "Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—An Explanatory Guide" were printed; where else it was sent or made available; what information this document contained which was not also printed as part of the explanatory and financial memorandum on the face of the Bill; why this guide contained no source of authorisation, date, printer, publisher, or official catalogue number; and by whom and for what reason it was authorised for publication.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Since publication of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, the document "Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill—An Explanatory Guide" has been available in the Vote Office and from the Department.

Approximately 4,000 copies of the document were made. Of these, approximately 3,500 have been distributed. Approximately 500 were made available in the Vote Office. The remainder were given, after the Bill was published, to the press and to individuals and organisations known to have an interest in the Bill, or have been given, on request, to members of the public, consumer and business organisations.

It is normal practice to publish such a document for long or complex Bills. The document contained a fuller explanation of the provisions of the Bill than the explanatory and financial memorandum, giving background information which would not have been appropriate for inclusion in the EFM, such as the Government's proposals for parliamentary scrutiny of orders made under chapter 1 of the Bill. The source and date of the document were omitted by an oversight. However, all copies distributed, other than through the Vote Office, were accompanied by material which made clear the source of the document.

Staff Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has a number of discretionary arrangements, delegated from Her Majesty's Treasury, which it can use in cases where a staff transfer in the public interest would lead to proven financial hardship. These arrangements include interest-bearing and interest-free loans; in highly exceptional cases there is provision for write-off. The arrangements are administered bearing in mind the cost to the taxpayer.

To provide the details requested would entail disproportionate cost.

Coal Mining

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many deep mines were in production in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom in each year since 1964.

Mr. Eggar: The numbers of British Coal deep mines in production at 31 March in each year since 1964 were as follows:

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*United Kingdom*
1964	386	103	87	578
1965	365	92	77	534
1966	334	82	67	483
1967	305	75	58	438
1968	263	66	47	378
1969	223	57	37	317
1970	213	54	32	213
1971	207	53	32	292
1972	204	53	32	289
1973	199	53	29	281
1974	185	50	24	259
1975	178	46	22	246
1976	176	45	21	241
1977	174	44	20	238
1978	172	40	19	231
1979	167	39	17	223
1980	165	38	16	219
1981	160	36	15	211
1982	149	35	14	198
1983	143	35	13	191
1984	131	30	9	170
1985	130	30	9	169
1986	105	19	9	133
1987	89	15	8	110
1988	78	12	4	94
1989	74	10	2	86
1990	65	7	1	73
1991	59	5	1	65
1992	45	4	1	50
1993	37	2	1	40

Source: British Coal.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total amount of coal production expressed in million tonnes from deep mines in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* the United Kingdom for each year since 1964.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Coal production (million tonnes)[1]

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*United Kingdom*
1964	151·9	21·8	16·1	189·8
1965	148·1	19·3	15·7	183·1
1966	137·6	18·6	14·9	171·1
1967	135·2	17·9	14·6	167·7
1968	130·5	16·1	13·1	159·7
1969	120·2	14·3	12·0	146·6
1970	109·3	16·1	11·3	136·7
1971	111·2	12·6	12·7	136·5
1972	89·1	9·9	10·0	109·1
1973	99·3	10·1	10·6	120·0
1974	83·1	8·1	8·8	100·0
1975	98·5	8·9	10·1	117·4
1976	92·0	8·7	9·6	110·3
1977	90·1	8·3	8·7	107·1
1978	90·6	8·6	8·3	107·5
1979	90·9	8·7	8·2	107·8
1980	95·5	8·8	8·2	112·4
1981	94·4	8·6	7·5	110·5
1982	91·0	8·2	6·9	106·2
1983	87·6	8·0	6·2	101·7
1984	32·5	1·8	1·0	35·2
1985	65·7	6·0	3·6	75·3
1986	78·8	7·7	3·9	90·4
1987	76·7	6·3	2·9	86·0
1988	76·1	5·5	2·1	83·8
1989	72·8	4·7	2·1	79·6
1990	66·0	4·6	2·3	72·9
1991	68·0	3·0	2·4	73·4
1992	61·0	2·6	2·2	65·8
[2]1993	46·6	2·0	1·9	50·5

[1] Includes production from licensed deep mines.

[2] Provisional figures.

United Kingdom Exports

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will produce a table to show what proportion of United Kingdom exports, including services and invisibles, was exported to the rest of the EC single market in each of the last 10 years and a similar table in respect of each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 22 February 1994]*: Information for 1982 to 1992 is given in the table. A breakdown of invisible exports to other EC countries is only available annually. Information for 1993 is not yet available.

Credits on United Kingdom transactions with the EC as a proportion of total credits on the current account of the balance of payments.

Year	*Per cent.*
1982	36·1
1983	37·3
1984	37·2
1985	38·1
1986	37·8
1987	38·5
1988	38·5
1989	38·6
1990	41·1
1991	44·1
1992	45·5

Note: Includes trade in goods and services, flow of interest profits and dividends, and financial transfers.
Source: The Pink Book 1993: United Kingdom balance of payments.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals there were against invalidity benefit being removed in *(a)* Lewisham and *(b)* London in 1993.

Mr. Scott: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about appeals against removal of Invalidity Benefit (IVB) in Lewisham and London.

The information is not available in the exact format requested. This is because Benefits Agency District boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries. The Benefit Agency's Lewisham District Office is responsible for Lewisham postal addresses but also for some adjacent areas. However, benefits work appropriate to Lewisham DO and a number of other Districts within the London area is dealt with by the Belfast Benefits Centre.

Statistics maintained by the Benefits Centre are available to show numbers of appeals received appropriate to each District. Within these figures it is possible to identify the numbers of appeals against removal of IVB. As figures cannot be further broken down geographically, the figure for Lewisham District may include appeals received from people living outside the Lewisham postal district.

In 1993, the number of appeals received against removal of IVB, appropriate to Lewisham District, was 31.

Although a number of the Agency's Districts within the London area have their benefits work dealt with at Benefit Centres, others process work within the District. Districts generally comprise a District Office and one or more Branch Offices. In some instances Districts have offices both inside and outside the London postal area. In addition, some Districts deal with IVB appeals at one site within that District. Statistics held by Districts regarding numbers of appeals could not therefore give a reliable figure for those appropriate to London.

For this reason the statistics below are those provided by the Independent Tribunal Service (ITS) for their London North and London South regions; and show the numbers of appeals received concerning IVB in the quarter ended March 1993 to be as follows:—

London North—427
London South—349

As these statistics represent all IVB appeals received, they will include cases where IVB is removed, or reduced. In addition, as the ITS regions include additional areas to the London postal area, the figures will include appeals received from people living outside that area.

The statistics provided are the latest supplied by ITS.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Income Support

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, from data taken from the annual statistical inquiry in 1991, 1992 and 1993, how many households in Tower Hamlets are having weekly deductions made from their income support as appropriate, for *(a)* electricity and *(b)* gas of (i) under £2 per week and (ii) in each £1 band above £2 per week up to £40 per week.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from M. Bichard to Ms Mildred Gordon, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the number of households in Tower Hamlets who are having deductions made from their Income Support to meet fuel costs.

The information is not available in the format requested this is because statistics are not kept which are specific to Tower Hamlets. However, I have placed in the attached appendix information which has been obtained from the Annual Statistical Enquiry, which is based on a 1 per cent. sample of Income Support claimants. The information is for the South East of England which comprises of the London North and London South administrative regions which cover the area of Tower Hamlets but cannot be broken down to a local level. All figures have been rounded to the nearest 500.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix

Number of Income Support recipients in South East England with deductions from benefit in respect of fuel costs

£	*Deductions for electricity*	*Deductions for gas*
1991		
0·01- 2·00	—	—
2·01- 3·00	500	—
3·01- 4·00	1,000	500
4·01- 5·00	1,000	1,000
5·01- 6·00	1,000	2,500
6·01- 7·00	1,500	3,500
7·01- 8·00	1,000	2,500
8·01- 9·00	1,000	4,500
9·01-10·00	1,500	3,500
10·01-11·00	1,500	4,000
11·01-12·00	1,500	2,500
12·01-13·00	1,000	1,500
13·01-14·00	1,000	1,500
14·01-15·00	500	1,500
15·01-16·00	500	500
16·01-17·00	500	—
17·01-18·00	500	—
18·01-19·00	—	—
19·01-20·00	—	—
20·01-21·00	—	—
21·01-22·00	500	—
22·01-23·00	—	—
23·01-24·00	—	—
24·01-25·00	—	—
25·01-26·00	—	—
26·01-27·00	—	—
27·01-28·00	—	—
28·01-29·00	—	—
29·01-30·00	—	—
30·01-31·00	—	—

£	Deductions for electricity	Deductions for gas
31·01-32·00	—	—
32·01-33·00	—	—
33·01-34·00	—	—
34·01-35·00	—	—
35·01-36·00	—	—
36·01-37·00	—	—
37·01-38·00	—	—
38·01-39·00	—	—
39·01-40·00	—	—
40·01 and over	—	—
Total	16,000	30,500
1992		
0·01- 2·00	—	—
2·01- 3·00	500	—
3·01- 4·00	—	1,000
4·01- 5·00	500	1,500
5·01- 6·00	1,000	3,500
6·01- 7·00	1,000	5,000
7·01- 8·00	1,500	5,000
8·01- 9·00	1,000	6,500
9·01-10·00	2,000	5,500
10·01-11·00	1,500	5,000
11·01-12.00	1,000	4,500
12·01-13.00	1,000	3,000
13·01-14·00	1,000	2,000
14·01-15·00	500	1,500
15·01-16·00	500	1,000
16·01-17·00	500	—
17·01-18·00	500	—
18·01-19·00	—	500
19·01-20·00	500	500
20·01-21·00	—	500
21·01-22·00	—	500
22·01-23·00	—	500
23·01-24·00	—	—
24·01-25·00	—	—
25·01-26·00	—	—
26·01-27·00	—	—
27·01-28·00	—	—
28·01-29·00	—	—
29·01-30·00	—	—
30·01-31·00	—	—
31·01-32·00	—	—
32·01-33·00	—	—
33·01-34·00	—	—
34·01-35·00	—	—
35·01-36·00	—	—
36·01-37·00	—	—
37·01-38·00	—	—
38·01-39·00	—	—
39·01-40·00	—	—
40·01 and over	—	—
Total	15,000	47,500

Benefits Agency, Ilford

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claiming income support at the Ilford office of the Benefits Agency in 1992 and 1993 were refused benefit by an adjudication officer; how many appealed; how many of those who appealed subsequently had their claim for income support allowed; and how many of those concerned had children.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mr. Mike Gapes, dated 22 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about persons refused income support at the Benefits Agency's Ilford Office.

The full range of information you request is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics relating to the refusal of Income Support and those which would identify children are not routinely collected. To obtain all the relevant information would require a physical examination of all Income Support records at the Ilford Office, which are in excess of 50,000.

I am, however, able to provide records which show the number of income support appeals which are for January to December for each year and are shown below:—

	1992	*1993*
Appeals received	503	459
Appeals allowed	40	54
Appeals partially allowed	10	9

This information has been obtained from the Income Support Management Information Statistics.

I am sorry that I am unable to be of more help on this occasion but I hope you find the reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many objections have been made to the Child Support Agency over its investigations into the arrangement of maintenance *(a)* where a court order for maintenance was already in operation and *(b)* where the agency proposed the setting up of maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Women's Pensions

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what assessment he has made of the number of married women who revoke the election to pay reduced rate contributions in the latter years of their working life, in the belief that there may be some significant gain, yet still have to rely on category B retirement pension or an addition paid to their husband;

(2) how many of women claiming a category B retirement pension in each of the last five years had revoked their election to pay reduced contributions either five, four, three, two or one year before retiring; and if he will estimate the value of the contributions they paid;

(3) in how many cases an adult dependant addition paid with invalidity benefit has been adjusted to take account of a category A retirement pension which is being paid to a wife who revoked her election to pay reduced contributions within five years before retiring; and what is the value of contributions paid by these married women.

Mr. Hague: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance he has issued to the Contributions Agency and the Benefits Agency concerning advice to be given to women considering revoking the election to pay reduced contributions in the latter years of their working life; and what reference is made to the impact which the husband's benefit circumstances may have on the financial benefits available.

Mr. Hague: It is open to any person, including women who have elected to pay reduced rate contributions, to request information about their contribution record or a forecast of the expected state retirement pension from the Benefits Agency. If a women has elected to pay reduced rate contributions, the pension forecast will tell her that if she wishes to improve her benefit position by paying more years of full contributions, she will have to cancel her election to pay reduced rate contributions. From then on, she would be able to pay contributions which do count towards retirement pension, subject always to her achieving a minimum entitlement of 25 per cent.

If a women seeks advice about the advantages of cancelling her election, Contributions Agency staff have instructions to recommend she obtains a pension forecast. They will also give her as much information as she wants about her national insurance position but without influencing her decision in any way. Taking account of her own circumstances, a women should decide for herself whether to keep or cancel her election.

If approached, the CA will suggest that she bears the following points in mind:

(i.) the relevant costs of paying full rate and reduced rate contributions;
(ii.) whether she will qualify for a basic pension and how that will compare with the pension she will receive on her husband's insurance when he reaches pension age and retires;
(iii.) how long she will have to wait to receive a pension on her husband's insurance;
(iv.) whether she will qualify for an additional pension and, if so, how much;
(v.) the effect of contracted-out deductions on the additional pension if she is paying towards an occupational pension scheme;
(vi.) if she anticipates qualifying for short-term benefits, the contribution conditions for the award of such benefits and the relevance of cancelling her election from the beginning of a tax year.

Additional information is available in leaflet NI1—national insurance choices for married women, available from local Social Security offices. This explains to women that they can qualify for a basic pension on either their own or their husband's contributions but they cannot get two pensions.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has received from Nicole Davoud in relation to the disability working allowance; what reply he is sending; what action he will take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have recently received representations from Mrs. Davoud and will be replying in the next few days.

Benefits Offices, Liverpool

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the total amount of money allocated to each benefit office in Liverpool for 1993-94 that is so far unclaimed for *(a)* family credit and *(b)* disability working allowance; and how many people he estimates are failing to take up their entitlement to the above benefits of each such benefit office;

(2) what is the total amount of money allocated to each benefit office in Liverpool for 1993-94 for *(a)* family credit and *(b)* disability working allowance; and what is the planned allocation to each benefit office in Liverpool for each benefit for (i) 1994-95 and (ii) 1995-96.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available. Benefit expenditure on family credit and disability working allowance is not planned or allocated on a regional basis.

WALES

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what progress has been made by the health intelligence unit, in collaboration with district health authorities and family health service authorities, to develop measures of consumer satisfaction with dental services;

(2) whether a baseline has been determined in 1993 for the purpose of assessing progress on the reduction in the proportion of 12-year-old children who have sustained dental injuries; and whether definitive criteria for this baseline have been published;

(3) which family health service authorities and district health authorities *(a)* have submitted to the Welsh Office a programme for the involvement of the resident population of their areas in the planning, provision and improvement of dental services and *(b)* not submitted such a programme by 31 December 1993;

(4) whether the protocol for investment in health care-oral health remains the basis of dental health policy objectives in Wales; and what assessment he has made of progress towards achieving those objectives;

(5) whether a baseline was determined during 1993 against which dental health gain targets for people without equal opportunity for good oral health can be assessed, based on local dental planning areas; and whether the definitive criteria of this baseline have been published.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All health authorities and family health services authorities in Wales have developed action plans to improve the health of their local population by the turn of the century. These are currently being assessed by the Department.

The development of the local strategies for oral health has been guided by the advice issued by the Welsh health planning forum in November 1992. Responsibility for establishing the necessary baseline information and measuring progress towards locally set targets, including those relating to patient satisfaction, rests mainly with health authorities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress was made during 1993 on achieving the service targets for the proportion of the population registered for capitation for dental purposes in the nought to two years age group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

	1992 Per cent.	*Position as at 30 September 1993*[1] *Per cent.*
Percentage of 0 to 2-year-olds in Wales registered with a dentist	17·0	21·0

[1] Latest date for which information is available from the Dental Practices Board.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by the Welsh Office over the past two years in establishing a framework to encourage primary care dental practitioners to become involved in clinical audit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Last October, the Department announced its plans for developing clinical audit in Wales. An important part is the proposal to appoint a dental audit adviser whose first task would be to strengthen the present arrangements for dental audit and their integration with audit spanning a range of related professional groups.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *865*, if he will list the 17 local authorities in Wales that registered representations on THORP; and if he will indicate those in favour and those against.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 17 Welsh authorities were Clwyd, Gwent, Gwynedd, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan county councils; Ceredigion district council, Colwyn borough council, Isle of Anglesey borough council, Llanelli borough council, Meirionnydd district council, Pembrokeshire district council, Port Talbot borough council, Radnor district council, Rhuddlan borough council, Swansea city council, Taff Ely borough council, and Wrexham Maelor borough council.

All submitted representations against THORP.

Care in the Community

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each district council and county council and in total for Wales as a whole in constant prices *(a)* the estimated actual spending for 1993-94 net of community care, *(b)* the standard spending assessments for 1994-95 net of community care, *(c)* the amounts by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)* and *(d)* the percentage by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Standard spending assessments net of provision for care in the community are given in the table. Budgeted revenue expenditure information on community care is not collected centrally, and comparisons with 1993-94 spending levels cannot be provided.

Standard spending assessments for 1994-95, net of care in the community

£000

	1994-95 SSAs[1]
Alyn and Deeside	10,125
Colwyn	8,253
Delyn	9,262
Glyndwr	5,501
Rhuddlan	8,717
Wrexham Maelor	16,372
Carmarthen	7,762
Ceredigion	9,979
Dinefwr	5,866
Llanelli	12,868
Preseli Pembrokeshire	11,273
South Pembrokeshire	7,740
Blaenau Gwent	15,185
Islwyn	11,534
Monmouth	9,765
Newport	22,472
Torfaen	13,702
Aberconwy	8,740
Arfon	9,826
Dwyfor	5,996
Meirionnydd	6,068
Ynys Mon	11,248
Cynon Valley	13,374
Merthyr Tydfil	12,226
Ogwr	20,598
Rhondda	17,746
Rhymney Valley	15,882
Taff Ely	14,644
Brecknock	6,257
Montgomeryshire	7,132
Radnorshire	3,283
Cardiff	45,765
Vale of Glamorgan	15,257
Port Talbot	8,896
Lliw Valley	8,827
Neath	10,148
Swansea	32,781
Clwyd	265,919
Dyfed	242,614
Gwent	294,362
Gwynedd	161,038
Mid Glamorgan	375,273
Powys	90,024
South Glamorgan	269,937
West Glamorgan	243,519
Total Districts	461,071
Total Counties	1,942,687
Total Wales	2,403,758

[1] Excludes £86 million of county SSA for care in the community.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for each district council and county council and in total for Wales as a whole in constant prices *(a)* the estimated actual spending for 1993-94, *(b)* the standard spending assessments for 1994-95, *(c)* the amounts by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)* and *(d)* the percentage by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on 1993-94 revenue expenditure budgets and 1994-95 standard spending assessments is given in the table. Outturn expenditure information for 1993-94 is not yet available. Budgeted expenditure includes spending financed through the use of reserves and spending above SSAs within capping limits and is not directly comparable with SSAs. The 1993-94 budgets have been inflated by 4 per cent.—the 1994-95 GDP deflator. This does not necessarily reflect the changes in the costs of local authority services between the two years.

Local authority estimates of revenue expenditure for 1993-94 and 1994-95 SSAs

	(a) *Adjusted 1993-94 budgeted net revenue expenditure* ¹*£000*	*(b)* *1994-95 SSAs* *£000*	*(c)* *Increase between 1993-94 budgets and 1994-95 SSAs* *£000*	*(d)* *Per cent.*
Alyn and Deeside	10,650	10,125	–524	–5
Colwyn	8,215	8,253	38	0
Delyn	11,901	9,262	–2,639	–22
Glyndwr	6,805	5,501	–1,304	–19
Rhuddlan	9,147	8,717	–430	–5
Wrexham Maelor	17,124	16,372	–751	–4
Carmarthen	9,481	7,762	–1,718	–18
Ceredigion	10,253	9,979	–274	–3
Dinefwr	5,920	5,866	–53	–1
Llanelli	14,723	12,868	–1,855	–13
Preseli Pembrokeshire	11,370	11,273	–97	–1
South Pembrokeshire	7,638	7,740	102	1
Blaenau Gwent	16,998	15,185	–1,813	–11
Islwyn	12,431	11,534	–897	–7
Monmouth	10,225	9,765	–460	–5
Newport	22,733	22,472	–261	–1
Torfaen	14,363	13,702	–661	–5
Aberconwy	9,246	8,740	–506	–5
Arfon	10,576	9,826	–750	–7
Dwyfor	7,216	5,996	–1,220	–17
Meirionnydd	6,420	6,068	–352	–5
Ynys Mon	13,097	11,248	–1,849	–14
Cynon Valley	13,743	13,374	–369	–3
Merthyr Tydfil	12,465	12,226	–239	–2
Ogwr	21,427	20,598	–829	–4
Rhondda	17,706	17,746	40	0
Rhymney Valley	16,465	15,882	–584	–4
Taff Ely	17,559	14,644	–2,915	–17
Brecknock	6,626	6,257	–369	–6
Montgomeryshire	7,403	7,132	–270	–4
Radnorshire	3,413	3,283	–131	–4
Cardiff	48,690	45,765	–2,924	–6
Vale of Glamorgan	16,620	15,257	–1,363	–8
Port Talbot	9,483	8,896	–586	–6
Lliw Valley	8,984	8,827	–156	–2
Neath	13,046	10,148	–2,898	–22
Swansea	35,326	32,781	–2,544	–7
Clwyd	287,086	280,306	–6,780	–2
Dyfed	264,490	253,355	–11,135	–4
Gwent	314,900	306,932	–7,968	–3
Gwynedd	173,533	169,002	–4,531	–3
Mid Glamorgan	402,047	388,857	–13,190	–3
Powys	95,438	93,656	–1,782	–2
South Glamorgan	279,846	280,920	1,074	0
West Glamorgan	266,549	255,622	–10,927	–4
Total Districts	495,485	461,071	–34,414	–7
Total Counties	2,083,889	2,028,650	–55,239	–3
Total Wales	2,579,374	2,489,721	–89,653	–3

[1] Net revenue expenditure budgets as reported by local authorities, inflated by the 1994-95 GDP deflator. Includes £19·2 million—at 1994-95 prices—of expenditure funded through the use of reserves and £69·3 million of spending over SSAs within capping limits.

PRIME MINISTER

School Teachers Review Body

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the current membership of the School Teachers Review Body.

The Prime Minister: The membership of the School Teachers Review Body is as follows:

	First appointed	*Expiry date*
John Gardiner (Chairman)	1993	1995
Mrs. Brigita Amey	1991	1995
Alan Cox CBE	1991	1995
Philip Halsey CB LVO	1991	1995
Mrs. Gill Rostron	1993	1996
Mrs. Anna Vinton	1992	1996
Mr. Michael Harding	1993	1997

TRANSPORT

M27

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that any proposals to widen the M27 motorway are subject to a full public inquiry.

Mr. Key: As indicated in an earlier answer to the hon. Member, *Official Report*, column *345*, consultants have yet to be appointed for the widening, and future progress on the scheme depends on the outcome of the review of scheme priorities announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport last August. It is too early to say whether a public inquiry will be held.

Buses

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to ensure that the provision of low-floor buses is included in the consultations his Department is having with the European Commission Directorate-General III on its draft directive on special provisions for buses and coaches.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom has proposed amendments to the Commission draft which are a significant improvement in terms of first step height and technical requirements and which, if adopted, will improve accessibility. Discussions are continuing.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what incentives he is considering for private operators in the deregulated bus industry to provide access for disabled people on public transport routes.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has funded a low-floor bus demonstration project in north Tyneside. A similar, but larger, project funded by London Transport was launched on 11 January. Both schemes are being monitored by my Department and the results will be made available to operators to help them assess the costs and benefits of such vehicles.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place within his Department and with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Northern Ireland Office regarding the development of the full potential of the United Kingdom's lead in low-floor bus technology.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has worked closely with the manufacturers on design features for low-floor buses.

Land Use

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Department of the Environment as to the integration of transport and land use planning plans under recent Department of the Environment planning policy guidance.

Mr. MacGregor: A consultation draft of the revised planning policy guidance note on transport—PPG13—was issued in April 1993. My Department has worked closely with the Department of the Environment both in the preparation of the consultation draft and in producing the final text of the PPG, following the consultation. PPG13 should be published shortly.

Vehicle Accidents

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the accident rates, including fatalities, for *(a)* cars, *(b)* heavy goods vehicles and *(c)* public service vehicles in each year since 1991-92.

Mr. Key: The rate of injury road accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres for these vehicle types are shown in the table.

Accident rates, by vehicle type and severity: Great Britain 1991-92

Rate per 100 million kms

	1991			1992		
	Car[1]	*HGV*[2]	*PSV*[3]	*Car*[1]	*HGV*[2]	*PSV*[3]
Fatal	1	2	4	1	2	3
Serious	11	19	33	11	10	32
Slight	49	35	197	50	34	205
Total	61	47	234	61	46	240

[1] Includes invalid tricycle, other three-wheeled car, taxi, car and minibus-motor caravans.

[2] Heavy goods vehicle-goods vehicle over 1·52 tonnes unladen weight.

[3] Public service vehicle.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for the last financial year the number of sick days taken by *(a)* men and *(b)* women working for the DVLA.

Mr. Key: For 1992-93 the figures are *(a)* 12,213 and *(b)* 43,714.

Satnam/Tesco Application, Stockport

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his reasons for giving a direction to refuse Satnam/Tesco, Tiviot way, Stockport, application No. 58636: if he intends to review his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We directed refusal because additional traffic generated by this proposed development could interfere with the safety and free flow of traffic on the M63, particularly at junction 13.

We shall review the direction if the applicants provide evidence to demonstrate that our concerns can be overcome.

Road Programme

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what priorities his Department has established for the road programme.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* The review of the trunk road programme is still in progress. No final decisions have been taken on the priorities to be allocated to schemes within the revised programme. An announcement will be made shortly.

Public Service Obligation Grant

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the public service obligation grant to British Rail in the year to 31 March 1992 was fully taxable; whether the amount subsequently categorised as capital grant had been subject to tax; how much tax was paid in each case; and what policy had been applied in previous years to the taxation of public obligation grant.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The public service obligation grant is not taxable.

Traffic Cones (Security)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *763*, if he will ask the police scientific development branch to study the use of standard traffic cones to conceal bombs in a recent attack in Northern Ireland and what other cases have been reported of concealing explosive devices in standard traffic cones.

Mr. Howard: I have been asked to reply.

The police are aware of no cases involving the concealment of terrorist devices in traffic cones in Great Britain. They have information about six such cases in Northern Ireland since 1976, the most recent of which, on 12 February, was the first not to have been safely defused. In the light of this new development I have asked for a further assessment to be made, in consultation with those responsible for security arrangements in Northern Ireland, of the case for publicly funded research on transparent cones and will write to my hon. Friend once this has been completed.

HEALTH

Lister Hospital

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the maintenance of clinical standards in pathology services at the Lister hospital following any decision to award a contract to a private company which takes clinicians out of the management arrangements; and what steps she will take to monitor the quality of these services.

Mr. Sackville: When placing contracts for pathology services, it is for trusts to specify the quality standards to be met, and to monitor compliance with those standards.

Asthma

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken by or for her Department on correlations between atmospheric pollution and the incidence of asthma and respiratory illnesses.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health is advised on the effects on health of air pollutants by two committees of independent experts, the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes and the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants.

MAAPE advises on the short-term health effects of episodic exposure to air pollutants and has produced three reports, on ozone, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. All are available in the Library.

COMEAP advises Government on the effects upon health of pollutants in outdoor and indoor air, liaises with other relevant bodies, and assesses existing scientific data, new discoveries and the need for further research. Two sub-groups of COMEAP established in 1993 advise on, respectively, the link between exposure to air pollutants and asthma, and the health effects of particulates.

One research project on the effects of air pollution is being funded directly by the Department of Health. Professor Ross Anderson HR, of St. George's hospital medical school, is currently carrying out research into the air pollution episode in London in December 1991, and its effects on public health.

There are also a number of studies currently being undertaken in connection with asthma, but which are not solely concerned with atmospheric pollution. The social medicine and health services research unit, which is funded by the Department, is currently undertaking two research projects, due to be completed in 1994, into the incidence of asthma in the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the special training package for doctors seeking approval under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983, or already approved, has been finalised.

Mr. Bowis: Discussions with the Royal College of Psychiatrists about this are continuing.

Milk Substitutes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice she has given to dentists on milk substitutes and tooth decay;

(2) what research her Department has undertaken into the link between milk substitutes and tooth decay.

Mr. Sackville: Only infant formula provides a substitute for breast milk in ensuring a sole source of nutrition for the newborn. The Government published the report from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food "Dietary Sugars and Human Disease" in 1989, copies of which are available in the Library, which concluded that lactose in milk and milk products is a negligible cause of tooth decay. Lactose is the carbohydrate in the majority of infant formulas retailed in this country.

Infant formulas based on soya protein are available for infants allergic to cow's milk. Some soya-based products are formulated with carbohydrates other than lactose, which are more cariogenic. These products are suitable for infants who cannot digest lactose or for those being reared on a vegan diet.

The proper use of infant formulas is a central feature of long-running programmes of education about feeding babies. These are directed both at parents and at health professionals including dentists. The importance of supervised bottle feeding and the change from bottle to cup feeding are all stressed as part of satisfactory weaning practices which contribute to dental health.

The Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, through the national diet and nutrition survey programme commissioned a survey of children aged one and a half to four and a half years which has included a dental component. Results from this work will be available later this year.

Home Visits (Fees)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will remind general practitioners that it remains her policy that fees for home visits are not permitted; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fees that may be claimed by general practitioners are adequately set out in the "Statement of Fees and Allowances payable to General Medical Practitioners in England and Wales" and the "Statement of

Fees and Allowances payable to General Medical Practitioners in Scotland", copies of which are available in Library.

Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many children were returned to their parents from local authority care subsequent to a diagnosis of Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy in each of the last five years;

(2) how many children were taken into local authority care after their mothers were diagnosed as suspected or suffering from Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy in each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Internal Review

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish the results of the internal review into whistle blowing in the NHS; and how many organisations and individuals were consulted.

Dr. Mawhinney: The management executive has not undertaken such a review.

Methadone

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policy considerations underlie the authorisation of doctors to prescribe methadone; how they receive a licence to do so; and how doctors prescribing methadone are monitored.

Mr. Bowis: Methadone is prescribed to opiate users for a range of treatments including detoxification, stabilisation and longer-term treatments. It can be a useful tool in helping to change the behaviour of some drug users towards abstinence and intermediate goals, such as reduction in injecting and the sharing of injecting equipment. "Drug Misuse and Dependence Guidelines on Clinical Management", issued by the Department of Health, includes advice to doctors on the prescribing of methadone. Copies of the guidelines are available in the Library.

Any doctor may prescribe methadone, for which no licence is required. Monitoring of the prescribing of all controlled drugs, including methadone, is carried out by the Home Office drugs inspectorate and is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial arrangements are being made for the five NHS trusts dissolved on 31 March 1993.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Pursuant to the dissolution of five national health service trusts on 31 March 1993, and their reconfiguration with parts, or all, of other trusts or directly managed units, I propose to create new originating capital debt for the six new trusts equal to the assets transferred to them and therefore to remit the outstanding debt of the five dissolved trusts.

These operations involve no loss to the Exchequer. Her Majesty's Treasury has today presented a minute to the House giving the particulars and circumstances of the proposed remission which it has approved in principle.

Population Census

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish details on the coverage and quality achieved by the 1991 population census.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the coverage of the 1991 census has been brought together in a 1991 census user guide—No. 58—copies of which have been placed in the Library. One of the methods used to assess the level of coverage was the 1991 census validation survey. The CVS report on coverage will be published before the summer recess.

Information on the quality of answers to census questions will be given in a monitor to be published by the census offices in March. A full report will be published before the end of 1994.

Creuztfeldt-Jakob dementia

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures available for the incidence of Creuztfeldt-Jakob dementia and related medical conditions in humans; and what age ranges are involved.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 2 February at column 722.

British Health Care Association

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what donations from the British Health Care Association have been made to the NHS in the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 February at column *212*.

Climagest Tablets

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons two prescription charges are payable for Climagest tablets.

Dr. Mawhinney: A prescription charge is payable in respect of each quantity of a drug or appliance dispensed, unless the patient is entitled to charge exemption or remission. Climagest contains two separate preparations, differentiated by colour, and two prescription charges are, therefore, due when these items are dispensed. The fact that for convenience, and as an aid to patient compliance, the two preparations are supplied in one pack does not alter the patients' liability for prescription charges.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct NHS trusts to release information relating to chief executive and managerial pay increases and levels of staff working within the trust; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are required to publish in annual accounts certain information about the average number of employees by main staff group and the emoluments of their chairmen and board members. From 1 April they will also be required to publish in their annual reports information about the total remuneration of chairmen, executive and non-executive directors.

Policy Decisions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions in the parliamentary year 1992-93 her Department has used *(a)* statements, *(b)* a press release alone, *(c)* a press conference or *(d)* an answer to a written question as the primary means for a policy decision to be made public.

Mr. Sackville: Major policy decisions are announced to Parliament in the first instance with press conferences or press releases or both used to explain the development and implementation of these policies. Apart from three formal statements to Parliament in 1992-93, it is not possible to determine accurately from our records the other information being sought.

Nurses

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of *(a)* whole-time equivalent registered nurses, *(b)* whole-time equivalent unregistered nurses and *(c)* whole-time equivalent nurses in training in England for each year from 1988 onwards.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* The information available is shown in the table. The definition of registered is both registered and enrolled nurses and midwives in hospitals and the community. This gives all qualified nurses, includes senior nurses, but excludes those nurses who have transferred to senior management terms and who cannot be identified separately from other senior managers.

Registered and unregistered nurses and nurses in training in England 1988-92 as at 30 September for each year

	Whole-time equivalents[1]				
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Registered	241,920	244,220	242,340	243,250	246,570
Unregistered	92,980	91,730	93,560	90,550	90,850
Nurses in training	62,950	62,100	58,800	47,340	34,740
Project 2000 nurses in training[2]	0	0	3,000	10,500	18,300
Practice nurses[3]	3,480	4,630	7,740	8,780	9,120
Others[4]	0	0	0	11,050	6,630

Source: NHS non-medical work force census.

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

[2] The figures for Project 2000 nursing students are approximate.

[3] Practice nurses are employed by general practices and do not therefore appear in hospital and community health services statistics.

[4] Due to a change in classification of nursing and midwifery staff in 1991 another category of "Others" was created. This category was for those staff whose pay scale did not allow them to be classified as either qualified, unqualified or as a learner.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 24 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. Brooke: I have replied to all the hon. Member's questions.

Listed Buildings

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total number of listed buildings; and how many were listed since his Department was set up.

Mr. Brooke: At 31 December 1993, there were 443,470 entries in the statutory lists. Between April 1992 and December 1993, 4,293 entries were added to the lists.

About 500,000 individual buildings are estimated to be protected.

Shalfleet Bridge

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out the reasons for the hold up in granting permission for the rebuilding of Shalfleet bridge; and when this bridge was scheduled.

Mr. Brooke: Shalfleet bridge was listed on 20 January 1994 on the basis of English Heritage's advice that it is a building of special architectural or historic interest.

The bridge is included in the draft revised list for South Wight and, on 20 January, the Isle of Wight joint planning technical unit, which has a copy of the draft list, drew my Department's attention to a planning application for the demolition and rebuilding of the bridge. The unit requested an immediate decision on whether or not the bridge was to be listed.

The effect of listing is that listed building consent is now required, in addition to planning permission, before the bridge can be altered or demolished. An application for listed building consent is at present being considered by the Department of the Environment.

Battersea Power Station

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last visited Battersea power station; and if he will make a statement on the present general condition of this building.

Mr. Brooke: I have not visited the building myself, but my Department receives regular reports on its condition from English Heritage. I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 31 January at column *516*.

Broadcasting Standards Council

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the annual cost of the Broadcasting Standards Council in each year since it was established.

Mr. Brooke: The Broadcasting Standards Council was established in May 1988. Grant-in-aid paid to the council in each year since then is as follows:

Year	£ million
1988-89	0·465
1989-90	1·080
1990-91	1·272
1991-92	1·439
1992-93	1·275
[1]1993-94	1·465

[1] Allocation

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional support he plans to provide for the long-term development work of British non-governmental organisations in 1994-95.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government's main channels of assistance to the long-term development work of British non-governmental organisations are the joint funding scheme and the British volunteer programme. In 1994-95 the joint funding scheme will increase by almost 14 per cent. to £33 million and the volunteer programme by 8 per cent. to £21 million.

These substantial increases reflect the Government's high regard for the work of voluntary agencies which are helping to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged people in developing countries.

Afghanistan

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what additional assistance he is providing to alleviate the plight of those affected by the recent outbreak of fighting around Kabul, Afghanistan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development has approved a further package of assistance for Afghanistan amounting to £2·5 million. This is in addition to a total pledge of £7·5 million earlier this financial year. The new money will be provided (a) to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees —£1 million—for the urgent needs of the newly displaced for shelter materials etc.; (b) to the International Committee of the Red Cross—£500,000—for the maintenance of hospital supplies and convoys to Kabul; (c) to UNICEF—£500,000—for work on water supplies and sanitation in camps and (d) to various United Kingdom non-governmental organisations—£500,000—for a variety of projects also in the camps, providing basic assistance, for example blankets, tents, shelter materials and cooking sets.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Duchy Council

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is the quorum for meetings of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster;

(2) how many meetings of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster have been inquorate since 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: The council's function is advisory and no quorum is required.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the attendance record of each member of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster since 1987 or from the date of his appointment, if later.

Mr. Waldegrave: Members of the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster are available to give advice to the Chancellor of the Duchy.

The advice sought may not require the attendance of all members at any one time.

However, the record of attendance since 1987 or their later date of appointment at full meetings of the council of those who form its present membership is:

Attorney General, 100 per cent. Receiver General, 94 per cent. Vice Chancellor, 67 per cent. (otherwise in Court): Sir Michael Bunbury Bt, 100 per cent. Professor Christopher Howes, 100 per cent. Mr. J. R. Sclater, 81 per cent.

Staff

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff are employed by the Duchy of Lancaster; and where they are located.

Mr. Waldegrave: The average number of staff employed on the Duchy's estates outside London was 35 in 1993.

The average number of staff employed in the Duchy office engaged in the management of the Duchy's assets was 13 in 1993.

The administration of Bona Vacantia is carried out by the Duchy solicitor assisted by two members of the Duchy staff full time and three part time in 1993.

The Duchy's duties in connection with the appointment of magistrates in the County Palatine, appointments to church livings and the administration of the benevolent fund were discharged by two members of staff in 1993.

All staff members other than those employed on the estates are located in the Duchy office at Lancaster place.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will answer the questions from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton tabled for answer on 26 January regarding the appointments he makes to public bodies.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have answered all 15 of the questions tabled to me by the hon. Member on 26 January 1994.

Magistrates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out what information he has on the political allegiance of the members of the magistrates bench in (i) Oldham, (ii) Rochdale and (iii) Manchester.

Mr. Waldegrave: Candidates are asked to give their political allegiance when they apply to become magistrates. Figures available for the three benches are:

	Numbers
Oldham	
Conservative	70
Labour	46

	Numbers
Liberal Democrat	34
Independent/Not Known	55
Rochdale	
Conservative	31
Labour	41
Liberal Democrat	36
Independent/Not Known	21
Manchester	
Conservative	119
Labour	113
Liberal Democrat	62
Independent/Not Known	88

Market Testing

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which departments have been subject to market testing; in each case what percentage of contracts have been awarded *(a)* outside and *(b)* inside the department; and what has been the cost of the process.

Mr. Waldegrave: All the main Government Departments have taken part in the "Competing for Quality programme. I expect to publish aggregate information on contract awards, and the cost of the process, in the citizens charter second report.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what savings have been achieved by market testing after taking into account *(a)* the cost of redundancy payments and *(b)* the cost of unemployment pay and other benefits in respect of civil servants rendered unemployed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The savings figures, to be published in the citizens charter second report, take account of the cost of redundancy payments. Information on the cost of unemployment pay and other benefits in respect of civil servants rendered unemployed is not available.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what monitoring arrangements exist in respect of outside contractors successful following market testing exercises.

Mr. Waldegrave: Guidance has been issued on the monitoring of contracts and can be found in the Government's guide to market testing, which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what circumstances successful bidders in market testing exercises may withdraw from contracts; and how many have done so.

Mr. Waldegrave: Contacts generally include clauses which allow for the termination of the contract by either side, after a given period of notice. The circumstances under which this may happen will be described in the contract. Information on contracts awarded following a market testing exercise which have subsequently been terminated is not held centrally.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants have had their terms and conditions of employment and pension rates altered following a market testing exercise.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants have been transferred to successful contractors following market testing exercises; and to how many of these the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 applied.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect to publish this information in the citizens charter second report.

EDUCATION

Adult Education (London)

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each year since 1990 the number of enrolments of students aged 19 years and over in adult education institutions and further education colleges maintained by the inner London boroughs or funded through Inner London education authority successor bodies.

Mr. Boswell: The number of enrolments by students aged 19 years and older on further education courses in adult education centres and further and higher education colleges in inner London which are maintained by an inner London borough or funded through an ILEA successor body are shown in the following table:

The number of enrolments as at 1 November of the appropriate year by students aged 19 and over on further education courses in adult education centres and HE and FE colleges in inner London

Academic year	*Number of enrolments (thousands)*
1990-91	233
1991-92	212
1992-93	217

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much *(a)* capital and *(b)* revenue money has been spent by grant-maintained schools each year since the first grant-maintained school opened; and how many pupils attended a grant-maintained school in each of those years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Financial year	*(a) Capital*[1] *(£ million)*	*(b) Revenue*[1] *(£ million)*	*Pupil numbers*[2]
1989-90	2	16	15,100
1990-91	7	63	38,100
1991-92	10	182	109,000
1992-93	28	479	236,000

[1] The information on capital and revenue expenditure has been compiled from returns made by the schools, and includes expenditure financed from income other than grant.

[2] Pupil numbers have been derived from the Department's annual January census, for the schools which were self-governing by the end of each financial year. The totals therefore include some pupils whose schools were self-governing for only part of the financial year.

School Numbers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many primary and secondary pupils are in (*a*) primary schools and (*b*) secondary schools in the last year for which figures are available and five, 10, 15 and 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The numbers of pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools in England in January of each year are shown in the table.

Pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools in England

	Primary (millions)	*Secondary (millions)*
1973	4·90	3·16
1978	4·64	3·85
1983	3·84	3·74
1988	3·84	3·07
1993	4·17	2·96

Nursery Schools

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the number of nursery places in voluntary-aided schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Sir D. Knox) on 1 February, *Official Report*, col. 726.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many new nursery projects have been approved by his Department in each year since 1989 in (*a*) voluntary-aided schools and (*b*) grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Numbers of proposals published under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 by the governing bodies of voluntary-aided schools for a significant change of character by the addition of a nursery which have been approved are as follows:

	Number
1989	14
1990	15
1991	20
1992	17
1993	26
1994	[1]2
Total	94

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[1] To date.

No statutory proposals have been approved for the addition of nurseries to grant-maintained schools.

Grant Aid

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will set out the criteria used by his Department in assessing priorities for grant aid for major projects at (*a*) voluntary-aided and (*b*) grant-maintained schools for 1994-95;

(2) if he will list (*a*) the schools and (*b*) the amounts awarded in grant aid for major projects at (i) voluntary-aided and (ii) grant-maintained schools in each education authority in England in 1994-95.

Mr. Forth: The following criteria were applied in determining how capital resources should be allocated for major projects at voluntary-aided and grant-maintained schools in 1994-95:

Voluntary-aided schools

Commitments arising from projects allowed for in previous capital allocations;

New projects to provide additional school places in areas of population growth (basic need);

New projects to implement cost-effective schemes to remove surplus places; and

Improvement work to the extent that the remaining resources allowed.

Grant-maintained schools

Commitments arising from projects allowed for in previous capital allocations;

Major repairs and other work required on priority health and safety grounds;

Bids for projects involving work required to implement the national curriculum;

New projects to provide additional school places in areas of population growth (basic need);

Work involving access for the disabled.

The amounts awarded in grant aid for major projects to voluntary aided and self-governing schools in each education authority are set out in press notices 427/93 dated 17 December 1993 and 425/93 dated 16 December 1993 respectively. Copies of these notices have been placed in the Library.

An announcement about those schools which became self-governing between October 1993 and January 1994 will be made during March 1994.

Chief Inspectors of Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which of Her Majesty's chief inspectors of schools—England—who have been in office since 1979 have had no experience (*a*) professionally in a primary or secondary school or (*b*) in another professional post in education; and what requirements he is making in respect of both the above in the appointment of the chief inspector due to take office on 1 September.

Mr. Robin Squire: Between 1979 and 31 August 1992 when HMI were part of this Department, three people—Sheila Browne, Professor Eric Bolton and Dr. Terence Melia—held the post of senior chief inspector (England). The Education (Schools) Act 1992 created a new statutory office-holder, Her Majesty's chief inspector of Schools (England) and Professor Stewart Sutherland was appointed to head his own department, the Office for Standards in Education, which opened on 1 September 1992.

All four had held professional posts in higher or further education. Professor Bolton had held a teaching post in a secondary school.

Professor Sutherland has given notice of his intention to resign from 1 September 1994. The public advertisement for the post states that Professor Sutherland's successor will be expected to have a good understanding of developments in education but experience of working in education is not a necessary requirement.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will state the names, current positions and the relevant experience of the panel of persons, or the person, who will make a final recommendation concerning (*a*) the short list and (*b*) the appointment of the next chief inspector of schools—England.

Mr. Robin Squire: A selection board will meet shortly to draw up a shortlist and interview candidates for the post of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in England with a view to making a recommendation to my right hon. Friend. The appointment is made by Her Majesty in Council.

The board will consist of:

Mrs. A. E. Bowtell, First Civil Service Commissioner

Sir Timothy Lankester, KCB, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education

Sir Ron Dearing, CBE, Chairman, School Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Mr. S. Kalms, Chairman, Dixons Group plc and Chairman of the Trust of Dixons CTC in Bradford

Mr. J. C. Hedger, Deputy Secretary, Department for Education

ENVIRONMENT

Hazardous Wastes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) on 12 January, *Official Report*, columns *200-1*, (1) which hazardous waste shipments to developing countries have been prohibited on the grounds that they are not moving towards environmentally sound recovery operations; who is responsible for deciding which shipments to prohibit; and what information is taken into account in making the decision to prohibit a shipment;

(2) what steps he has taken to ensure that lead battery recycling operations in Brazil are environmentally sound;

(3) what criteria he uses to decide whether lead battery recycling operations are environmentally sound in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* non-OECD countries;

(4) when he was informed to which Brazilian battery recycling facility the consignment of battery wastes which were prevented from loading on the container ship Brazil Express, at Tilbury docks on 10 February, was destined; whether he considers this facility to be environmentally sound; if he will prohibit this consignment from shipment to a facility whose environmental standards he has not investigated; and what steps he will take to ensure that this consignment moves towards environmentally sound recovery.

Mr. Atkins: There are no powers under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 to prohibit shipments of non-ferrous metals destined for recovery operations. The operation of the 1988 regulations is normally a matter for the waste regulation authorities. However, in the event that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received a notification under regulation 6 of the 1988 regulations, relating to the export of hazardous waste outside the European Community, he would consider that notification in accordance with article 4 of Council directive 84/631/EEC, as amended, on the supervision and control within the European Community of the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste. No such notification has been received in relation to any developing countries.

The supervision of standards in lead battery recycling facilities in Brazil is, in the first instance, a matter for the Brazilian authorities. Environmentally sound management at overseas recovery facilities is the subject of the investigation referred to in my answer of 12 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) *Official Report*, columns *200-1*. The question of environmentally sound management of wastes is also being considered by a technical working group under the auspices of the Basel convention. Officials from my Department are participating fully in those discussions.

All facilities recycling waste batteries in Great Britain must be licensed under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

I have no information about the recycling facility referred to by the hon. Member. I understand that the waste regulation authorities concerned are investigating this case.

Air Monitoring Sites

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Government air monitoring sites there are; what plans there are to increase their number; and what information he has on the number of air monitoring sites in *(a)* Germany and *(b)* Japan.

Mr. Atkins: The Government fund a number of air quality monitoring stations. This includes 46 continuous automatic sites of which:

29 monitor ozone,
24 monitor nitrogen dioxide,
21 monitor sulphur dioxide,
19 monitor carbon monoxide,
12 monitor fine particles (PM_{10})
and 7 monitor 26 hydrocarbons including benzene, 1, 3, butadiene and ozone precursors.

The Government also undertake air quality monitoring surveys using non-automatic techniques. Nitrogen dioxide is monitored in this way at over 1,100 sites and smoke and sulphur dioxide at 252 urban sites, both in collaboration with local authorities. In addition, lead is monitored at 21 sites, other heavy metals at six sites, toxic organic micropollutants such as dioxins at five sites and sulphur dioxide at 38 rural sites.

In the second anniversary report of the 1990 Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", the Government made a commitment to extend their urban air quality monitoring network to cover all major cities by 1997. In addition, the Government are currently considering responses to the recently published consultation paper on "The Future of Air Quality Monitoring Networks in the United Kingdom", in which proposals were made to develop a framework which draws local and national air quality monitoring together into a coherent quality assured network.

Information on numbers of air quality monitoring sites in Germany and Japan is not held centrally.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the per capita coverage on provision of air monitoring sites in Britain and each other EC country for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: The Government fund a number of air quality monitoring stations in the United Kingdom. The per capita coverage of these monitoring sites is presented in the tables.

Pollutant	*Number of sites*	*Per capita coverage × 10^{-7}**
1. Continuous automatic sites		
Ozone	29	5·30
Nitrogen dioxide	24	4·40
Sulphur dioxide	21	3·80
Carbon monoxide	19	3·50
Fine particles (PM_{10})	12	2·20
Hydrocarbons	7	1·30

Pollutant	*Number of sites*	*Per capita coverage × 10^{-7}**
2. *Non-automatic sites*		
Nitrogen dioxide†	1,164	212·00
Smoke/sulphur† dioxide (urban)	252	45·80
Sulphur dioxide (rural)	38	6·90
Lead	21	3·80
Heavy metals	6	1·10
Toxic organic micropollutants	5	0·91

* Assumes population of the United Kingdom of 55 million.

† Monitoring undertaken in collaboration with local authorities.

Information on numbers of air quality monitoring sites in other European countries is not held centrally.

Atmospheric Pollution, Greenwich

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the levels of atmospheric pollution in the Greenwich area and, in particular, the levels of nitrous oxide and black smoke emissions, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Atkins: Annual average concentrations of black smoke, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide in Greenwich and surrounding sites are given in tables 1 and 2. As part of the expansion of the urban monitoring network a site was established in Eltham, Greenwich in 1993 which continually monitors 26 hydrocarbons. The provisional data for benzene and 1, 3 butadiene for the first four months of operation are presented in table 3. Annual emissions of smoke, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide between 1985 and 1991 are given in the Department of the Environment's 15th edition of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Table 1

	Greenwich[1]		*Woolwich*	
Year	*Black smoke (ug/m^3)*	*SO_2 (ppb[3])*	*Black smoke (ug/m^3)*	*SO_2 (ppb[3])*
1985	8·7	66·3	6·0	48·2
1986	8·0	47·1	6·0	47·1
1987	12·6	50·1	11·3	51·0
1988	12·8	58·7	10·5	63·8
1989	19·4	55·2	9·7	40·2
1990	16·8	50·5	10·2	47·3
1991	14·5	45·8	9·0	47·1
1992	11·2	36·2	6·6	36·0

[1] Greenwich site:
West Greenwich branch library, Greenwich High road.

[2] Woolwich site:
Shrewsbury house, Bushmore Crescent, Plumstead, SE18.

[3] Parts per billion at 20°C and 1013 millibars pressure.

Table 2

Year and site	*Annual average No_2 (ppb)*
1991	
Shrewsbury house, Bushmore crescent, Plumstead SE18	34·0
1992	
—	—
1993	
(Kerbside), Greenwich town hall, Woolwich road, SE10	20·6
Environmental curriculum centre, Bexley road, SE9	15·5
De Lacy school, Cookhill road, Abbey Wood, SE2	16·3
Shrewsbury house, Bushmoor crescent, Plumstead, SE18	13·7

Table 3

Month/year	*Benzene (ppb)*	*1,3 Butadiene (ppb)*
August 1993	0·80	0·16
September 1993	0·89	0·21
October 1993	0·75	0·17
November 1993	1·16	0·21

Private Water Companies

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make regulations applicable to private water companies on the same lines as those in section 2(3) of the Environmental Information Regulations 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The Environmental Information Regulations 1992 apply among others to those bodies with public responsibilities for the environment as defined in regulation 2(3). It is for the water companies to interpret what responsibilities they may have under the existing regulations and for the courts to adjudicate if their interpretation is challenged.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels of teachers' pay was allowed for in the local government central support grant settlement for the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Baldry: The settlement assumes that any increase in pay costs is offset by efficiency savings.

Benzene

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to monitor and control airborne levels of benzene in the light of the report by the expert panel on air quality standards committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment is establishing a network of 12 sites to continually monitor benzene and 25 other hydrocarbons in urban areas in the United Kingdom. Sites have been established in London Bloomsbury, London Eltham, Middlesbrough, Belfast, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Cardiff. Sites in Leeds and Bristol are expected to be in operation by the spring and a further three sites are expected to be in operation by the end of the year.

The expert panel on air quality standards recently published its first report in which it recommended an air quality standard for benzene in the United Kingdom of 5ppb as a running annual average and a target standard. The panel also recommended that this standard be reduced to the lower level of 1ppb running annual average in the longer term. The Government are considering the panel's recommendations on benzene very carefully and will shortly publish a consultation paper which will discuss how air quality standards should operate and ways in which they can be achieved. The Government will consider how the recommended standard could be used in this context and over what time scale the lower target standard could be met.

Water Use

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will launch a Government action plan to encourage using water more wisely;

(2) what action he has taken following the receipt of responses to the publication of "Using Water Wisely, A Consultation Paper", July 1992, DoE/Welsh Office.

Mr. Atkins: We intend to publish shortly a document setting out the range of actions that we are taking in the light of the responses to the consultation paper.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what targets and mechanisms he will introduce to ensure the sustainable use of water in accordance with the principles of sustainable development as set out in articles 3 and 4 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. Atkins: For England and Wales, the system of water management, introduced by the Water Resources Act 1963 and most recently updated by the Water Act 1989, provides an excellent framework for ensuring the sustainable management of water. Systems for the same purposes exist in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The policies to be followed, and the challenges to be addressed, in running these systems are described in "Sustainable Development—The UK Strategy" (Cm 2426).

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column 26, what are the criteria and rules applying to the house purchase loans for departmental staff on compulsory transfer including the circumstances under which loans can be written off; what were the total amounts loaned or granted under the scheme in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94; and how many staff were assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: Advances of salary are available to assist with the costs of house purchase when staff are involved in permanent and compulsory transfers. Loans are advanced when staff move to a higher-priced housing area or when, because of individual circumstances, they would not otherwise be able to afford to move home. Staff must take the maximum mortgage they can afford and contribute the net proceeds of sale of the old property. Loans are normally limited to half annual salary. Staff posted to London whose loan under the normal rules would be limited to less than £9,500 can, however, obtain an extra £1,000.

Loans must be repaid within 12 years of the date of transfer, but repayment can be deferred for up to four years from the date of the transfer. The advance is repayable if the borrower ceases to be a civil servant or if completion of purchase is not made.

Excluding PSA Services, there were 14 loans in 1992-93 amounting to £115,529 and 10 so far in 1993-94 amounting to £94,600.

Write-off is unlikely and would normally be approved only after all avenues of recovery had been pursued. There have been no write-offs in 1992-93 or 1993-94.

Building Regulations

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to include part M of the Building Regulations in the Government's deregulation programme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to extend part M of the Building Regulations to include existing buildings and housing.

Mr. Baldry: Building Regulations made under the Building Act 1984 at present make provision for access by disabled people to new non-domestic buildings. I have asked the Building Regulations Advisory Committee to advise me on whether these provisions should be extended to cover certain alterations and changes of use in such buildings. I have also asked it to examine the desirability and practicability of extending the provisions in part M to new dwellings. I hope to be in a position to make a statement on this before Easter. Any plans to introduce new or extended regulations are carefully scrutinised to ensure that the costs do not outweigh the benefits.

Approved Contractors

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many firms are included in his Department's register of approved contractors.

Mr. Baldry: The Department of the Environment manages two registers of approved contractors. These are the contractor management information system and the consultants register. There are 7,893 contractors on the contractor management information system and 3,239 consultants on the consultants register.

Hayes Records Centre

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to speed up the decontamination work at the Hayes records centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The decontamination work at the Public Record Office site, Hayes, started in late November 1993. As the separate storage areas in the two buildings are decontaminated they are being handed over progressively so that the records in them can be accessed, with priority being given to the records which are most urgently needed. Six of the eight areas in building A, which contains the MOD records, have already been completed and the building should be fully decontaminated by 4 March. Four of the eight areas in building Y had been completed and the aim is to complete the final area by 10 March. The work on building Y is a seven-days-a-week operation.

Hotels (Change of Use)

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue guidance in respect of the change of use of hotels to *(a)* hostels for social security claimants and *(b)* housing association homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: On *(a)*, this will depend on the outcome of our review. *(b)* There are no plans to issue guidance on the conversion of hotels to housing association homes.

Subsidence

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of homes in *(a)* London, *(b)* the south-east of England, *(c)* the south-west of England, *(d)* the midlands, *(e)* the north-east of England, *(f)* the north-west of England, *(g)* Scotland, *(h)* Wales and *(i)* Northern Ireland were affected by subsidence from 1985 to 1993.

Mr. Baldry: There are no centrally collected statistics on the number of homes affected by subsidence.

BRE Digest 352 "Underpinning" (Revised 1993) gives the annual value and number of insurance claims for subsidence and heave damage to dwellings based on payments made by the major insurance companies. This shows the number of claims to rise from about 10,000 per year in 1985 and 1986 to about 65,000 in 1991 and the value to rise from about £110 million per year in 1985 and 1986 to almost £550 million in 1991. The most recent figure available is that the value of claims exceeds £260 million for 1992.

A nationwide survey for the Building Research Establishment found that about 50 per cent. of all underpinning is carried out in London and the home counties. BRE Digest 352 illustrates the geographical distribution of underpinning projects as proportions of the national total in 12 arbitrary areas. The relevant figures are:

	Percentage of national total
London and South East England	33
Central Southern England	18
South West England	2
Midlands	20
East Anglia	12
North East England	3
North West England	4
Wales and Welsh Borders	3
Scotland	4
Northern Ireland	1

Groundwork Trusts

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will approve funding for a Groundwork trust to make payments to an existing environmental charity providing the same services as Groundwork trusts to pay for *(a)* core costs and *(b)* project costs.

Mr. Atkins: No. Groundwork's grant in aid is given specifically to fund Groundwork activity. There is a wide range of grants available from this Department to fund the environmental activities of other existing voluntary organisations.

Flats Over Shops Initiative

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will receive supplementary credit approvals under the flats over shops initiative for 1994-95 and at what levels; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have placed in the Library a list of the 131 local authorities in England to receive flats over shops allocations totalling £10 million in 1994-95.

I am delighted with the progress that has been made with this scheme. As in the last two years, the programme was again considerably oversubscribed. This shows that there is great interest in turning empty space above shops into residential accommodation.

The aims of the initiative are twofold; to reduce housing stress by creating new homes and to demonstrate that such a change of use is possible and can have positive advantages for both property owners and the area generally.

Creating flats over shops not only contributes to the growth of housing for rent, but brings life back to our inner cities and improves shop front security.

I expect to see many more homes created this year as a result of this initiative.

I hope that those local authorities which were not successful in gaining Government resources will still consider promoting flats over shops schemes in their area, using other available funds.

Redundant Building Grant Scheme

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria for eligibility for receipt of the Rural Development Commission's redundant building grant scheme; what were the criteria in April 1992; what parts of the country it covers now; and what parts it covered in April 1992.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Virtually any building in a designated rural development area is eligible, provided that it will be used for business purposes when the works are completed. Grants are not, however, available for conversions to, or refurbishment of, residential property, nor for buildings which will be used for agricultural or horticultural purposes. Tourism and leisure projects are eligible, including quality, serviced, overnight accommodation but not small bed-and-breakfast and self-catering developments.

Prior to April 1992, the Rural Development Commission's redundant building grant scheme was available only in the designated rural development areas. The scheme's coverage was extended in April 1992. Areas now eligible are:

All rural development areas.
All national Parks and the Norfolk Broads.
Countryside employment programme areas.
The rural coastal strip in the Worthington and Whitehaven areas of Cumbria.
Rural parts of the Barrow peninsula, Cumbria.
Portland, Dorset.
St. Austell and surrounding area.
Rural coalfield closure areas in:
  North East Derbyshire/West Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire
  North West Leicestershire/South Derbyshire
  South East Northumberland
  East and West Durham
  Yorkshire
  North Warwickshire
  East Kent.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently in receipt of the Rural Development Commission's redundant building grant scheme; and how many were in receipt in April 1992.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* At the end of January 1994, the Rural Development Commission had paid £19·89 million in grants to 3,144 redundant building grant projects since the scheme's inception in 1982. At the beginning of April 1992 the comparable figures were £15·7 million to 2,723 projects.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Integrated Prison Scheme

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his evaluation of the integrated prison scheme in which vulnerable and ordinary prisoners share all activities together.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 23 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the evaluation of arrangements in those prison establishments where vulnerable and ordinary prisoners share regime activities. An evaluation study is to be undertaken as part of the Prison Service's planned research programme for 1994-95.

Traffic Laws (Police Enforcement)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *801*, who is conducting the review of police enforcement of the traffic laws; when it will be completed; if he will make the results public; what is the time scale for public consultation as part of the review; if he will place a list of those being consulted in the Library; and if he will make it his policy to advise any organisation or individual being consulted that their response may be made public unless they request otherwise.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Government officials will be reviewing traffic policing duties in consultation with the police service and police authority representatives. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to receive a report on that exercise in the autumn. He will consider the impact of any changes proposed on operational efficiency and the quality of service that the police offer the community. He will also wish to consider how best to consult the public if any changes are proposed that would affect the police interface with the public.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost to date of police operations in connection with protests in Wanstead against the construction of the M11 link road.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on 22 February, *Official Report*, column *154*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the police tactics decided on for the final removal of protestors occupying houses in Wanstead in opposition to the M11 link road; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the level of seniority within the Metropolitan police service at which the decisions were taken as to the number of officers to be deployed, and the tactics to be used, in the final removal of protestors from houses in Wanstead occupied as a protest against the construction of the M11 link road.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that his officers were present at the request of the high sheriff of Greater London who was seeking to enforce an order of the High Court obtained by the Department of Transport for possession of the site. The role of the police was to prevent any breach of the peace.

The Commissioner informs me that his officers sought, for reasons of safety and to enable the order to be enforced, to establish cordons around the area and to direct traffic away from it. Police officers then cleared the road in front of the houses to enable the high sheriff's officers to take possession of them. Once this had been achieved, most of the police officers withdrew, although a few remained to prevent the site from being reoccupied. Decisions on deployment and tactics were taken by an officer of the rank of commander.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the police operation against the M11 link with protestors at Wanstead on 16 February cost; and what are the total costs to date of policing activities in relation to the M11 link road.

Mr Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner that the additional costs of the police operation on 16 February are estimated to be more than £200,000. The total manpower costs since September of security and policing for the M11 link road through Wanstead are £470,075. Information on the cost of support services and other resources involved is not available.

Ethnic Minority Grants

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the effect of withdrawing section 11 funding on schools in Avon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All posts approved for funding under section 11 remain eligible for grant. It is a matter for grant recipients to decide, within their overall financial provisions, how they propose to proceed in the light of the reductions in the level of section 11 expenditure which we regret it has been necessary to make.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the schools within the Tooting constituency that are receiving funding under section 11.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Teacher posts approved for funding under section 11 are currently allocated to the following schools identified as being in the Tooting constituency:

Balham Nursery
Broadwater—junior mixed infants
Burntwood
Chestnut Grove
Eardley—junior mixed infants
Earlsfield—junior mixed infants
Ernest Bevin
Fircroft—junior mixed infants
Franciscan—junior mixed infants
Furzedown—junior mixed infants
Graveney
Hillbrook—junior mixed infants
Penwortham—junior mixed infants
Ravenstone—junior mixed infants
Sellingcourt—junior mixed infants

Smallwood—junior mixed infants
St. Anselm's—junior mixed infants
St. Boniface—junior mixed infants
Swaffield—junior mixed infants
Trinity St. Mary's CE—junior mixed infants
Wandle—junior mixed infants

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, columns *698-99*, when the hon. Member for Walthamstow can expect to receive the letter referred to.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to the hon. Member yesterday.

Cannabis (Sentencing)

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the average sentence and *(b)* the range of sentences for those convicted of dealing in cannabis in the latest convenient period; and how many people are currently in prison for this offence.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in tables S2.28 and S2.31 of the Home Office statistical bulletin, issue 30/93 "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom, 1992 (Supplementary tables)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are in prison as a result of convictions for possessing cannabis.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of persons in prison on 30 June 1992—the latest date for which figures are available—is contained in table S2.31 of the Home Office statistical bulletin No. 30/93 "Statistics of drugs seizures and offenders dealt with, United Kingdom 1992 (Supplementary tables)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1010*.

Members (Statutory References)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the statutory references to hon. Members in respect of *(a)* parliamentary constituency boundaries, *(b)* disqualification and *(c)* any other matters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

(a) There are no references to hon.Members in the legislation governing the drawing of parliamentary constituency boundaries.

(b) The main statutory references to disqualification for membership of the House of Commons are contained in the Parliamentary Elections Act 1695, the Act of Settlement 1700 and schedule 7 to the British Nationality Act 1981, the House of Commons (Clergy Disqualification) Act 1801, the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829, the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918, the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975, the Representation of the People Act 1981, the Representation of the People Act 1983, and section 427 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

(c) Information about other statutory references to hon. Members is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Fires (Letting Accommodation)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires occurred, by fire authority, in letting accommodation not requiring fire certification as a result of six-bedspace legislation in each year since 1983.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The statistical information requested on the number of fires in such properties is not available centrally.

Urgent Inquiries

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his target for replying to urgent inquiries from hon. Members.

Mr. Howard: I have no specific target for replying to urgent inquiries from hon. Members but I aim to do so as quickly as possible. Inquiries requiring urgent attention are identified by my private office which ensures that they are treated with priority.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will respond to the resolution of the European Parliament concerning the deserters and conscientious objectors in former Yugoslavia; and what action will be taken to assist those individuals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have noted the terms of this resolution. All applications for asylum, including those from deserters and draft evaders, are considered carefully on their merits in accordance with our obligations under the 1951 United Nations convention on the status of refugees.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, by country of origin, how many asylum seekers whose applications were made before the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 have since had their application determined; how many were granted refugee status; how many were granted exceptional leave to remain; and how many were refused;

(2) if he will list, by country of origin, how many asylum seekers have made application since the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993; how many of these applications have been determined; how many applicants have been granted refugee status; and how many have been granted exceptional leave to remain.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The table provides information on applications and decisions made in the period 1 August 1993 to 31 January 1994.

A split of the decision figures between those where the application was lodged before enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and those lodged after is not readily available.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, and decisions[1], by nationality, 1 August 1993 to 31 January 1994

Number of principal applicants

	Applications received[2]	Decisions[2] [3]			
		Total decisions	Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum[4]	Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave[5]	Total refusals[6]
Europe and Americas					
Bulgaria	55	20	—	*	15
Colombia	175	70	—	*	70
Romania	150	155	—	5	150
Turkey	730	515	80	40	400
Former USSR	195	25		—	25
Former Yugoslavia	620	155	5	100	55
Others	325	80	*	*	80
Total	2,255	1,020	80	145	790
Africa					
Angola	195	145	*	*	140
Benin	5	15	—	—	15
Cameroon	35	15	—	—	15
Congo	5	10	—	—	10
Ethiopia	295	95	5	25	65
Ghana	925	630	*	*	625
Nigeria	1,200	315	—	5	315
Sierra Leone	485	170	*	5	165
Somalia	600	760	10	615	135
Sudan	145	120	35	10	75
Togo/Ivory Coast	180	95	—	*	90
Uganda	185	205	*	15	185
Zaire	245	250	*	5	245
Others	905	420	10	50	380
Total	5,405	3,245	65	740	2,445
Middle East					
Iran	160	80	40	5	35
Iraq	260	145	75	60	15
Lebanon	145	50	*	5	40
Others	145	130	10	15	110
Total	705	405	120	85	200
Asia					
China	120	40	10	5	30
India	685	560	*	5	560
Pakistan	545	330	—	5	320
Sri Lanka	1,130	235	5	50	180
Others	315	130	5	5	120
Total	2,795	1,295	20	65	1,210
Other and unknown nationalities	130	25	—	*	25
Grand Total	11,285	6,000	290	1,040	4,670

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5 with *=1 or 2.

[2] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.

[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the period.

[4] Excluding south-east Asian refugees.

[5] Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject than to further review.

[6] Total refused includes: those refused after full consideration, those refused on third country grounds where the applicant had arrived from a safe third country, and those refused under paragraph 180F of the immigration rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by *(a)* Her Majesty's Treasury and *(b)* his agencies (i) in the current financial year and (ii) planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested covering the Treasury is shown in the table. None of the Chancellor's agencies mounted campaigns costing more than £10,000. The information relating to campaigns to promote the sale of coins covers those which are paid for by the Treasury. It does not include campaigns mounted by the Royal Mint to promote sales of its other products.

Campaign	*Objectives*	*Cost £*	*Effectiveness*
HM Treasury			
1993-94			
BT3 share offer	To inform prospective purchasers that the BT3 share offer was taking place and the key dates on which action had to be taken.	13,500,000	Effectiveness was assessed through market research conducted on behalf of the Treasury and involving the Central Office of Information.
£5 Coronation crown	To promote sales of the circulating of the 1993 £5 coronation crown.	470,000	Sales of the coin were monitored before and after the campaign.
1994-95			
£2 Commemorative coin	To promote sales of the £2 commemorative coin.	415,000	Sales of the coin will be monitored before and after the campaign.

Mortgage Protection

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will seek to assess the Financial Services Act 1986 to include the sale of mortgage protection policies.

Mr. Nelson: I have no plans to extend the range of insurance products which fall within the scope of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department plans to take to encourage the development of mortgage protection policies for borrowers.

Mr. Nelson: The Government believe that the development of mortgage protection policies is a matter for the insurance market.

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue will be raised by the imposition of 8 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope: Figures published in the 1993-94 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" show that imposing VAT at 8 per cent. on domestic fuel is expected to raise £950 million in 1994-5.

Insurance Premium Tax

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the number of people who will not be able to afford house contents insurance due to his imposition of a 3 per cent. levy; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I have received no such specific representations. At the low rate proposed the tax is unlikely to have any significant effect on the take-up of insurance.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response his Department has made to the report by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux on mortgage repossessions.

Mr. Nelson: I was interested to read the recent NACAB report on mortgage repossessions. I commented on the report in a letter to Ms Ann Abraham, the chief executive of NACAB, on 25 November 1993 and I am placing a copy of my letter in the Library. Since then, the Council of Mortgage Lenders has published figures showing a further significant fall in mortgage arrears and possessions in 1993.

National Tax Burden

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what the nation's tax burden as a percentage of gross domestic product will be in 1998-99; and what this figure was in 1978-79.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimates for the non-North sea tax burden are shown in table 2A.2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95".

Tax Increases

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the most recent representations he has received concerning the cost to the average family of the cumulative tax increases announced since last March.

Mr. Dorrell: Treasury Ministers have received a number of letters from correspondents about the impact of the Budget on their family finances.

Finance and Business Sector

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* each region was accounted for to the finance and business sector in each year between 1983 and 1993.

Mr. Nelson: The latest available estimates consistent with the United Kingdom "National Accounts Blue Book", 1993 edition, expressed in percentage terms are as follows:

Percentage of Gross Domestic Product in the finance and business sector[1]

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	[2]*1992*
North	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8
Yorkshire and Humberside	5	5	6	7	7	6	7	8	8	8
East Midlands	6	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
East Anglia	7	7	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9
Greater London	15	15	17	19	21	21	22	23	22	22
Rest of South East	13	13	14	15	16	17	17	17	16	16
South West	8	8	8	9	10	9	10	10	10	9
West Midlands	7	7	7	8	9	8	9	9	8	9
North West	7	7	7	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
Wales	5	5	6	6	7	6	7	7	7	7
Scotland	7	7	8	8	9	8	9	9	9	10
Northern Ireland	5	5	6	7	7	7	7	8	7	7
United Kingdom	9	9	10	11	12	12	12	13	12	12

[1] Excluding rent on dwellings.

[2] 1992 results are provisional.

Mortgage Interest Rates

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving *(a)* the average mortgage interest rate for the leading building societies on 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October of each year since 1990, *(b)* the average interest rate paid to investors by the leading building societies on each of these dates and *(c)* the differential between them.

Mr. Nelson: The table gives *(a)* the average mortgage rates charged by building societies, *(b)* the average share rates paid by them and *(c)* the difference between the two, on each date specified. The rates are taken from "Financial Statistics" published by the Central Statistical Office. The interest rate paid to investors has been enhanced to take account of withheld tax paid by societies direct to the Inland Revenue, on investors' behalf.

	Mortgage rate	*Gross share rate*	*Differential*
1990			
January	14·44	13·28	1·16
April	15·24	14·21	1·03
July	15·25	14·37	0·88
October	15·25	14·44	0·81
1991			
January	14·34	13·41	0·93
April	14·24	12·71	1·53
July	12·75	10·61	2·14
October	11·82	9·77	2·05
1992			
January	11·39	9·69	1·70
April	10·96	9·23	1·73
July	10·82	8·84	1·98
October	10·60	8·41	2·19
1993			
January	8·98	6·29	2·69
April	8·04	5·76	2·28
July	8·01	5·80	2·21
October	8·00	5·77	2·23
1994			
January	8·00	5·32	2·68

Source: Financial Statistics (CSO).

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Bolton Institute of Higher Education

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to make a decision concerning the application of Bolton institute of higher education to become a university.

Mr. Newton: No such application has been received. There is however an application for the institute to be granted powers to grant research degrees, which is currently under consideration.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Secretarial Allowances

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members pay their secretarial allowances into private or public limited companies.

Mr. Newton: There has been no significant change in the number of Members who have authorised payments from their office costs allowance direct to companies and other organisations from that quoted in my reply to the hon. Member on 19 July, 1993, *Official Report*, columns *23-24*.

Automated Access Control

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what assessment he has made of the effect on Divisions of the House of the introduction of automated access control at the entrance to New Palace Yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No such specific assessment has been undertaken, but I am not aware of any significant difficulties having been caused in relation to Divisions. It is, of course, the practice for the side gate at the subway entrance to be open during Divisions to avoid any risk of congestion at the turnstiles.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Korean Peninsula

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States Government about tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Goodlad: We are in regular and continuous contact with the United States Government on Korean matters.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the IGADD—Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development—talks seeking to bring peace in Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development leaders have had some success in reconciling the factions of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, who agreed on 6 January to a joint position on an agenda for peace talks. But progress with the Sudanese Government is more limited. On 17 February the Sudanese Government announced the postponement of a meeting between Presidents Bashir and Moi arranged for 18 February. We urge the Sudanese Government to respond positively to the IGADD initiative and make a serious effort to achieve a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press at the United Nations Security Council for a no-fly zone to prevent the bombing of civilian targets in southern Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We deplore the latest outbreak of fighting in the south, and condemn the bombing by the Sudanese air force of civilian targets. On 21 February we and our European Union partners issued a declaration to this effect, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. We have not ruled out recourse to the United Nations Security Council but would not want to pursue this option unless we were confident that it would be constructive.

Kashmir

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there has been in the talks between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Talks at permanent secretary level between India and Pakistan on Kashmir resumed last month in Islamabad after a gap of over a year. We were encouraged that both sides were prepared to discuss their differences over Kashmir at length. We hope that they will continue their efforts to resolve the Kashmir problem through bilateral dialogue.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is British Government policy that the Simla agreement should form the basis for progress in talks between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to believe that the best way forward on Kashmir should involve simultaneous progress on dialogue between India and Pakistan as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement, an improvement in human rights in Kashmir and a genuine political progress there, and an end to external support for violence in Kashmir.

Somalia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what significant changes in the United Nations position on Somalia have been made following the recent meeting of the Security Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Security Council reviewed the mandate of UNOSOM II during late January/early February in light of the decision by the United States of America and most European nations to withdraw most of their forces from Somalia at the end of March 1994.

SCR 897 of 4 February 1994 redefines UNOSOM II's mandate as:

(a) Encouraging and assisting the Somali parties in implementing the "Addis Ababa Agreements", in particular in their co-operative efforts to achieve disarmament and to respect the ceasefire;

- (b) Protecting major ports and airports and essential infrastructure and safeguarding the lines of communications vital to the provision of humanitarian relief and reconstruction assistance;
- (c) Continuing its efforts to provide humanitarian relief to all in need throughout the country;
- (d) Assisting in the reorganisation of the Somali police and judicial system;
- (e) Helping with the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons;
- (f) Assisting also in the ongoing political process in Somalia, which should culminate in the installation of a democratically elected government;
- (g) Providing protection for the personnel, installations and equipment of the United Nations and its agencies, as well as of non-governmental organisations providing humanitarian relief and reconstruction assistance.

The main difference between the new mandate and the previous one is that United Nations troops will no longer attempt to disarm factions by coercive means, but will instead rely on the parties to disarm voluntarily.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average length of time for the disposal of a case before the European Court of Human Rights from the time of petition to the time of setting down for trial.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The average time taken from petition to the European Commission of Human Rights to judgment by the Court is about four and a half years.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many petitions have been brought by United Kingdom citizens before the European Court of Human Rights in each of the years since its establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Cases are referred to the European Court of Human Rights by the Commission or by the state concerned, not by individuals. We do not have a figure for the total number of petitions received by the Commission. Many are rejected as unfounded or frivolous, and details of these are not notified to the Governments concerned.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many judgments adverse to the British Government have been delivered by the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The European Court of Human Rights has delivered 31 judgments adverse to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many petitions brought by United Kingdom citizens have been accepted by the European Court of Human Rights as being within its jurisdiction in each of the years since its establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In all, 48 individual applications against the United Kingdom have been referred by the European Commission of Human Rights to the Court and resulted in judgments on the merits. The number of those applications which have been brought by United Kingdom citizens is not readily available and could be determined only at disproportionate cost.

Hong Kong

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the talks with China over Hong Kong's constitutional development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: A White Paper on the development of representative Government in Hong Kong will be published and laid before Parliament on Thursday 24 February. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The White Paper will explain the background to the talks with China on electoral issues in Hong Kong, give a summary of the talks, and an assessment of the proposals put forward by both sides against our requirement that the elections should be open and fair.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electricity (Rural Properties)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assistance is available in Northern Ireland to connect rural properties to the mains electricity supply.

Mr. Tim Smith: I understand it is the practice of Northern Ireland Electricity plc to bear 40 per cent. of the cost of connecting rural properties.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council.

Mr. Ancram: Membership of the Northern Ireland Higher Education Council is as follows:

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield KCB (Chairman)
Mr. Roy Bailie
Professor Peter Bush
Mr. Dan Harvey
Dr. Tony Hughes
Dr. Paula Kilbane
Professor Peter H. McKie
Mr. Declan Morgan
Mr. Finlay Scott
Professor Dorothy Severin

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Local Enterprise Development Unit.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current membership of the Local Enterprise Development Unit is as follows:

Mr. Paul McWilliams (Chairman)
Mrs. Joan Ruddock
Mrs. Teresa Townsley
Mr. Garry Mullen
Mr. Will KcKee
Dr. Bill McCourt
Prof. Jim Magowan
Mr. Michael Black
Mr. Sean Quinn
Ms Claire Faulkner

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each education and library board.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS

Belfast
Chairman:
Rev. J. McAllister
Members:
Mr. J. Alderdice
Mrs. L. R. Brown
Mr. D. H. Browne
Mr. N. B. Butterwick
Mr. J. Carson
Mr. D. C. Carty
Mr. V. Cochrane
Mr. J. A. Coggle
Mr. J. J. Collins
Mr. J. Cooper
Rev. T. D. Cooper
Mrs. M. Cruickshank
Mr. N. A. Dodds
Mr. T. D. Hamilton
Mr. T. J. Kirkpatrick
Rev. W. A. Lewis
Ms P. Lewsley
Mr. S. McBride
Mr. N. A. McCausland
Mrs. M. McGuinness
Mr. W. F. C. McKay
Rev. J. McManus
Mrs. M. F. MacNally
Mr. O. J. Magill
Mrs. M. S. Muldoon
Miss C. Murphy
Mr. J. P.'A. Murphy
Mrs. A. Odling-Smee
Rev. P. F. Patterson
Mr. F. Proctor
Mr. F. Rogers
Mr. W. M. Sillery
Rev. E. Smyth
Mr. J. Walker
Mr. W. G. Watson
Rev. D. Whyte

South Eastern
Chairman:
Mr. H. R. Small
Members:
Mr. D. G. Andrews
Rev. R. G. Bagnall
Rev. W. J. Beattie
Mrs. H. M. Bell
Mr. T. P. Benson
Mr. W. J. Biggerstaff
Mrs. H. E. Bradford
Mr. S. A. Campbell
Miss R. B. Carabine
Rev. T. V. Craig
Mr. M. J. Curran
Mr. I. Davis
Canon S. M. J. Dickson
Mrs. L. P. Douglas
Mr. R. Gibson
Mr. R. A. Jones
Mr. S. R. Kilpatrick
Mr. W. D. Linton
Mr. P. McAleenan
Mrs. M. M. McGoran
Rev. J. H. McIntyre
Mr. W. R. Magill
Mr. W. J. Masterson
Mr. C. Moore
Mrs. F. M. Reid
Dr. R. J. Rodgers
Mr. S. Semple
Rev. K. J. Smyth
Mrs. D. Tennis
Miss G. Tigchelaar
Mrs. A. Thompson
Mrs. S. T. Towasley

North Eastern
Chairman:
Rev. R. F. S. Poots
Members:
Rev. S. Allen
Mr. J. A. Beggs
Mrs. E. T. Black
Mr. R. S. Bolton
Mrs. J. Christie
Rev. D. Clarke
Mrs. C. C. Corrigan
Mr. E. J. Crilly
Mr. J. Currie
Mr. S. C. Dickson
Rev. J. A. Fair
Mrs. L. Frazer
Mr. J. A. Gaston
Mrs. P. A. Gillespie
Mr. J. Graham
Mr. R. J. Hanna
Mr. J. B. H. Hill
Mr. D. Hollis
Mr. P. A. Kilpatrick
Mrs. P. A. Lerwill
Mr. T. A. Lyttle
Mr. A. P. McConaghy
Mr. R. E. McCrea
Rev. B. McGoldrick
Mr. P. G. McShane
Mr. F. R. H. Marks
Mr. J. J. Meehan
Mrs. K. Regan
Mrs. G. E. Scott
Mr. J. A. Scott
Mr. R. J. Sloan
Mrs. D. M. White
Rev. J. R. Wilson
Rev. T. H. Wilson

Southern
Chairman:
Councillor N. R. D. Mulligan
Members:
Mrs. M. Alexander
Mr. C. W. Breen
Mr. B. Costelloe
Mr. F. E. Crowe
Mr. F. Feely
Rev. G. A. Green
Rev. A. Hamill
Mrs. F. Hamill
Mr. I. B. Hanna
Mrs. P. M. B. Kelly
Mrs. C. O. McAnerney
Mrs. D. A. McBride
Mr. J. V. McCart
Mrs. E. McClurg
Sister O. A. E. McConville
Mrs. J. M. McCool
Mr. A. C. McElhinney
MMr. V. M. McGahie
Mr. W. J. McIlwrath
Mr. A. McKelvey
Mr. J. H. McParland
Mrs. S. McRoberts
Rev. M. McVeigh
Mr. W. J. Martin
Rev. S. A. Matthews
Mr. W. J. Mitchell
Rev. S. Rice
Mr. A. Ruddy
Mr. J. A. Speers
Rev. F. D. Swann
Mr. J. Tate
Mr. J. W. Trueman
Rev. W. R. Twaddell
Mrs. P. E. Wilson

Western
Chairman:
Mrs. B. B. McIvor
Members:
Mr. M. Bradley
Mr. S. J. Burnside
Mr. T. B. Campbell
Rev. R. W. W. Clarke
Rev. C. Clerkin
Rev O. Crilly
Rev. P. J. Crilly
Mr. R. E. Dallas
Mr. A. J. Dardis
Mr. P. Devine
Mr. A. Doherty
Dr. E. M. Downey
Mr. P. Duffy
Mr. H. Faulkner
Mr. J. Gallagher
Mr. T. J. Gallagher
Mrs. S. C. Hogg
Mrs. T. Kelly
Mr. J. J. Kerr
Mr. P. M. C. Little
Mr. A. C. McFarland
Miss D. M. McNamee
Mr. D. Nixon
Mr. W. C. Noble
Mr. G. O'hEara
Mr. P. O'Kane
Mrs. S. M. O'Kane
Rev. D. C. Orr
Mr. S. Shields
Mr. E. Turner
Mrs. E. Waterson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The Probation Board for Northern Ireland currently comprises 14 members, including a chairman and deputy chairman. In the interests of personal security it would not be appropriate to name individual members of the board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current members of the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mrs. J. R. Smyth *Chair and Chief Executive*
Mr. R. A. Coughlin *Deputy Chairman*
Professor S. B. Dickson *Deputy Chairman*
Mrs. M. S. V. Young
Dr. D. Kennedy
Mrs. P. Feeney
Mrs. J. Eve
Ms A. Hope
Ms B. Callaghan

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the boards of visitors and visiting committees.

Sir John Wheeler: In the interest of personal security it would not be appropriate to name individual members of boards of visitors or visiting committees.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Historic Monuments Council.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Historic Monuments Council are as follows:

Reverend Canon A. E. T. Harper *(Chairman)*
Professor M. G. L. Baillie
Mrs. D. Browne
Professor R. E. Buchanan
Mr. A. Candon
Mrs. Corcoran
Dr. R. M. M. Crozier
Mr. C. W. Dickinson
Miss M. M. Gallagher
Ms K. M. Gormley
Dr. A. Lynch
Dr. P. Robinson
Mr. C. W. Tweed
Mr. R. B. Warner
Mrs. P. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company are as follows:

Mr. I. Doherty *(Chairman)*
Mrs. P. Farren
Mr. A. Keery
Mr. S. R. Reed
Mr. N. Whitehead

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland review body for operator and vehicle licensing.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland review body for operator and vehicle licensing are as follows:

Mr. M. Hale *(Chairman)*
Mr. N. Caters
Mr. W. S. Anderson
Mr. E. Sheridan
Mr. S. Best
Ms H. E. Roulston

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Economic Council.

Sir John Wheeler: The current membership is as follows:

Professor Sir C. M. Campbell *(Chairman)*
Professor S. Birley
Professor R. P. Kinsella
P. D. Montgomery
Janet M. Trewsdale
R. M. Gibson
R. T. Jordan, OBE
W. J. McCourt
G. P. McGrath
N. P. E. Smyth
T. Carlin
M. Dunnigan
J. Freeman
Ms P. Holloway
J. McCusker

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Law Reform Advisory Committee for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Chairman
The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Carswell
Members
Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, KCB
Mr. J. B. Garrett
Professor D. S. Greer
His Honour Judge Gibson, QC

Mrs. S. Grant
Mr. H. P. Kennedy, QC
His Honour Judge Markey, QC
Mr. J. Meehan
Mr. I. Montgomery
Miss M. Walsh

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Travellers.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Travellers are as follows:

Mr. W. J. Newburn, OBE, *Chairman*
Councillor J. A. Agnew
Councillor M. J. Byrne
Councillor H. Casey
Ms D. Cunningham
Mr. T. Curran
Miss E. M. Gallagher, OBE
Dr. M. Gordon
Mr. T. Haverty
Councillor P. McElroy
Councillor C. D. McGimpsey
Mr. D. A. McMurray
Mr. T. McQuillan
Mr. M. Mongan
Alderman F. Proctor
Mr. P. Stokes

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside are as follows:

Professor P. Newbould *Chairman*
Mr. R. Hanna *Deputy Chairman*
Ms D. Allen
Sister U. Beggan
Mr. R. Blakiston-Houston
Mrs. D. Browne
Mr. P. Casement
Mr. P. Doughty
Dr. D. Kennedy
Professor A. Long
Miss M. Lyons
Mr. N. McLaughlin
Councillor M. McSparran
Councillor J. McVitty
Dr. A. Mitchell
Dr. K. Milton
Mrs. H. Northridge
Miss A. Nugent
Dr. J. Parsons
Professor D. Wilcock

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Rent Assessment Panel.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Rent Assessment Panel are as follows:

Mr. J. V. Arthur
Councillor Mrs. J. Baird
Councillor P. J. Bradley
Councillor D. Browne
Mr. G. R. Burgess
Mr. B. Campfield
Councillor T. J. Catherwood
Councillor W. Clulow
Mrs. J. Conaghan
Mr. J. E. Cousins
Mrs. A. O. Curran
Councillor J. McD Dow
Councillor S. Dunlop
Mr. J. L. Frazer
Miss D. J. Gillings
Alderman D. G. R. Green
Mr. P. V. Hopkins
Mr. R. H. B. Houston
Mrs. A. C. Lismore
Mrs. G. M. Loughran
Miss M. P. Mackintosh
Mr. L. McBrien
Mr. S. A. McCausland
Mr. D. P. McDonagh
Mrs. C. McGuckian
Mrs. M. McMullan
Mr. J. G. Neill
Mr. J. Nixon
Councillor P. O'Hare
Councillor G. V. Peoples
Mr. R. J. Polley
Mr. B. T. Shiels
Mr. B. H. Sleith
Mr. D. Smyth
Ms F. M. Stelfox

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Water Council.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Water Council are as follows:

Mr. John G. Kelly, *Chairman*
Councillor Joan Baird
Sister Mary Una Beggan
Dr. Clare Elizabeth Carter
Dr. Stanley Robert Cochrane
Mrs. Patricia Farren
Mrs. Joan Irene Harbison
Mr. Anthony Francis Hennessey
Mr. Allen Kilgore
Councillor Robert McKee
Mr. George S. McKinley
Mr. C. G. M. Mills
Alderman William F. O'Connell
Mr. Michael D. Playle
Alderman Geraldine A. Rice

Mr Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Local Government Staff Commission.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members of the Local Government Staff Commission are:

Prof. D. Rea *Chairman*
Mr. P. Devine
Ms D. Vaugh
Mr. D. Haughey
Mr. G. Kane
Mr. J. McCammick MBE
Mr. C. McGimpsey
Ms A. McGonigle
Mr. R. Gilmore
Mrs. I. Belshaw
Mr. P. O'Neill
Mrs. M. Taggart
Mr. G. Burns MBE
Mrs. M. Young
Mr. N. Jackson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Historic Buildings Council.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Historic Buildings Council are as follows:

Dr. P. Robinson, *Chairman*
The Viscountess Brookeborough
Mr. T. Brown
Cmdr P. C. D. Campbell
Mrs. A. Davey Orr

Mr. D. Evans
Mr. P. C. Fay
Dr. M. H. Gould
Lady Humphreys
Mr. S. Leighton
Miss O. Madden
Dr. D. S. MacNeice
Mrs. C. McGuckian
Mr. J. D. Thompson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Laganside corporation.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Laganside corporation are as follows:

The Duke of Abercorn, *Chairman*
Mr. Jim Fitzpatrick
Mrs. Margaret Spence
Councillor Reg Empey
Dr. Brian Feeney
Mr. Ernest Airey
Mr. G. R. Irwin
Councillor Fred Cobain
Mrs. Lucinda Blakiston-Houston

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Water Appeals Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Water Appeals Commission for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mr. R. S. Hawthorne
Mr. F. J. Warke
Mr. F. G. Guckian

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the housing benefit review body.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the housing benefit review boards are as follows:

Belfast area panel
Ms E. Evason[1]
Mr. W. Glendinning[1]
Mrs. M. McMullan[1]
Ald. N. Dodds
Mrs. K. G. Dunlop
Mr. S. H. Egerton
Mrs. E. M. Fulton
Miss K. Gill
Mr. W. J. Heyburn
Mr. D. W. Irvine
Mrs. M. Muldoon
Mr. D. Wasson

North east area panel
Cllr. W. H. King[1]
Ald. J. Neeson[1]
Mrs. P. Whittley[1]
Ald. Mrs. R. G. Armstrong
Mrs. S. Hillan
Cllr. Mrs. A. Kelly
Mrs. M. P. Moran
Mr. C. Steele
Mr. G. Wells

South east area panel
Mrs. B. McErland[1]
Mr. J. Wells[1]
Mrs. W. Bleakley
Mrs. A. Boyle
Cllr. W. J. McAllister
Mrs. B. McKeown
Mr. A. D. Nichol
Mrs. C. Shannon

South area panel
Mr. J. McGaffin[1]
Mr. D. J. Ryan[1]
Mrs. J. Allister
Cllr. Mrs. A. Brolly
Mrs. A. Gray
Mrs. E. F. Hendron
Mrs. E. Holt
Mr. H. McCafferty
Cllr. W. McFadden

West area panel
Cllr. O. Gibson[1]
Mrs. M. Jefferson[1]
Cllr. A. Kane[1]
Cllr. T. Kerrigan[1]
Mr. R. Rogan[1]
Mrs. M. Campbell
Cllr. J. Canning
Mrs. M. Devlin
Cllr. G. Gallagher
Mrs. E. McClelland
Mr. J. A. McConnell
Miss M. R. McEneaney
Cllr. McGrath
Mr. S. Stennet

[1] Denotes Chairperson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee are as follows:

Mr. E. G. Isherwood *(Chairman)*
Ms R. C. M. Bevan
Mr. D. F. Cannell
Mr. P. Cooke
Mr. K. Ewart
Mr. M. Ferguson
Mr. K. Harper
Mr. J. A. Hill
Mrs. S. Ingram
Ms M. McKeown
Mr. E. A. McKinley
Mr. A. S. Nelson
Mr. C. O'Cathain
Mr. T. G. Rankin
Mr. G. W. H. Silcock
Mr. J. Smith
Mr. J. K. Stevenson
Mr. R. F. White

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members of the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee are:

Mr. F. Ledwidge, OBE, FCA *(Chairman)*
Councillor Mrs. E. T. Black
Mr. J. Galbraith
Mr. K. Brown
Councillor Mrs. M. Bradley
Mr. T. Salmon
Mrs. C. Shields
Mr. E. Hesketh
Mr. S. J. Lyons
Ms B. Callaghan
Mr. E. G. Corscadden
Mr. G. Manly
Mr. G. S. McKinley
Miss P. D. Bunting

Mr. G. McKinley
Ms E. May
Mr. F. E. Donnelly

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. John McEvoy

Vice-Chairman:
Mr. William Carson, CBE

Members:
Mr. John Hood
Mr. Sydney McDowell
Mrs. Elaine Waterson, MBE
Mrs. Fionnuala Cook
Mrs. Anne O'Donoghue
Mr. Jack Allen, OBE
Mr. Sandy Spence, MBE
Mr. Eddie Turner

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Planning Appeals Commission.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Planning Appeals Commission are as follows:

Full-time members:
R. S. Hawthorne, Chief Commissioner
F. J. Warke, Deputy Chief Commissioner
J. S. Turner, Senior Professional Commissioner
G. R. B. Farrington, Senior Professional Commissioner
B. A. M. Banks, Senior Professional Commissioner

Part-time members:
Mrs. I. Marie Campbell
Ms. Jane O'Dempsey
Mr. Don Crawley
Mr. W. J. Mitchell
Mr. James Rowlan Mossop
Mr. Iain Kirk

Mr Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Construction Industry Advisory Council.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Construction Industry Advisory Council are as follows:

Mr. W. E. Little
Mr. T. Patterson
Mr. A. A. Reynolds
Mr. W. F. Gillespie
Mr. P. R. Scott
Mr. R. B. Anderson
The Hon. T. R. V. Dixon, MBE DL
Mr. J. N. Finlay
Mrs. J. White
Mr. F. Cogan
Mr. W. H. Dowds

SCOTLAND

Forestry

16. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the report of the forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend expects to receive the forestry review group's advice within the next few weeks.

29. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the planting of broadleaved trees.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has received many representations in relation to the review of forestry incentives, which is part of the work of the forestry review group. Some of these have been concerned with planting broadleaves.

A90 Upgrading

17. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the upgrading to dual carriageway of the final section of the A90 Aberdeen to Perth road to be complete.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Brechin bypass, the final section of the A90 Perth to Aberdeen trunk road to be upgraded to dual carriageway, is scheduled to open fully to traffic within the next two months.

Sheriff Courts

18. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the operations of the sheriff court system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend receives many representations about the operation of the courts. In recent months he has been receiving responses to the wide-ranging proposals we have made for improving the delivery of justice in Scotland.

Reinventing Government

19. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech on reinventing government and the accountability of quangos and other public bodies and public services, delivered at the Eglinton management centre, Edinburgh, on 7 February.

Mr. Lang: I have today placed in the Library a copy of my speech on reinventing government.

Roads (Crash Barriers)

20. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway and dual carriageway there are in Scotland that do not have crash barriers along their central reservations.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are 19 miles of trunk road motorway and 106 miles of trunk road dual carriageway in Scotland without central reserve safety fencing.

School Buildings

21. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on capital allocation to regional councils for the repair and replacement of school buildings.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will be announcing within the next few weeks the detailed distribution among authorities of capital allocations for 1994-95, in respect of their non-housing programmes, including educational building.

Housing, Glasgow

22. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the representatives of tenants' associations to discuss the housing needs in Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet tenants' organisations to discuss housing needs in Glasgow. In the first instance, it is for the City of Glasgow district council to assess the housing needs of its area. In the course of my own housing visits in the Glasgow area I often meet tenants and hear their concerns at first hand while my officials are in regular contact with the council.

Scottish Economy

23. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Lang: I last discussed the Scottish economy with the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 14 December 1992.

NHS Trusts

24. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the Highland health board over the introduction of NHS trusts in its area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Approval was given on 6 December 1993 to the application for trust status by the Highland communities NHS trust. All provider units in the Highland health board area will be self-governing trusts from 1 April 1994.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many trained nurses employed by agencies were employed within *(a)* NHS non-trust and *(b)* NHS trust hospitals in Scotland in the three months ended December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Information on the overall number of agency nurses—head count—employed in the NHS in Scotland is not held centrally. The information which is held, however, shows that the average hours worked by agency nursing staff during the six months ending 30 September 1993, the latest period for which data are available, were as follows:

	Average hours
NHS non-trust hospitals:[1]	
Total:	204·5
Nurses	157·5
Nursing assistants	47·0
NHS trust hospitals:	
Total:	56·2
Nurses[2]	38·5
Nursing assistants	17·7

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[1] No separate figures are as yet available for Lothian trust and non-trust hospitals. Both are, therefore, shown under this category.

[2] 1 whole-time-equivalent nurse contributes 875 hours of work in a six-month period.

26. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the chairman of Tayside health council to discuss the Perth and Kinross trust.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Highlands and Islands

25. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the economic development of the west highlands and islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The west highlands and islands share the confidence in the economic outlook which Government policies have promoted throughout the highlands and islands.

36. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to maintain the current levels of public expenditure by his Department upon development, training and infrastructure in the highlands and islands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will continue to review the needs of the highlands and islands as part of the annual public expenditure survey.

GPs' Patients

27. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest available figures of the average number of patients per general practitioner; and what they were in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Mr. Stewart: At 1 April 1993, the average number of patients per general practitioner was 1,549; the figures for 1 October 1979 and 1 October 1989 were 1,856 and 1,590 respectively.

Interest Rates

28. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of interest rate changes since October 1990 on the performance of industry and commerce in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The Treasury estimates that in the United Kingdom as a whole the reductions in interest rates since October 1990 are worth over £13 billion a year off companies' interest payments, when fully passed through.

Given Scotland's share of the number of registered companies, this suggests that the reduction in Scottish companies' interest payments is worth over £700 million a year.

Cumbernauld Airport

30. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many bids were received by Cumbernauld development corporation for Cumbernauld airport; who made these bids; and which was the highest offer.

Mr. Stewart: Two bids were received by the closing date. These were from Cormack Air Services Ltd., which made the higher bid, and the West of Scotland Flying Club Ltd.

Housing

31. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of the various tenant associations throughout Scotland to discuss bad housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), on 26 January 1994, *Official Report*, column 277.

Health Provision, Glasgow

32. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to meet the chairman of the Greater Glasgow health board to discuss health provision in the Greater Glasgow area.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State regularly meet with representatives from all health boards to discuss health provision issues. He expects to meet with the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board in due course.

Local Government Reorganisation

33. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his most recent estimate of the cost of local government reform.

Mr. Stewart: The likely costs of local government reform were detailed in the Government's White Paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils", published last July. The Government have estimated that following the changes in boundaries agreed during the Committee stage of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill, there will be annual savings in the range £16 million to £60 million arising from the new structure, with some consequential reduction in transitional costs. In addition, some local authorities concerned have estimated that the new structures will be more cost effective in a number of respects.

Health Boards

34. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the range of salary payments to health board chairmen in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Levels of remuneration of health board chairmen vary according to the size of the respective boards in terms of population and budgetary responsibility. At present, the rates payable range between £7,200 and £25,140 per annum.

37. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the chairmen of the health boards to discuss funding.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State will meet the chairmen of health boards on 25 February 1994 to discuss a wide range of issues.

Unemployment

35. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss unemployment.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) earlier today.

Rents

38. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish community-based housing associations raised their rents above the rate of inflation in 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not held centrally.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average council home rent; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average standard rent in 1993-94 of local authorities in Scotland is £26·51 per dwelling per week. Local authority rent levels are a matter for decision by the local authorities concerned.

University Entrance Examinations

39. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what comparisons the Scottish Office has made between secondary education university entrance examination procedures in Scotland with that of the rest of the European Union.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office Education Department has participated in a Europe-wide survey of entrance requirements to higher education in the European Union which is about to be published by EURYDICE, the official EC information network for senior policy-makers in education. The survey report will include comparison of university entrance procedures and requirements, together with a statement of restrictions on admissions.

Care in the Community

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make dedicated funding available to enable the Scottish local authorities to increase the respite care provision they offer in respect of increases in the numbers of those receiving care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Although I have no plans to introduce such arrangements, £6·5 million has been allowed in grant-aided expenditure for day, domiciliary and respite care services in 1994-95. It is, however, for local authorities to determine their own spending priorities. Taking account of the DSS transfer, authorities in Scotland will have additional provision of approximately £170 million for community care expenditure in 1994-95 compared with 1990-91.

Central funding is also provided towards the development of respite care services through the mental illness specific grant scheme, bridging finance and direct to voluntary organisations. Of the 230 projects assisted by mental illness specific grant, in the current year, the 117 which provide respite care have been allocated almost £5 million.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of voluntary organisations operating in Scotland who have a direct and recognised role in the implementation of care in the community policies.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the river purification boards.

Mr. Lang: The members of the river purification boards are:

Clyde River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. D. A. Biggart
Mr. S. G. Cannon
Mr. D. A. S. Cranstoun
Mr. J. W. Lawrie
Mr. A. J. Love
Mrs. A. R. McKay
Mrs. J. Mitchell
Mr. G. S. Murray
Dr. I. Simpson
Mr. G. J. Young

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor C. Hebenton, JP
Councillor A. Lambie, JP
Councillor A. MacLean, JP[1]
Councillor J. Martin
Councillor D. Mills, MBE

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor J. Foley
Provost A. Macdonald, JP
Councillor A. Nisbet, JP
Councillor D. Roach, JP
Councillor J. Shields

Forth River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Dr. J. Balfour
Dr. J. Blair
Mr. J. H. Brown
Mr. I MacKenzie
Dr. P. S. Maitland
Mr. D. A. Pate
Lt. Cmdr. E. F. B. Spragge
Cptn. A. H. F. Wilks

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor J. Connelly JP
Councillor W. Drummond JP
Councillor W. Hanlon
Councillor R. King OBE Jp[1]

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor A. Fowler
Councillor W. Russell
Councillor R. N. Turpie
Councillor D. Wilson

Highland River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. W. Brown
Mrs. M. Dennis
Mr. N. M. Graesser OBE[1]
Mr. A. J. Kelly
Mr. I Lambart
Major J. MacAlpine Gregor Grant TD
Mrs. B. MacDonald
Mr. D. A. McLeod

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor N. Cameron
Councillor Col. Sir A. M. Gilmour
Councillor N. J. O. Graham
Councillor R. W. Munn

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor J. Anderson
Councillor D. Fraser
Councillor J. H. Green
Councillor Rev. A. MacArthur

North East River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. A. S. Buchan
Mr. J. P. Grant
Mr. J. A. D. Harrison
Mr. A. Hume
Mr. D. R. Paton
Dr. M. Young
Mr. J. G. Watson
Dr. S. Woodin

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor G. A. Barnes
Councillor B. M. S. Dunlop
Councillor A. Stuart
Councillor G. Swapp

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor A. Gordon
Councillor J. B. Gordon[1]
Councillor C. Mossie
Councillor (Mrs.) J. Watson

Solway River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. A. P. G. Dodd
Mr. G. H. Gordon
Dr. P. G. Hopkins
Mr. J. Y. Ogilvie
Mr. D. M. Rothwell
Mr. S. Watson Pain

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor B. D. Conchie
Councillor N. Parke
Councillor J. Pirrie

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor W. N. Copeland, MBE TD DL
Councillor J. Nelson[1]
Councillor A. Turner

Tay River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. M. A. E. Browne
Mr. J. C. Compton
Mr. J. Goodfellow
Dr. J. A. Horobin
Mr. S. G. House
Mr. W. J. McGregor
Mr. I. Mitchell[1]
Captain J. J. Watson

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor W. F. Barr
Councillor J. A. O. Fordyce, JP
Councillor J. Glover
Councillor R. N. Turpie

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor N. A. McGowan
Councillor R. W. Nairn
Councillor C. Rhind
Councillor A. Thomson

Tweed River Purification Board
(Members appointed by the Secretary of State)
Mr. D. Bumpsteed
Mr. R. Bruce Cowe, MBE
Mrs. M. McGregor
Mr. W. Paton
Mr. V. Tokely
Mr. N. P. Yonge

(Members appointed by Regional Councils)
Councillor A. J. C. Hewat[1]
Councillor P. Fishbourne
Councillor A. S. Watt

(Members appointed by District Councils)
Councillor J. M. Davidson
Councillor S. A. Rose
Councillor G. Till

[1] Chairman (appointed by the board)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board.

Mr. Stewart: The members currently appointed to the Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board are as follows:

Mr. D. J. MacLeod, CBE, CA *(Chairman)*
Mr. Y. Ali, OBE
Mr. D. R. Campbell
Mr. J. J. G. Good, CBE
Mr. J. C. G. Halley, OBE
Mr. J. Lumsden
Mrs. C. McAteer
Mr. H. McLevy
Mr. A. Merrills, OBE
Professor J. C. Shaw, CBE
Mr. P. Timms, MBE
Mr. P. H. J. de Vink

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Dental Establishments.

Mr. Stewart: The current members are:

Mr. J. R. Wild *(Chairman)*
Mr. C. J. Allan
Dr. I. G. Chestnutt
Mr. D. MacIntyre
Dr. J. S. Rennie
Professor P. Sutcliffe
Mr. T. R. Watkins

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Records Advisory Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members are:

Professor R. H. Campbell, CBE *(Chairman)*
Dr. Barbara E. Crawford
Mrs. A. Dundas-Bekker
Mr. M. A. J. Gossip, OBE
Sheriff P. G. B. McNeill, QC
Rt. Hon. the Lord Cameron of Lochbroom
Miss Marion M. Stewart
W. W. Scott, CB
Andrew Tod
Miss A. B. F. Farquhar
Dr. M. A. Crowther

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the local review committees for Her Majesty's prisons and young offenders institutions in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Aberdeen Prison
Mr. W. D. McKenzie
Mr. J. M. Pirie
Dr. Audrey A. Dawson
Mr. G. Bell
Mrs. H. Smith
Mr. T. Houlichan

Castle Huntly Young Offenders' Institution and Noranside Prison
Mr. D. Watt
Mr. B. McWilliam
Mr. E. Carnegie
Mrs. B. L. Jack
Mr. A. Courtney-Dunn
The Hon. Mrs. E. Lyle

Cornton Vale Prison and Institution
Mr. R. F. Fyfe
Mrs. H. R. Corbett
Mrs. B. Docherty
Mr. W. Brown
Mrs. A. Dando
Mrs. E. Murdoch

Dumfries Young Offenders Institution
Mr. J. Brydson
Mr. M. K. Marchbank
Mrs. M. Bogie
Mrs. B. McGilliard
Mr. I. M. Harvey
Mr. J. W. B. Taylor

Dungavel/Barlinnie Prisons
Mr. D. Crawford
Mrs. R. Cochrane
Mrs. J. Young
Mr. J. Beresford
Mr. H. McGregor

Edinburgh Prison
Mr. P. W. Milliard
Mr. L. Findlay
Mr. D. Gray
Mr. R. S. Lancashire
Mrs. C. Gill
The Rev. Hillary Smith
Father James Morrison
Mr. C. Hawkes
Mr. A. Duncan

Glenochil Prison
Mr. A. R. T. Henry
Mr. R. McGregor
Mr. R. McQuillen
The Rev. D. Redwood
Mr. I. B. Johnston
Mr. J. H. M. Forrest
Mr. J. L. McKiddie
Mr. A. Hunter
Mr. R. Burns
Mrs. M. Lawrie

Penninghame Prison
Mrs. A. E. Findlay
Mr. P. W. Bolland
Mr. J. Haylett
Dr. R. Simpson
Lt. General Sir Norman Arthur
Mr. J. Bateman
Mrs. M. O'Brien

Perth Prison
Mrs. M. Owens
Mrs. C. N. M. Fowlie
Mr. J. D. Robertson
Mr. T. Aitken
Mr. A. W. Prescott
Mr. A. Manson
Mr. J. Howden

Peterhead Prison
Mr. A. Hamilton
Mr. J. G. Morgan
Mr. J. G. E. Paulin
Mrs. E. Strachan
Mr. C. D. Mackenzie

Polmont Young Offenders' Institution-Greenock Prison
Mr. J. Graham
Mr. J. Muirhead
Councillor P. McCafferty
Mr. R. Barnes
Mr. J. Leinster
Mr. A. Mackenzie
Mr. J. B. Adams

Ms J. Martin

Shotts Prison

[illegible] E. Williams
Mr. A. Hall
Mr. A. W. McCallum
Mr. F. Pontin
Ms M. Anderson
Mrs. F. Corsar
Mr. J. Donaldson
Mr. P. Streater
Mr. M. Lipsey
Mrs. E. Aughey
Mr. A. Law

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee on Medical Establishments.

Mr. Stewart: The current members are:

Dr. A. B. Young, *Chairman*
Mr. M. D. Cook
Dr. C. A. Cormie
Dr. A. Cremona
Professor G. W. Fenton
Dr. J. A. Ford
Dr. H. P. McEwan
Mr. A. B. MacGregor
Mr. P. McNally
Dr. S. B. M. Reith
Dr. M. A. Roberts
Dr. I. S. Ruthven
Professor A. A. Spence
Professor F. Walker
Professor J. Weir

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of Scottish Enterprise.

Mr. Stewart: The members currently appointed to the board of Scottish Enterprise are as follows:

Professor Donald Iain MacKay, MA, FRSE, *Chairman*
Ronald Garrick, CBE, *Deputy Chairman*
Dr. James Adamson, OBE
Professor Andrew Bain
Tom Farmer, CBE
Michael Gray, OBE
Barbara Kelly, CBE
Rosemary McKenna
Cameron McLatchie, OBE
Professor John Shaw, CBE
Yvonne Strachan

In addition the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise is an ex-officio member of the board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The present membership of the Scottish Legal Aid Board is as follows:

Mrs. Christine Davis, *Chairman*
George Barrie, Esq
Mrs. Patricia A. M. Bolton
Mrs. Pamela Bowman
Miss M. Lynda Clark, QC
Archibald Gilchrist, Esq
Professor Peter H. Grinyer
George D. Holmes, Esq CB FRSE
David A. Leitch, Esq
Robert J. Livingstone, Esq
Mrs. Isobel G. McColl
Colin N. McEachran, Esq QC
Sheriff Robin G. McEwan, QC
Mrs. Gillian M. Peebles
Mrs. Margaret Tait

Supplies (Quality)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department takes if the quality of supplies from one of its contractors does not meet the specification.

Mr. Lang: Should the quality of supplies from a contractor fail to meet the specification, the contractor will immediately be invited to discuss with the Department what measures the supplier intends to implement to rectify the problem. If the problem with the quality of supplies is not rectified, the Scottish Office will consider exercising its rights under the terms and conditions of the contract.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February, at column *1010.*

EC Structural Funds

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has as to what proportion of EC structural funds for industrial and urban areas in decline—objective 2 areas—will be apportioned to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* The European Commission recently announced indicative allocations to member states. The United Kingdom share of objective 2 funds for the period 1994-96 has been set at 2,142 mecu at 1994 prices.

Allocations to individual objective 2 areas will be linked to the submission of satisfactory regional development plans to the European Commission and the establishment of Community support frameworks for the respective objective 2 areas. The Commission has indicated that use within the United Kingdom of the same criteria for internal allocation as were used to set the United Kingdom total would result in the allocation of 19 per cent. of the available resources to Scotland, as follows:

Eastern Scotland 118 mecus
Western Scotland 289 mecus

The Western Scotland area includes Strathclyde region outside objective 1 and a small part of the Glasgow travel-to-work area in central region.

Funds are not normally earmarked for specific parts within designated objective 2 areas. Individual areas benefit through projects competing successfully for funds by demonstrating value for money and lasting economic benefit.

Local Authorities (Applicants)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to local authorities on the appointment of chief executives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has no locus in the employment practices of local authorities and has therefore offered no advice on the subject.

Court of Session

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to consult interested parties before the next revision of fees for actions in the Court of Session.

Mr. Lang: Officials have asked the Law Society of Scotland for views on proposals for the attribution of costs to different items of business in the Court of Session in preparation for revision of the Court of Session fees.

AIDS

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money will be given to each health board in Scotland in 1994-95 for *(a)* HIV/AIDS and *(b)* drugs services.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Discussions are currently taking place with Scottish health boards to consider the proposals which each has submitted for the funding of HIV/AIDS and drug misuse services in 1994-95.

Planning Guidelines

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be able to issue draft planning/mineral guidelines; if he proposes to make these open to consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Draft national planning policy guidelines on land for mineral working were issued for public consultation in July 1992. We do not propose further consultation, and intend to issue the final guidelines soon.

Cancer Clusters

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what surveys have been undertaken by the Scottish Office into cancer clusters in the west of Scotland; and what conclusions they have reached.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Over the last three years, the information and statistics division of the NHS in Scotland has carried out four studies of cancer incidence in the west of Scotland, as follows: cancer incidence in the Port Glasgow area; childhood leukaemia in Largs and Millport; cancer incidence in the Cumbernauld and Muirhead areas; and childhood cancer in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area. Each study concluded that there was no evidence of abnormally high rates of cancer in the area studied.

Hearing Aids (Children)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) which agency monitors the provision of insurance on hearing aids for children and young people; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement;

(2) if he will list the conditions under which children and young people are entitled to be provided with the most appropriate hearing aid whether or not this is part of the national health service range of hearing aids;

(3) which agency is responsible for monitoring the provision and maintenance of hearing aids for *(a)* pre-school children, *(b)* children at school and *(c)* young people aged 16 years and above who are in full-time education; and what plans there are to change the present arrangement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Hearing aids are available under the national health service for anyone who needs one. It is for the clinician concerned to decide which aid is most appropriate in each case, whether it is from the standard range or purchased by hearing aid centres from a commercial source. As hearing aids are provided on loan there is no requirement for the patient, or in the case of a child under 16 the child's parent, to insure the device. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of voluntary organisations in Scotland receiving funding from regional social work departments in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations his Department has received from voluntary organisations expressing concern that *(a)* the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill has no statutory requirement for the new councils to establish a social work committee, or a director of social work and *(b)* that there is no requirement for a director of social work, if appointed, to hold a professional qualification in social work.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* As at 16 February representations have been received from 27 voluntary organisations, four housing associations and five individuals expressing concern that the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill has no statutory requirement for the new councils to establish a social work committee or a director of social work. Those same correspondents have also expressed concern that there is no requirement for a director of social work, if appointed, to hold a professional qualification in social work.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dentists have been recruited by each of Scotland's health boards in each of the last three years; and how many dentists are currently employed by each of Scotland's health boards.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The information requested is shown in table 1. General dental practitioners are not employed by health boards but are independent contractors who join a health board's dental list and undertake to provide NHS dental services. The number of general dental practitioners on health board dental lists is contained in table 2.

Table 1

Hospital, community and salaried dentists; by health board: at 30 September

	Recruits in year ending 30 September			*Number in post*
	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1993*[1]
Scotland	62	60	29	462
Argyll and Clyde	5	5	3	30
Ayrshire and Arran	3	2	1	21
Borders	1	—	—	9
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	1	13
Fife	2	4	2	26
Forth Valley	3	1	1	15
Grampian	6	6	—	31
Greater Glasgow	17	10	7	112
Highland	4	2	5	25
Lanarkshire	4	1	6	36
Lothian	11	26	2	98
Orkney	—	1	—	3
Shetland	—	2	—	5
Tayside	4	—	3	53
Western Isles	1	2	1	8

[1] Some dentists may hold contracts in more than one health board and are therefore double counted.

Table 2

Number of general dental practitioners on health board dental lists as at 30 September 1993

Health Board	*Number*
Argyll and Clyde	163
Ayrshire and Arran	126
Borders	34
Dumfries and Galloway	40
Fife	116
Forth Valley	81
Grampian	160
Greater Glasgow	356
Highland	67
Lanarkshire	142
Lothian	283
Orkney	3
Shetland	6
Tayside	139
Western Isles	10
Total	1,726

Ministerial Visits

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the date, purpose and itinerary of official visits made to each Scottish parliamentary constituency by himself and each Minister in his Department since January 1993.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1994]:* The information is not held in the form requested and its compilation would involve disproportionate costs. Scottish Office Ministers have paid around 450 official visits to many parts of Scotland since January 1993.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Pension Fund

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what plans the Commissioners have for a separate pension fund to be set up with independent trustees; and if it will be the Commissioners' policy for the size of the fund to be actuarially sound to meet all committed pension payments even to the extent of funding it out of income for a number of years.

Mr. Alison: It is the Commissioners' intention to ensure that the arrangements for the funding of clergy pensions should be placed on an actuarially sound basis. A leading firm of actuaries has been appointed to offer independent advice and discussions are being held with the Church of England Pensions Board and others about the best way forward. The Commissioners' assets comfortably exceed the pensions liabilities which have accrued to date.

Investment Advisers

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column 9, what consideration the Church Commissioners gave to dismissing any of their commercial property investment advisers in the last three years.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners regularly review the performance of their commercial property advisers. None has been dismissed but, following competitive tendering, the day-to-day management of their American properties has passed from Chesterton to Aldrich, Eastman and Waltch of Boston, Massachusetts.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what plans the Church Commissioners have to contract out to independent professional advisers any investment advice currently obtained in house.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners already have the benefit of a wide range of professional investment advice through the use of external managers for their property portfolio and from brokers in relation to their stock exchange investments. The independent actuaries, to whom I referred in my previous answer will, in addition to expenditure liabilities, also advise on investment strategy and management.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will list which recommendations outlined in the Lambeth Group report and Coopers and Lybrand report to the

Archbishop of Canterbury last year have now been implemented, with particular reference to *(a)* the recommended alternations in the investment strategy and *(b)* regarding pensions as a first charge on the Commissioners' assets.

Mr. Alison: I have arranged for a copy of GS1093 to be placed in the Library. This note was prepared by the Commissioners to inform the General Synod debate last November about the Lambeth report and lists action taken in response to the report's recommendations. The outstanding recommendations are being actively pursued, although the reduction of the Commissioners' dependence on property investment has to be sensibly managed against market conditions and may take several years to achieve. As regards pensions, I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 24 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

County Court Judgments

Mr. Channon: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress is being made on proposals to allow interest to be paid on county court judgments for sums *(a)* above £5,000 and *(b)* below £5,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: That part of section 74 of the County Courts Act 1984 which deals with interest on county court judgments of £5,000 and over was implemented on 1 July 1991. Since that date it has been possible to claim interest on a county court judgment for £5,000 and over. Following consultation last year on extending the provision to judgments below £5,000, no workable proposals were identified which would not place undue burdens or costs on creditors and the courts. The matter is still under review.

Death Penalty

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been made by the Law Commission since 17 December 1990 in examining the law in relation to treason, treason felony and piracy; what recommendations have been made concerning the continued existence of the death penalty for these offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Statute Law Repeals Act 1993, which implemented recommendations of the Law Commissions in their joint reports, *"Statute Law Revision: Fourteenth Report"* (Law Com. No. 211, Scot. Law Com. No. 140, Cm. 2176), repealed among other obsolete measures the Piracy Acts of 1698, 1721 and 1744. The Law Commission has made no recommendations in this area other than those in this report.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what information he has on the political affiliation of justices of the peace in (i) Basingstoke, (ii) Rugby and (iii) Newcastle.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The political affiliation of magistrates in north-west Hampshire, which includes the former Basingstoke bench, and in Rugby and Newcastle on the latest information available is as follows:

	North West Hampshire	*Rugby*	*Newcastle*
Conservative	50	25	74
Labour	13	7	71
Liberal/Democrat	22	8	31
Independent/not known	19	8	23

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many retired Chinese civil servants were resident in Hong Kong at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: There are approximately 38,000 retired Hong Kong Government civil servants living in Hong Kong. There is no indication of any exodus of these pensioners away from Hong Kong.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many retired Chinese civil servants are expected to be resident in Hong Kong in 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: Of the current 41,000 Hong Kong Government pensioners, 38,000 are living in Hong Kong. It is expected that most of those living in Hong Kong will remain after 1997. There will also be a few thousand more who retire between now and 1997.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the agreement with China over the question of pensions which will be paid to retired Chinese civil servants resident in Hong Kong in 1997.

Mr. Goodlad: Annex 1 to the Sino-British joint declaration of 1984 provides that pensions will continue to be paid after 1997 on terms no less favourable than before. This guarantee is repeated in article 102 of the Basic Law.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will agree to supply the names and addresses of retired Chinese civil servants to the Hong Kong Civil Service Association.

Mr. Goodlad: In the light of article 14 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights 1991 on protection of privacy and the Hong Kong Government's guidelines on protection of personal data, it is not possible to pass the names and addresses of retired civil servants to a civil service pensioners' association. However, the Hong Kong Government will pass on any information which an association wishes to convey to pensioners.

Somaliland

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is United Nations policy to support the peace process set in motion at the Boroma conference in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is United Nations policy to encourage all peace efforts throughout Somalia which are aimed at returning stability to the country.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take at international level to aid the peace process in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We take every opportunity during discussions with the United Nations and in our contracts with other international bodies and Governments to stress the importance of seeking an early solution to the problems in Somalia.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action he proposes to take to increase the commitment of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Officials from our embassy in Addis Ababa will continue to pay regular visits to north-west Somalia. The frequency of these visits, and of other assistance to the north west, will depend on there being a stable and secure environment in the region.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to ensure that there is funding to ensure security of the heavy weapons currently being handed over by militias in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: UNDP experts have developed a plan for demobilisation and disarmament which is currently under review by UNDP. We will consider the plan when it issues.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the progress of disarmament in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The latest information we have is that one tank, three heavy technicals, 20 technicals and a quantity of heavy weapons have been surrendered by clan brigades. The weapons are to be stored in two sites outside Hargeisa. The local administration continue to urge the clan militias to hand in their weapons.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications of the most recent UN Security Council resolution for the provision of extra resources to Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The most recent Security Council resolution makes it clear that priority for directing international resources will be given to those regions which are secure and where representative and accountable institutional structures exist to facilitate the effective use of aid.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *709*, what information he has on the causes of the intra-Muslim tension in the Bihac pocket; and if this tension has led to armed conflict.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Intra-Muslim tension in the Bihac area resulted from the declaration of the autonomous province of Western Bosnia by Fikret Abdic. This has led to conflict between Abdic's forces and those loyal to the Bosnian Government.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *939*, what report was made to the United Nations Security Council on 17 February on the presence of regular Croatian troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina; what numbers he estimated were deployed there; in which areas they were deployed; and what action he recommended.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary-General's report to the Security Council concluded that there may be as many as 5,000 regular Croatian troops in Bosnia, but that UNPROFOR had not found any command structures or any regular Croatian army brigades operating as formed units. We have repeatedly condemned Croatian interference in Bosnia. The issue is now being considered by the Security Council. In the meantime, we shall continue to press the Croatian Government to withdraw their forces.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *709*, if he will list those who gave evidence to the United Nations investigative team who looked into the massacre at the Sarajevo market on 5 February.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The report of the United Nations investigative team has not been published. Details of witnesses or others consulted in the investigation have not been made available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communication he has had from Lord Owen in respect of an UNPROFOR report about the massacre at the Sarajevo market on 5 February; what information was contained in that communication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lord Owen communicates regularly with European Union Foreign Ministers, reporting on his talks with the Bosnia parties. The contents of these communications are confidential.

The United Nations investigative team, established by United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative, Yasushi Akashi, concluded that it was not possible to establish who was responsible for the Sarajevo market massacre.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *939*, what is the basis for his belief that Belgrade is recruiting personnel and providing equipment for the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: That belief is based on reports from Belgrade and theatre.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *14*, what is the name of the conservation consultant for the British Indian Ocean Territory; what resources have been made available for this consultant; and what plans there are to reduce the military presence on the British Indian Ocean Territory at Diego Garcia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The consultant's name is Mr. J. M. W. Topp. He has the full support of the authorities of the British Indian Ocean Territory and regularly visits the territory. Mr. Topp has access to all scientific data gathered from previous expeditions to the area and has been provided with a computer and related software. Mr. Topp is working closely with Warwick university on a conservation management plan for the territory.

There are no plans to reduce the military presence on Diego Garcia.

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in establishing a stable Government in Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: After several rounds of discussion between all interested parties in Burundi, President Ntaryamira was sworn in on 5 February. He has appointed a new Tutsi Prime Minister from the main opposition party. Every party contesting the June 1993 election, successful or not, has a slot in the new cabinet. The army appears to be supporting the civil Government.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to redirect the savings from the reduction in MIRAS into a housing subsidy targeted at low income home owners.

Mr. Portillo: None.

VAT (Commercial Fuel)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be raised by an extra 2 per cent. non-returnable VAT on commercial fuel use.

Sir Jophn Cope: Based on expenditure in 1992, it is estimated that an extra 2 per cent. irrecoverable VAT on commercial fuel use, excluding expenditure on road transport would raise around £300 million in a full year.

Departmental Reports

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the 1994 departmental reports to be published.

Mr. Portillo: Proposed publication dates for 1994 departmental reports are as follows:

1994 Departmental Reports: proposed publication dates

Departmental Report	*Date*
Statistical Supplement to the Financial Statement and Budget Report	Friday 25 February
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Intervention Board	Friday 25 February
National Heritage	Tuesday 1 March
Home Office (including Charity Commission)	Wednesday 2 March
Lord Chancellor and legal departments	Thursday 3 March
Ministry of Defence	Thursday 3 March
Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments and net payments to EC institutions	Thursday 3 March
Department of Health and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys	Monday 7 March
Department of Social Security	Tuesday 8 March
Department of the Environment	Tuesday 8 March
Department of Trade and Industry	Wednesday 9 March
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (including ODA)	Wednesday 9 March
Cabinet Office	Wednesday 9 March
Wales	Thursday 10 March
Department of Transport	Thursday 10 March
Department of Employment	Thursday 10 March
Northern Ireland	Friday 11 March
Scotland	Friday 11 March
Department of Education	Friday 11 March

Copies will be made available at the Vote Office.

Insurance Premium Tax

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the rate of insurance premium tax during this Parliament.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 22 February 1994]*: The Government have announced a package of proposed changes to the insurance premium tax provisions of the Finance Bill, designed to simplify the operation of the tax, mainly in response to representations made by the insurance industry. As part of that package it is proposed to tax gross premiums, inclusive of commission, at 2·5 per cent. rather than net premiums at 3 per cent. This change means that the total yield and the impact of the tax remain broadly the same as originally forecast.

Air Passenger Tax

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the tax losses to the Exchequer of *(a)* all exemptions from air passenger tax, *(b)* the exemption from air passenger tax of aircraft under 10 tonnes in weight, or with fewer than 20 seats and *(c)* of the exemption from air passenger tax of flights for which tickets are not issued and *(d)* the total of the exemptions for private aircraft under *(b)* and *(c)*.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 22 February 1994]*: It is estimated that if all passengers departing from a United Kingdom airport were liable to air passenger duty, there would be an additional revenue yield of around £80 million in 1995-96. Of this total, around £30 million is in respect of passengers on return domestic flights; £45 million is in respect of transit and transfer passengers; and around £5 million is in respect of passengers on aircraft with fewer than 20 seats or having a maximum take-off weight below 10 tonnes. Data are not available on the proportion of non-chargeable aircraft which are private aircraft. No estimates have been made for the revenue yield that would result from extending the duty to cover children under two. The issuing of tickets is not a criterion used to determine whether air passenger duty is payable.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide estimates of the percentage of passengers who fly to, from and between the Scottish islands, that will be exempt from payment of the air passenger tax.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 21 February 1994]*: Civil Aviation Authority data suggest that around a third of passengers departing from airports on the Scottish Islands and from Inverness and Wick are on non-chargeable aircraft. This includes North sea rig operations. It is likely that around half of all passengers departing from those airports on chargeable aircraft will be exempt because they are on the return leg of a domestic journey. No estimates have been made for the proportion of passengers who are exempt because they are either transfer passengers or under two years old.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many VAT-registered companies and individuals became insolvent following action by Her

Majesty's Customs and Excise in each year since 1991; how much outstanding VAT was recovered from these concerns after formal insolvency occurred; what was the cost to Customs and Excise of pursuing those insolvencies; and how many VAT registrations were affected after guarantees were sought because of previous insolvency action against persons in the new venture.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 24 February 1994]*: The numbers of VAT-registered companies and individuals who were declared to be insolvent by the courts following presentation of a petition on behalf of Customs and Excise were 6,775 in the financial year 1991-92 and 7,543 in 1992-93. In the vast majority of these cases other creditors were also involved. Figures for recoveries and costs related to insolvencies resulting from petitions on behalf of Customs and Excise are not available separately. Where Customs and Excise seek security from a business this follows VAT registration. The number of cases in which security was sought was 106 in 1991-92 and 573 in 1992-93.

Student Benefits

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the net effect on the public sector borrowing requirement in each year since 1991 of the removal of students' entitlement to housing benefit and income support.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 23 February 1994]*: Benefit entitlement will vary according to individual circumstances. There is no information available to enable a meaningful estimate of the overall effect of the changes on the PSBR to be made.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Anthony Jeffs

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the reasons for his decision to recall to custody Anthony Jeffs following his release on licence after serving 20 years of a life sentence for the murder of PC Peter Guthrie in 1972; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 January 1994, the Secretary of State exercised his power under section 39(2) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, to revoke the life licence of Anthony Charles Jeffs and recall him to prison. This decision was taken in the light of information received from the probation service responsible for Mr. Jeffs' supervision in the community under the terms of his life licence. That information gave rise to concern about the risk Mr. Jeffs might pose to others, although there was nothing to indicate that he had committed any criminal offence since his release from prison on life licence on 3 September 1993.

Electoral Rolls, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the percentage of people aged *(a)* 18, *(b)* under 21 and *(c)* under 24 years that are missing from the electoral roll in (i) the parliamentary constituency of Newham, North-West and (ii) each London borough.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 18 January at column 477.

Hong Kong

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Governor of Hong Kong has submitted a further report on the discharge of his functions under the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990.

Mr. Howard: The Governor of Hong Kong submitted a third report to me on 3 January. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Drugs

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spends annually on *(a)* drug education, and *(b)* drug welfare programmes aimed at children.

Mr. Maclean: Since 1990, the Home Office drugs prevention initiative has, through the work of its 20 local teams and the central drug prevention unit, generated, supported and funded a wide range of activities to encourage drugs prevention in the community, including drugs education and support for families and children. The total cost of the initiative to date is about £14 million. The third annual report of the initiative, which describes a cross-section of work supported, is in the Library.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 14, *(b)* 15, *(c)* 16 and *(d)* 17-year-olds were (i) given cautions (ii) fined and (iii) imprisoned on drugs offences in each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of 14, 15, 16 and 17-year-olds who were given cautions, fined or given immediate custodial sentences for drug offences, in each of the years since 1987, is contained in the table.

Table: number of 14, 15, 16 and 17-year-olds given cautions, fined and given immediate custodial sentences for drug offences, United Kingdom 1987-92

	Age at sentence			
Year and disposal	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*
1987				
cautioned	36	116	258	405
fined	3	15	103	344
immediate custody	2	5	14	49
1988				
cautioned	36	131	319	659
fined	2	23	76	360
immediate custody	3	6	20	57
1989				
cautioned	97	282	548	1,028
fined	5	23	123	529
immediate custody	3	7	20	45
1990				
cautioned	207	573	1,031	1,633
fined	10	33	163	602
immediate custody	1	0	21	38
1991				
cautioned	256	661	1,219	2,091
fined	11	28	143	551
immediate custody	0	4	19	53
1992				
cautioned	281	619	1,263	2,365
fined	6	27	122	424
immediate custody	0	10	25	67

Burglaries and Fires

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cases of household burglary were recorded by the police in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom for each year from 1989 to 1993;

(2) how many cases of arson against a domestic dwelling were recorded by the police in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom for each year from 1989 to 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not collected centrally. Figures for domestic burglary by police force area and figures for arson offences for all of England and Wales are published annually in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales". Details on the types of building subject to arson attacks are not collected centrally. Requests for figures relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland should be addressed to the Scottish Office and Northern Ireland Office respectively.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many household fires to which the emergency services were called were reported in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom from 1989 to 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The most detailed information available centrally is for fire brigade areas. Details of fires in dwellings in these areas are published in the annual Home Office report "Fire Statistics United Kingdom", copies of which are in the Library. The latest published data are for 1991 and are shown in table 61 of the 1991 volume. Comparable data for previous years are in table 61 of the 1990 volume and table 59 of the 1989 volume.

Blasphemy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to remove the offence of blasphemy from the statute books.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have no plans to change the law in this area.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it remains his advice to Somalians and British citizens of Somali descent in the case where his Department refuses to issue prior visa authority for their relatives to apply direct on their behalf to the nearest British diplomatic post.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In cases raised on or after 27 January 1994, Somalis who wish to join relatives in this country are expected to make entry clearance applications in person in the normal way, although it will be open to sponsors to write to posts on behalf of their relatives.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to publish the Government's position on negotiations to alter the means of petitioning the European Court of Human Rights;

(2) what plans he has to argue for the alteration of the system of petitioning the European Court of Human Rights; and what system he will propose.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At present, under the European Convention on Human Rights, acceptance by member states of the right of individuals within their jurisdiction to petition the European Commission on Human Rights may be on a renewable or indefinite basis. Since 1966 the Government, in successive declarations, has recognised the competence of the Commission to receive such petitions from people who claim to be the victims of a violation of the convention in the United Kingdom.

We are currently considering a proposal within the Council of Europe that indefinite acceptance of the right of individual petition should be a requirement on member states.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the President of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the President of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals the Government have made to reform the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are contributing fully to work within the Council of Europe on the reform of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights by their replacement with a single body, with the aim of enabling the increasing number of cases to be dealt with more speedily while maintaining the highest standards of jurisprudence.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the right of United Kingdom citizens to seek legal redress for violations of the European declaration of human rights.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government fully accept, and have no plans to review, their obligations under article 13 of the European convention on human rights to provide effective national remedies in respect of claims of violations of the convention. Under present arrangements, the right of individuals within the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom to petition the European Commission of Human Rights will be reviewed in 1996. We are currently considering the proposal that indefinite acceptance of that right should be a requirement on states party to the convention.

Fire Precautions Act

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has received the report on the review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 which began in July 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) on 17 February at column 909.

PRIME MINISTER

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by his office *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

The Prime Minister: No advertising has been incurred in my office on promotional or advertising campaigns in the current financial year. None is planned for 1994-95.

Royal Family

Mr. Frank Fields: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those areas with regard to the royal family, on which it is his practice to answer questions.

The Prime Minister: I will answer questions which are within the conventions of this House and raise issues of public policy, where appropriate.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 24 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, columns *33-34*, if Russia would be consulted and its approval need to be given before NATO air-strikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina were carried out.

The Prime Minister: United Nations Secretary Council resolution 836 authorises the use of air power in support of UNPROFOR in and around the safe areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is no need for further decisions by the Security Council.

We nevertheless regard consultation with Russia as of the utmost importance. We welcome the Russians' positive contribution to lifting the siege of Sarajevo, which demonstrated their commitment to bringing the conflict to a peaceful end.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, columns *33-34*, if he will give President Yeltsin's response to his description of the specific terms of the North Atlantic Council's response to the United Nations Secretary-General's request for NATO asssistance at Sarajevo; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 21 February at columns *33-34*.

Gifts

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister in what circumstances gifts made to the Prime Minister which are state property may be used; and, in the case of gifts of jewellery, who is entitled to wear it.

The Prime Minister: These are matters for the Prime Minister's discretion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fire Safety

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has, in the review of fire legislation and organisation of fire safety enforcement announcement by his Department on 17 January, to consult the representative bodies and organisations of the United Kingdom fire service.

Mr. Heseltine: The review team have now begun their consultations on fire safety legislation and enforcement with all known interested parties. These include the Fire Brigades Union, the Chief and Assistant Fire Officers Association, the National Association of Fire Officers and the Fire Service college. They are being assisted by a small contact group which includes a fire brigade chief officer and are also proposing to consult a selection of individual senior fire service staff.

Ticket Agencies

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek to amend the legislation which currently allows ticket agencies to take and hold people's money without giving a guarantee that they can provide tickets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: When a ticket agency takes money from a consumer it enters into a contract with him and its obligations will depend on the terms of that contract. If the agency is in breach of its obligations under the contract, the consumer can take action to recover the money paid. I see no need for any change in the law in this area.

Research Contracts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give a list of current research contracts concerning any aspects of transport and the environment, giving costs and the names of consultants employed.

Mr. Heseltine: No research contracts of the type indicated by the hon. Member are currently being carried out on behalf of my Department.

European Committee for Electrical Standardisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade why the CENELEC report of 1991 "Live with the Differences on Plugs and Domestic Wiring" was referred back to CENELEC by the European Commission; and what representations he made on the reference back.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Commission did not mandate the current work in CENELEC. CENELEC itself decided to commence work in this area at its General Assembly in 1992.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the application of subsidiarity to the harmonisation of electrical plugs on CENELEC standards.

Mr. Sainsbury: The question of subsidiarity does not arise because the Commission has made no formal proposals. The harmonisation in question may emerge from discussions in the relevant standards body, CENELEC. It is uncertain whether a standard which emerged from this process would be enforced by an EC Directive, but if a new standard were to be agreed, it would be for the United Kingdom to decide whether to accept it or seek a derogation.

The Independent

Mr. Moss: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a further statement on the proposed transfer of *The Independent* newspaper.

Mr. Heseltine: I have received a second application for my consent to acquire a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing, owner of *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday.* The application is made by Independent Newspapers plc (INP). INP currently holds 24·99 per cent. of the shares in Newspaper Publishing. It has agreed, subject to securing my consent, to acquire a further 5 per cent. shareholding in Newspaper Publishing. My consent is required if INP wishes to acquire 25 per cent. or more of Newspaper Publishing.

I announced to the House on 17 February that I have received an application to acquire a controlling interest in Newspaper Publishing from a consortium including Mirror Group Newspapers. As with that application, I am considering whether I should give my consent to this second application without an inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 58(3)(a) of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

This section gives me discretion to consent to a newspaper transfer without an MMC inquiry where I am satisfied that the newspaper concerned is not economic as a going concern and as a separate newspaper, and that, if the paper is to continue, the case is one of urgency. I am inviting comments from interested parties by 7 March on whether I should give my consent without an MMC inquiry.

I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses a note describing the main features of the proposed transaction and explaining how the newspaper merger provisions of the Act apply to this case.

I expect to make a further statement to the House announcing my decision following the period of public consultation.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Rendel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what differentiation in terms of the loan guarantee scheme exists between applications from firms in inner-city areas and from firms in other areas.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* Some eligible small firms with trading addresses within inner city task force or successful city challenge areas receive more favourable terms under the small firms loan guarantee scheme. The comparable terms are:

Inner city task force and successful city challenge areas

85 per cent. guarantee on all loans;
0·5 per cent a year premium on the outstanding loan paid by borrower;
No minimum loan size.

National

85 per cent. guarantee on loans to businesses that have been trading for at least two years immediately prior to the loan application;
70 per cent. guarantee on other loans;
1·5 per cent. a year premium on the outstanding loan paid by the borrower for variable interest rate loans;
0·5 per cent. a year premium on the outstanding loan paid by the borrower for fixed interest rate loans;
Minimum loan size of £5,000.

Deregulation

Mr. Martlew: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of his task forces on deregulation considered policies on *(a)* the planning system, *(b)* hedgerow legislation and *(c)* forestry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* The construction, retail, tourism and transport deregulation task forces considered planning issues. The food, drink and agriculture task force considered hedgerow legislation and forestry issues. Their recommendations were published as part of the overall recommendations of the business task forces on 19 January.

ENVIRONMENT

Liverpool Docks

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial support the port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has received from *(a)* his Department and *(b)* Liverpool city council in each financial year from 1990-91 to 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: The port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company received no direct financial support from my Department in the financial years 1990-91 to 1993-94. I have no information about the level of financial assistance offered in this period by Liverpool city council.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial support the port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company are expected to receive from *(a)* his Department and *(b)* Liverpool city council in 1994-95 and in subsequent years.

Mr. Baldry: The port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour company received no direct financial support from my Department in 1994-95 and there are no plans for such assistance in subsequent years. I have no information about the level of financial assistance offered in this period by Liverpool city council.

Local Government Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table which lists *(a)* the non-local authority employers who employ staff covered by the local government superannuation scheme, *(b)* the numbers of (i) current and (ii) retired employees covered by the local government superannuation scheme attached to each such non-local authority employer and *(c)* the total number of non-local authority (i) current and (ii) retired employees covered by the local government superannuation scheme.

Mr. Baldry: There are 1,345 non-local authority employers classified as scheduled or admitted bodies under the local government superannuation scheme in England. I will send the hon. Member a list of their names shortly. The Department keeps no record of the numbers of active and retired scheme members of each non-local authority employer. That information is available only from the local authorities which administer the LGSS. The total number of employees of non-local authority employers in the LGSS, as at 31 March 1993, was 58,634; retired employees, including dependants and former members of the LGSS entitled to deferred benefits, totalled 67,773.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* current and *(b)* retired employees are covered, in total, by the local government superannuation scheme.

Mr. Baldry: The number of employees in the local government superannuation scheme (LGSS) in England as at 31 March 1993, totalled 948,663. The number of retired employees, including dependants and former members of the LGSS entitled to deferred benefits, totalled 999,794.

Opencast Mining (Hazel Grove)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about an application by Coal Contractors Ltd. to mine opencast coal in the area of the Hazel Grove/Paynton boundary, Middlewood way; whether one or more neighbouring local authorities are expected to receive revenue should planning permission be granted; what entity owns the mineral rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My Department has received a copy of the environmental statement submitted with the planning application. From this it would appear that the proposal would involve the extraction of 250,000 tonnes of coal from a site known as Towers Farm and New House Farm over a period of approximately two and a half years. We have no information relating to any local authority receiving revenue should planning permission be granted. The mineral rights are owned by British Coal.

European Funding Schemes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount of European funding obtained by local authorities in each year from 1979.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the total budget for each of the European funding schemes for which local authorities are eligible;

(2) what is the total amount of European funding that is allocated for uptake in England.

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom is to receive 2,430 million ECU for 1994-1999 for Objective 1 regions, including 840 million ecu for Merseyside, 2,142 million ecu for 1994-96 for objective 2 regions and 817 million ecu for 1994-99 for objective *5(b)* regions, from the EC structural funds. The amounts under objective 2 and *5(b)* have not yet been broken down between Scotland, Wales and the English regions. In addition, further structural funds are likely to be available under Community initiatives, details of which have yet to be announced by the European Commission.

Funds allocated to objective 2 and *5(b)* regions in England for the years 1989 to 1993 totalled approximately 2,300 million ecu.

European Environment Agency

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has held and what decisions taken on the nomination of a national focal point for the European Environment Agency.

Mr. Atkins: None. The United Kingdom national focal point for the European Environment Agency has already been set up in the environmental protection statistics division of my Department.

"Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics No. 16"

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his Department's "Digest of Environmental Protective and Water Statistics No. 16" to be published.

Mr. Atkins: We are aiming to publish the next edition of the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" in April 1994.

"This Common Inheritence"

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the third year report on the 1990 White Paper, "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Atkins: We expect to publish the third year report on "This Common Inheritance" after the Easter recess. As well as the 1990 White Paper, this year we have to take account of the strategy for substainable development published on 25 January.

Urban Regeneration Agency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his proposals for the Urban Regeneration Agency in the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: These are matters for the board of the Urban Regeneration Agency, now known as English Partnership. English Partnership's board will shortly be submitting to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State its first corporate plan, which will include its proposals on structure and future programme.

It is anticipated that there will be a strong regional structure with a small London office.

Rented Houses

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of socially rented houses are provided by *(a)* council houses, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private rented houses; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The number of dwellings rented from local authorities, from housing associations and rented privately is shown in table 2.23 of the September quarter edition of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Part 2". This table also shows the proportion of the total dwelling stock represented by each category.

A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what actions he will take or policy changes he will make to implement the requirements of European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to the achievement of the objectives of the habitats directive. The Government set out their policies and proposals for legislative changes in a public consultation paper issued on 4 October 1993. We are currently considering the responses to the consultation. The wider objectives for the conservation of our natural heritage were further addressed in the biodiversity action plan, published on 25 January 1994. Copies of both documents were placed in the House Library.

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to secure greater transparency in the affairs of non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by him or who exercise functions previously carried out by local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: Since 1991 we have published Management Statements for many of the non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—sponsored by the Department, and are preparing statements for others. These describe the bodies' roles and responsibilities, their aims and objectives, financial management arrangements and lines of accountability to Parliament, Ministers and the public. Copies of most statements are available in the Library. In December 1993 we issued guidance to the chairmen and board members of all executive NDPBs on the exercise of their responsibilities. Housing action trusts and urban development corporations, which currently exercise some functions previously carried out by local authorities in their areas, are statutorily required to consult the relevant local authorities about their key pains and they make strenuous efforts to involve the local community in their activities. The boards of housing action trusts include representatives of tenants. All executive NDPBs publish annual reports and accounts and follow the principles of the citizens charter in their dealings with the public. The provisions of the White Paper on Open Government, Cm. 2290, July 1993, also apply to public bodies.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of which non-elected bodies whose membership, in whole or in part, is appointed by him *(a)* meetings are open to the public, *(b)* there is scrutiny of financial procedures by independently appointed audit and *(c)* there are rules governing the declaration of interest.

Mr. Baldry: It is for such bodies themselves to determine how best to keep the public informed and consulted on their activities. All housing action trusts consult their tenants frequently and allow them to attend their board and committee meetings, and most urban development corporations hold open planning meetings. The accounts and financial procedures of all the executive non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—sponsored by the Department are subject to annual scrutiny by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Audit Commission or external auditors appointed by the Secretary of State. All executive NDPBs have rules requiring board members to declare any potential conflicts between their public duties and other interests.

Flooding, Windsor

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial assistance to the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead under the Bellwin scheme towards their costs of dealing with the flooding incident which occurred between 12 and 14 October 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Yes. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that financial relief under the Bellwin scheme would be justified given the exceptional nature of this incident. A scheme of assistance will therefore be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Grant will be paid to cover 85 per cent. of eligible costs which are above a threshold, and which have been incurred by the royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead in respect of this flood damage.

Flooding

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of homes in *(a)* London, *(b)* the south-east of England, *(c)* the south-west of England, *(d)* the midlands, *(e)* the north-east of England, *(f)* the north-west of England, *(g)* Scotland, *(h)* Wales and *(i)* Northern Ireland were affected by flooding for each year from 1985 to 1993.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not held centrally.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Omasase Lumumba

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, column 96, if he will place in the Library the report of the Metropolitan police into and transcript of the evidence at the inquest on the death of Omasase Lumumba.

The Attorney-General: No. Police reports relating to the investigation of alleged criminal offences and submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service are confidential. The coroner will, on application, and on payment of the prescribed fee, supply a copy of the transcript of proceedings to anyone who in his opinion is a properly interested person.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Portrait of Lady Astor

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what steps are proposed to secure the return to the House of Commons of the portrait of Lady Astor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: The picture of Lady Astor was re-hung near the Terrace entrance on 22 February, following its temporary removal for photography.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Committee on Women in Science and Technology

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the Committee on Women in Science and Technology.

Mr. Waldegrave: In March 1993 I established an independent committee to advise me on how the potential, skills and expertise of women could best be used for national advantage and for the benefit of science, engineering and technology. The committee published its report, "The Rising Tide", this morning and I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The Government welcome the report as a valuable contribution to the debate and will now consider its recommendations.

TRANSPORT

Freight Depots

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the amount of finance available to Freight Company West to modernise satellite and other depots; and if he will list their locations.

Mr. Freeman: Trainload Freight West will exist as a division of the British Railways Board from 1 April. The allocation of finance for specific purposes such as depot modernisation is a matter for the Board.

Police Scientific Development Branch

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column *763*, where the police scientific development branch is located; what is its annual budget; and if he will publish a breakdown of its staff by grade and area of expertise.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The police scientific development branch—PSDB—is located at two sites; Sandridge, Hertfordshire and Horsham, Sussex. PSDB's budget estimate for financial year 1993-94 is £5,533,000.

A breakdown of PSDB's staff as at 18 February 1994, by civil service grade, is as follows:

	Number
Scientific and technical staff	
Grade 5	1·0
Grade 6	2·0
Grade 7	11·0
Senior scientific officer	15·0
Higher scientific officer	12·0
Scientific officer	7·0
Assistant scientific officer	2·0
Senior professional and technology officer	2·0
Higher professional and technology officer	5·0
Professional and technology officer	1·0
Administrative staff	
Grade 7	1·0
Higher executive officer	1·0
Executive officer	2·0
Administrative officer	6·0
Administrative assistant	2·0
Personal secretary	3·0
Typist	1·0
Industrial staff	6·5
TOTAL	80·5

In addition, six police officers are seconded from their local forces to provide liaison, support and operational advice. They are ranked as follows:

	Number
Chief superintendent	1
Superintendent	3
Inspector	1
Sergeant	1

The areas of expertise of the 58 scientific and technical staff are as follows:

	Number
Building and construction	1
Chemistry	5
Computer science	6
Electronic engineering	10
Materials science	3
Mathematics	1
Mechanical engineering	9
Photographic science	1
Physics	21
Statistics	1

Cash Limits

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash limits for 1993-94.

Mr. MacGregor: Further to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend on 4 February 1994 at col. *1004*, subject to parliamentary approval of a revised spring supplementary estimate the cash limit for class VI, vote 2 will now be increased by £30,778,000 from £202,236,000 to £233,014,000. There is no change to the previously announced reduction of £309,000 in the Department's running costs limit. The additional £20,000,000 now sought on vote 2 is to provide a payment to the United States Government if, as expected, we are shortly able to conclude an agreement to settle a dispute with them over airport user charges. The addition on this vote will be offset by a further reduction in the cash limit on class VI, vote 1 of £20,000,000 from £2,249,797,000 to £2,229,797,000. The extra provision now sought on vote 2 will not therefore add to the control total of public expenditure.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to issue safeguarding directions for the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: Planning directions to safeguard the route of the channel tunnel rail link and the terminus at St. Pancras were issued today and come into force tomorrow.

Road Programme

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department uses in setting the priorities for the road programme.

Mr. Key: I announced on 5 August 1993 a package of measures to speed up the delivery of national road schemes. One measure was a review of the road programme aimed particularly at ensuring that schemes were prepared and delivered in accordance with a clear set of priorities. I will make an announcement about the results of that review shortly.

Rail Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his intention to use joint industry scheme assets after rail privatisation for purposes other than the payment of pensions.

Mr. Freeman: I have no intention of using scheme assets for any purpose. I intend that the new scheme should be used for paying pensions and other benefits for which the present scheme is designed. The present scheme would permit payment to the employer of an element of residual surplus on winding-up. The winding-up rules of the new scheme are still under discussion.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the current preserved benefit arrangements of the British Rail pension scheme will be affected by the privatisation of British Rail and the introduction of the joint industry scheme.

Mr. Freeman: My officials are discussing with the trustees of the BR pension scheme simplification of the present arrangements which involve separate "preserved benefits" sections, but members with preserved benefits will not lose any protection as a result.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the pension arrangements for employees following rail privatisation will include in the membership of trustee boards and local management committees employer/employee nominees on a 50:50 basis; and whether existing provisions for trade union nominees to represent members will be unchanged.

Mr. Freeman: The Government intend that equal employer/member representation should continue at all levels of the governance of the new scheme. The precise method of appointing the members' representatives is under discussion and I hope to put forward proposals for consultation shortly.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the existing British Rail pension scheme surplus and deficit requirements will be replicated in the post-privatisation joint industry scheme;

(2) if the British Rail pension scheme winding-up arrangements will be replicated in all sections of the joint industry scheme.

Mr. Freeman: My officials are presently discussing drafts of the trust deed and rules of the joint industry scheme with BR and the trustees. It will not always be possible to replicate the existing provisions exactly in the new scheme because its structure will be different. But the sections of the new scheme covering people to be protected under the Railways Act 1993 will have to satisfy the condition that they are "no less favourable" than the BR pension scheme.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the arrangements for the collection of employee and employer pension contributions following rail privatisation will conform with the existing British Rail pension scheme rules in respect of remitting contributions to the trustees within seven days.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the publication of his circular on the planning of motorway service areas, including their spacing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the deregulation of motorway service areas (MSAs) in August 1992. His statement included detailed guidance to intending developers and specified that MSAs should not generally be located at intervals of less than fifteen miles. A circular to local authorities in England and Wales setting out these policies is in preparation. I expect to issue it shortly.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of the construction of the M11 link road in Wanstead.

Mr. Norris: The total estimated works cost of the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 link road is £170 million of which the current contract in Wanstead has been awarded at a tender sum of £31·5 million.

Staff Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Norris: Since January 1992 the Department has had in place a contract with a relocation company which offers to individual members of staff being compulsorily transferred a guaranteed selling price for their home based on an agreed valuation. All staff being transferred compulsorily are encouraged to participate in these arrangements. Staff are reimbursed other reasonable expenses incurred in their move.

The Department has discretion to assist staff who are compulsorily transferred but who have a negative equity in their homes. In such cases staff are offered an interest bearing loan over a period of up to 20 years with an option to defer payment of the capital sum for up to four years. Interest is payable immediately. During 1992-93 seven members of staff received loans totalling £55,000. and to date in 1993-94 eight members of staff have received loans totalling £87,000. Where additional assistance of this type is given loans may be written off only in cases of severe ill health, medical retirement or death.

In addition, the Department has discretion to deal with cases of financial hardship, dating from the period before a guaranteed selling price was offered through the relocation company, where members of staff being compulsorily transferred, and who had bridging loans on which the interest was paid by the Department, were affected by falling property values. In 1992-93 18 such cases were dealt with through grants of £238,000 to enable bridging loans to be paid off. In 1993-94 to date six cases have been dealt with through grants of £78,000.

Roads, London

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure on *(a)* construction, *(b)* maintenance and *(c)* improvements to (i) trunk roads and (ii) motorways in Greater London in each year since 1978 at both current and constant 1992-93 prices; and what is his planned expenditure in the years up to and including 1996-97.

Mr. Norris: Spend on major trunk road schemes and trunk road and motorway maintenance in London (including land costs, preparation costs and VAT where appropriate) from 1982-83 onwards is given in the table.

Trunk roads and motorways in Greater London

	Spend £m (at outturn prices)		*Spend £m (at 1992-93 prices using the gross domestic product index)*	
Year	*Construction/ improvement*	*Maintenance*	*Construction/ improvement*	*Maintenance*
1982-83	30·4	8·3	52·1	14·2
1983-84	20·7	8·3	33·9	13·6
1984-85	19·7	8·0	30·7	12·5
1985-86	54·3	12·2	80·2	17·9
1986-87	85·1	17·0	122·1	24·4
1987-88	88·0	20·3	119·8	27·6
1988-89	61·7	25·2	78·7	32·2
1989-90	117·9	32·2	149·7	38·4
1990-91	138·9	42·1	153·4	46·5
1991-92	157·0	60·8	163·0	63·1
1992-93	138·5	64·1	138·5	64·1
1993-94	[1]148·9	[1]61·7	—	—

[1] Forecast. Indices not available for 1993-94.

To provide figures before 1982-83 or the breakdowns requested between new construction and improvements and between trunk road and motorway expenditure would involve disproportionate costs.

My right hon. Friend will announce in the near future the national road schemes on which works are due to start in 1994-95 and the results of the current review of road programme priorities.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each scheme in Greater London in his Department's current trunk roads and motorways programme with the total cost in each year since construction commenced up to estimated completion at both current and constant 1992-93 prices for *(a)* junction improvements, *(b)* other improvements, *(c)* maintenance and *(d)* new construction.

Mr. Norris: The table gives the information available. It lists trunk road improvement and new construction schemes in progress in London. Works costs are at 1992-93 prices and include preparation, land and VAT as appropriate. No indices are available for the forecast expenditure comparable with 1992-93.

The large number of individual small projects in the maintenance programme make it impossible to itemise spend except at disproportionate cost. The forecast expenditure for maintenance for 1993-94 is £61·7 million.

£ million

	Actual expenditure in		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Junction improvements			
A40 Long lane junction	4·3	7·5	16·1
Other improvements			
A406 Hanger lane/Harrow road	50·5	39·8	23·2

£ million

	Forecast expenditure in					
Scheme title	*1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*	*1996-97*	*1997-98*	*1998-99*
Junction improvements						
A40 Long lane junction	15·9	4·4	1·3	1·0	1·0	0·0
A13 Blackwall tunnel/Cotton street	3·2	4·4	4·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
A13 Butcher row junction improvement	0·8	0·8	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
A406/M junction 1	7·5	1·5	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Other improvements						
A406 East of Falloden way	—	—	—	5·1	3·7	3·0
A406 Hanger lane/Harrow road	20·0	26·8	17·7	0·3	0·1	0·0
Trunk road cabling and communications	15·5	6·8	1·7	2·1	1·7	1·0

Scheme title	*Forecast expenditure in* *1993-94*	*1994-95*	*1995-96*	*1996-97*	*1997-98*	*1998-99*
A40 Long lane-West End road widening	5·8	1·1	2·1	0·0	0·0	0·0
A406 Dysons road-Hall lane	3·9	0·1	0·0	5·8	2·2	0·1
	18·2	36·0	30·7	—	—	—
New construction						
A13 Thames avenue-Wennington	28·6	48·1	38·0	33·1	5·3	5·1
Hackney-M11+	15·5	40·0	71·5	75·0	30·0	11·0

Note: Spend for each scheme is shown as beginning in the year of actual start of works. There is expenditure (on e.g. property acquisition, advance works and preparation costs) in advance of the actual start date.

Market Testing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instigate a full public inquiry before any further market-testing programme in respect of the civil service.

Mr. Norris: No. Market testing has realised substantial benefits in my Department, as it has elsewhere, and I am confident that further gains will continue to be achieved.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what traffic forecasts his Department has undertaken in relation to 44-tonne lorries involved in journeys in the United Kingdom for 1999-2000.

Mr. Key: There is no commitment to allow lorries to operate at 44-tonnes in the United Kingdom except (1) under the proposed new regulations which will apply only to certain six-axle vehicles carrying containers and swap-bodies to or from rail terminals; and, (2) under existing European Community limits for international movements, from which the United Kingdom has a derogation until 1 January 1999, which allow 44-tonnes only for articulated vehicles carrying containers in combined transport. We are unable to forecast how many 44-tonne combined transport vehicles will be operating in 1999.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce 44-tonne lorries for domestic journeys *(a)* to and from rail terminals and *(b)* on other road journeys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Regulations are about to be made which will allow certain six-axle articulated vehicles and drawbar-trailer combinations to operate at up to 44 tonnes when carrying containers or swap-bodies to or from rail terminals in combined road/rail operations. This measure is intended to encourage intermodal road/rail freight movements. The lorries concerned will be no larger and cause no more road wear than present 38 tonne five-axle vehicles. We are not proposing to allow 44-tonne vehicles for other types of road journey.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the formula and what methodological assumptions are used by his Department in calculating the forecast of the number of 44-tonne lorries on United Kingdom roads.

Mr. Key: We are not able to make any forecast of the number of lorries which may operate at 44 tonnes under the proposed new regulations which will allow certain six-axle vehicles to operate at this weight only when carrying containers and swap-bodies to and from rail terminals in combined road/rail movements.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for rest facilities for heavy goods vehicle drivers in transit in the United Kingdom on international journeys.

Mr. Key: All motorway service areas—MSAs—in England provide free short-term parking for all types of vehicles including lorries. In order to secure more MSAs more quickly, we announced in 1992 that in future MSAs will be provided by private developers rather than my Department. Adequate free lorry parking will nevertheless continue to be required at any MSA signposted from the motorway. On all-purpose roads, provision of services has always been a matter for the private sector, though the Department does encourage provision of comprehensive sites with facilities for all types of vehicle.

Roadside services in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales respectively.

Freight Loads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the number of freight loads carried by road from rail for each year since 1990.

Mr. Key: I regret that this information is not available. Statistics on the tonnage of freight moved by rail by commodity since 1982 may be found in table 5.14 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library. There is no information on how much of this traffic also moves by road during the course of its journey.

A38, Landrake

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work will commence on the pedestrian footbridge over the A38 trunk road at Landrake; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* We are seeking to acquire by agreement the privately-owned land required for the construction of the footbridge. If timely agreement on this matter can be achieved, construction could take place in 1994-95.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Details of equipment stolen from the Department during the last three financial years are set out in the tables.

	£
Financial year 1991-92	
2 Telephone Answering Machines	170
4 Cameras	498
10 Apricot Computers	17,177
4 Laser Printers	3,000
2 Laptop Computers	2,300
1 Computer Mouse	200
1 Visual Display Unit	444
3 Telephone Handsets and Leads	72
1 Payphone	140
Wallpaper	400
Diskettes	300
1 Fax Machine	900
3 Fire Extinguishers	117
3 Embossing Stamps	105
1 Siren	1,200
1 Lifejacket	27
2 Rescue Suits	118
1 Lamp	6
1 Pye Westminster	50
1 Cliff Clogger	30
3 Beacons	219
1 Projector Screen	30
1 Protective Waistcoat	8
1 Pair Protective Boots	22
Overalls	17
Financial year 1992-93	
8 Desk Top Computers	10,066
1 Lap Top Computer	1,000
3 Visual Display Units	1,500
5 Printers	5,300
4 Keyboards	1,500
4 Telephone Answering Machines	245
Computer Software	1,200
3 Televisions	1,300
3 Video Recorders	790
25 Microwave Ovens	2,327
4 Vacuum Cleaners	300
2 Desk Fans	70
1 Telephone Handset	20
2 Tape Recorders	500
1 Set of Tyres	3,000
2 Generators	10,000
4 Pairs of Binoculars	312
1 Hire Car	9,090
2 Small Generators	716
2 Lamps	12
1 Winch	425
1 First Aid Kit	54
Maps	5
1 Spade	8
1 Blanket	15
1 Protective Jacket	76
3 Heavy Duty Batteries	300
1 Battery Charger	50
4 Radios	1,360
1 Beacon	80
1 Stretcher	50
1 Stoop	31
Financial Year 1993-94	
7 Desk Top Computers	12,045
4 Lap Top Computers	4,700
7 Fax Machines	4,637
6 Printers	2,740
3 Calculators	106
1 Dictaphone	77
Diskettes	10
2 Visual Tool Display Units and Keyboards	1,400
Tools	81
1 Tape Recorder	80
2 Mobile Telephones	250
Vehicle Parts	500
2 Kettles	40
1 Motorcycle	2,884
6 Two Way Radios	11,400
2 Refrigerators	240
1 Word Processor	1,487
3 Emission Analysers	2,250
1 Safe	500
2 Cameras	7,300
1 Video Recorder	300
1 Television	200
5 Hot Washers	5,000
20 Beacons	2,000
1 Telephone Answering Machine	500
1 Pair of Wellington Boots	12
1 Fluorescent Jacket	40
6 First Aid Kits	73
1 Waterproof Jacket	60
2 Pairs Protective Boots	56
1 Fuel Tank	90
1 Safety Belt	13
1 Fuel Line	33
17 Radios	4,930
7 Pagers	830
1 Loud Hailer	65
4 Rescue Suits	300
1 Generator	358
2 Pairs of Overalls	60
2 Lifejackets	117
2 Cliff Cloggers	60
1 Stretcher	30
5 Lamps	35
1 Battery Charger	30
1 Rescue Buoy	12
1 Pair of Binoculars	53
1 Aerial	30

Driving Standards Agency

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Driving Standards Agency is currently involved in a market-testing exercise.

Mr. Key: My Department's 1993-94 competing for quality programme includes the following activities within the Driving Standards Agency:

driver test booking, finance and office services;
regional property management;
property maintenance inspections and reports;
payroll service.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the announcement by the Driving Standards Agency of the intention to close driving test centres, with particular reference to which centres are involved; how many people are employed at each test centre; which are the parliamentary constituencies within which each testing centre lies; what are the amounts that will be saved by the closure of each of the testing centres; and on what basis the savings are calculated;

(2) how many people are currently employed at each testing station operated by the Driving Standards Agency;

(3) what current testing centres are operated by the Driving Standards Agency; and in which parliamentary constituency each lies;

(4) if he will make a statement indicating how many tests were carried out at each test centre currently operated by the Driving Standards Agency during the financial year 1992-93; how much revenue was raised at each testing centre; and how much each testing centre cost to operate.

Mr. Key: Responsibility for the subject of these questions has been delegated to the Driving Standards

Agency under its chief executive Dr. S. J. Ford I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given. Copies of the relevant annexes will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Dr. J. Ford to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 23 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Questions about DSA's national network of driving test centres and our intention to close 22 centres. Some of the information you require is not recorded by DSA on a routine basis, and the information supplied is the best we can assemble in the time available.

The closure programme announced recently followed the review of our estate envisaged in our published Business Plan for 1993-94. The continuing fall in demand for tests requires us to continue to reduce fixed costs, although cost is not the only criterion for assessing the future of a test centre. As set out in the Plan, centres were assessed against the following criteria:

a. the number of satisfactory routes, including an assessment of the proportion of routes which include higher speed roads;

b. the quality of facilities for customers, including the provision of toilets and off road parking;

c. the financial efficiency, including the rent, maintenance and energy costs; and

d. demand for tests at the centre and its proximity to other centres.

Where a centre scores badly on one or more of these four criteria, it will be reviewed for possible inclusion in our rationalisation programme. This includes a range of options from re-siting to merger with another centre or closure. With the sharp decline in tests over the past few years, closures have been inevitable, but the number of closures has not been proportionate to the drop in business.

Annex A lists the 22 centres we will be closing over the next year showing the constituencies in which they lie, the numbers of staff, testing volumes and the expected savings in both accommodation charges and, in the case of occasional centres, travel and subsistence expenses for deploying examiners to them from permanent centres. As you will see, most of the centres to be closed are outstations (occasional centres), some of which had very low levels of demand. The direct cost savings are naturally low when the usage is very low, but centres with very low demand are disproportionately complicated (and therefore more costly) to administer.

Annex B lists all our test centres by region, distinguishing between permanent centres and outstations (part time centres which are not permanently staffed, and where driving examiners are detached in to conduct driving tests). The annex lists staff in post, and the accommodation costs for each centre.

Annex C lists the parliamentary constituencies in which, I understand, each test centre lies. This is not information which the Agency had to hand, and the attached list has been assembled as accurately as we are able in the time available. Our regional staff are in places uncertain of precise constituency boundaries in relation to test centre addresses, and it is therefore difficult to guarantee the absolute accuracy of the list.

The question on the revenues at each of the 484 centres and on the costs of operating each centre cannot be answered fully.

Because it is not relevant to the day-to-day running of the business, DSA does not routinely apportion other costs to the centres. (Most obviously the administration costs of operating the booking service, which tend to be higher for occasional centres, are not routinely apportioned; nor are the costs of moving examiners to part time centres.) Also, when a centre is selected for closure, the most significant cost saving might not be in these direct costs but in the saving of the costs which may be required to rebuild (£150 thousand to £250 thousand) or to refurbish a poor quality centre to bring it up to standard.

We do not have readily available the detailed analysis of volumes and revenue for each centre. This is information we normally monitor on a regional basis, although when we are considering the future requirements for a particular centre, volume data are assembled on a case by case basis (as in Annex A).

EDUCATION

Tuition Fees

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list which EU member states require students undertaking courses of higher education to contribute towards their tution fees, the proportion they are obliged to pay and the proportion of maintenance costs that are funded through student loans.

Mr. Boswell: Systems of financial support for students undertaking higher education courses vary widely across the EU, and the information requested is not available in a comparable form. The attached table, taken from "The Main Systems of Financial Assistance for Students in Higher Education in the European Community", summarizes the available information. Copies of this document will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Systems of Grants in the European Community—Eligibility and Portability

	Tuition fees	*Form of main financial support*	*Depends on income of student/parents/spouse*	*Depends on academic criteria*	*Percentage of all students receiving direct assistance*	*Amount variable according to income and/or place of residence*	*Other social benefits*
Belgium		Fr. Comm.					Family allowance paid until age 25
French community	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	Fr. C. 20	Yes	Tax allowances
Flemish community	Yes	Flem. Com.	Yes	Yes	Fl. C. 23	Yes	Reduced tuition less
		Grant					Concessionary fares
Denmark	No	Grant + loan	No	No	100	Yes	No
Federal Republic of Germany	No	Grant 50% loan 50%	Yes	Yes	West (33) East (90)	Yes	Family allowances until age 27 Tax allowances
Greece	No	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	7	Yes	Family allowances Free medical service Concessionary fares Free course material

	Tuition fees	*Form of main financial support*	*Depends on income of student/ parents/ spouse*	*Depends on academic criteria*	*Percentage of all students receiving direct assistance*	*Amount variable according to income and/ or place of residence*	*Other social benefits*
Spain	Yes	Grant	Yes	Yes	± 20	Yes	Grants: Travelling expenses Public transport Accommodation Exemption from tuition fees Course material
France	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	± 18	Yes	Exemption from tuition fees (in the public sector) Tax allowances Travelling expenses
Ireland	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	± 34	Yes	Reduced tuition fees
Italy	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	2·5	Yes	Family allowances paid until age 26 Exemption from tuition fees
Luxembourg	No	Grant + loan	Yes	No	80	Yes	Family allowances paid until age 27
Netherlands	Yes	Grant + loan	No (for the basic grant)	No	100	Yes	Family allowances Tax allowances Free pass for public transport
Portugal	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	No	10 to 15	Yes	Reductions on price of educational materials Free medical care, sports and cultural activities
United Kingdom	Yes	Grant + loan	Yes	Yes	76 Grant 28 Loan	Yes	Remission of tuition fees

Education Expenditure

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been made available for spending on education for *(a)* under-fives, *(b)* five to 10s, *(c)* 11 to 15s, *(d)* 16-plus and *(e)* other education in each local education authority in each of the last six financial years; and what is the figure for 1994-95.

Mr. Robin Squire: For the purpose of determining standard spending assessments, the education component of Standard Spending, net of specific grants, is divided into five sub-blocks—under fives, 5 to 10, 11 to 15, 16-plus, and other education. The table below sets out the figures for 1994-95. The figures for each of the last four financial years are set out in the "Standard Spending Assessment Handbook" copies of which have been placed in the Library. The local government finance system prior to 1990-91 was not constructed in such a way to provide data on a basis which is comparable with the present system. Neither education standard spending assessments nor the sub-blocks within them are ear-marked for local authority spending on education, as each authority is free to determine its spending priorities between and within the services for which it has responsibility.

Final 1994-95 Education SSAs in £ million

LEA	*5 to 10*	*11 to 15*	*Post 16*	*Under 5*	*Other*	*Total*
City	0·094	0·101	0·031	0·052	0·153	0·431
Camden	24·152	22·977	5·350	4·866	6·662	64·006
Greenwich	42·898	43·179	7·055	7·130	6·419	106·682
Hackney	41·212	39·377	4·436	8·630	7·805	101·461
Hammersmith	19·909	18·683	2·337	4·435	5·622	50·987
Islington	32·033	30·587	2·571	6·222	6·824	78·237
Kensington	11·129	10·547	1·979	3·480	5·068	32·203
Lambeth	48·450	42·096	3·791	9·961	10·321	114·618
Lewisham	45·488	40·062	5·969	8·150	8·002	107·672
Southwark	45·266	37·341	3·018	8·874	8·390	102·889
Tower Hamlets	49·500	47·207	5·739	7·858	6·836	117·139
Wandsworth	31·997	30·232	5·292	6·960	8·186	82·667
Westminster	16·547	16·571	3·327	4·223	6·462	47·130
Barking	25·569	25·895	4·058	3·867	3·222	62·611
Barnet	38·812	40·647	9·748	6·599	6·403	102·209
Bexley	32·909	35·877	7·226	4·541	3·873	84·425
Brent	44·443	45·755	10·505	7·228	7·503	115·434
Bromley	35·706	38·303	9·288	5·183	4·898	93·379
Croydon	47·043	47·340	4·370	7·789	7·045	113·587
Ealing	45·098	46·379	6·324	7·617	7·653	113·070
Enfield	41·031	44·749	10·318	6·319	5·872	108·289
Haringey	36·637	35·789	7·011	6·989	7·399	93·825

LEA	*5 to 10*	*11 to 15*	*Post 16*	*Under 5*	*Other*	*Total*
Harrow	28·778	30·487	2·492	4·247	4·015	70·019
Havering	33·636	39·474	3·777	4·214	4·033	85·134
Hillingdon	34·686	36·478	7·426	5·249	4·684	88·522
Hounslow	33·114	35·249	6·988	5·138	4·869	85·358
Kingston	16·351	17·033	3·938	2·523	2·504	42·350
Merton	22·086	21·610	3·023	3·904	3·592	54·216
Newham	53·402	49·902	4·489	9·179	7·452	124·425
Redbridge	34·201	37·892	9·676	5·126	4·943	91·838
Richmond	15·504	15·037	0·886	2·861	2·557	36·845
Sutton	23·551	25·614	5·421	3·611	3·095	61·293
Waltham Forest	39·212	39·973	3·063	6·847	6·408	95·503
Birmingham	180·359	180·941	24·380	26·456	24·826	436·962
Coventry	46·406	45·437	8·489	6·634	6·332	113·298
Dudley	40·578	43·935	2·191	5·199	4·829	96·732
Sandwell	46·228	47·783	4·444	6·430	6·164	111·048
Solihull	26·515	27·894	2·325	3·261	3·035	63·030
Walsall	39·947	42·581	8·022	5·147	4·764	100·462
Wolverhampton	38·373	41·354	6·978	5·603	5·444	97·752
Knowsley	31·748	31·400	3·524	4·515	4·121	75·309
Liverpool	82·376	80·424	14·901	11·925	12·607	202·234
St Helens	25·236	28·628	3·568	3·177	3·083	63·692
Sefton	40·079	42·421	6·607	5·291	5·175	99·572
Wirral	49·440	52·724	10·000	6·811	6·608	125·582
Bolton	39·585	40·437	4·122	5·275	4·642	94·061
Bury	24·712	24·739	0·790	3·213	2·683	56·138
Manchester	80·362	74·000	4·328	12·783	12·716	184·189
Oldham	35·814	37·036	3·411	4·727	4·060	85·047
Rochdale	33·463	35·168	3·509	4·628	3·875	80·644
Salford	33·580	32·620	1·266	5·039	4·881	77·387
Stockport	36·377	38·104	3·323	4·743	4·190	86·738
Tameside	32·203	32·741	1·298	4·287	3·587	74·115
Trafford	27·903	29·768	4·388	3·746	3·323	69·128
Wigan	43·739	46·765	2·832	5·617	5·017	103·969
Barnsley	30·993	32·760	1·679	4·035	3·748	73·214
Doncaster	46·339	48·269	8·992	5·779	5·233	114·613
Rotherham	36·787	40·715	5·299	4·766	4·223	91·790
Sheffield	67·117	70·845	6·856	9·733	10·818	165·369
Bradford	82·901	86·817	16·690	11·351	10·069	207·828
Calderdale	28·431	30·625	5·818	3·769	3·432	72·075
Kirklees	57·011	59·767	6·825	7·588	7·084	138·275
Leeds	95·531	100·415	16·773	13·325	13·120	239·163
Wakefield	43·805	44·806	4·242	5·747	4·999	103·599
Gateshead	27·630	29·324	4·839	3·783	4·031	69·607
Newcastle	38·741	37·970	6·368	5·691	6·565	95·334
North Tyne	25·545	28·616	4·225	3·215	3·138	64·739
South Tyne	23·456	24·614	1·550	3·006	2·945	55·570
Sunderland	45·737	50·038	3·791	6·033	5·764	111·363
Isles of Scilly	0·482	0·489	0·075	0·050	0·039	1·135
Avon	118·964	124·028	22·695	16·170	15·816	297·673
Bedfordshire	84·935	90·562	14·494	11·542	9·620	211·153
Berkshire	104·990	112·771	23·276	14·415	12·362	267·815
Buckinghamshire	92·967	108·421	26·206	12·203	10·125	249·922
Cambridgeshire	90·131	96·688	13·985	11·365	10·413	222·581
Cheshire	130·960	142·977	23·755	16·387	14·472	328·551
Cleveland	93·396	97·635	4·973	11·790	10·711	218·506
Cornwall	62·193	70·091	8·781	7·116	6·858	155·039
Cumbria	64·317	70·906	11·598	7·517	7·075	161·414
Derbyshire	120·831	134·559	18·395	15·232	13·656	302·673
Devon	127·648	139·392	22·471	15·909	16·290	321·710
Dorset	73·750	83·780	14·763	9·373	9·849	191·515
Durham	83·994	92·961	11·084	10·388	10·089	208·516
East Sussex	83·458	88·780	11·240	11·892	12·387	207·757
Essex	214·362	246·484	34·373	28·051	25·248	548·518
Gloucestershire	67·110	73·765	13·758	8·528	7·637	170·799
Hampshire	213·330	224·759	11·244	28·230	25·427	502·990
Hereford and Worcester	86·007	97·098	13·628	10·567	9·229	216·529
Hertfordshire	134·557	148·837	33·960	18·315	15·486	351·155
Humberside	127·253	137·132	14·389	16·144	14·964	309·881
Isle of Wight	16·881	18·822	4·061	1·910	2·060	43·735
Kent	211·578	240·234	48·900	27·953	24·857	553·522
Lancashire	200·410	211·902	18·264	25·773	23·593	479·942
Leicestershire	125·806	135·040	21·749	16·276	15·037	313·908
Lincolnshire	77·106	90·983	14·423	8·910	8·545	199·967
Norfolk	92·921	105·914	16·068	11·137	11·144	237·184
North Yorkshire	85·812	95·535	15·012	10·004	9·233	215·596
Northamptonshire	81·629	88·781	17·127	10·501	8·681	206·719
Northumberland	41·079	47·715	10·523	4·517	4·280	108·114
Nottinghamshire	138·285	147·203	21·827	18·437	17·685	343·437

LEA	*5 to 10*	*11 to 15*	*Post 16*	*Under 5*	*Other*	*Total*
Oxfordshire	72·808	74·776	14·115	10·404	9·248	181·352
Shropshire	56·084	60·895	5·825	6·700	5·992	135·496
Somerset	58·355	63·494	6·589	7·127	6·421	141·986
Staffordshire	140·652	151·381	21·201	17·126	15·181	345·541
Suffolk	77·752	87·428	17·077	10·309	8·610	201·176
Surrey	112·656	122·011	19·730	16·495	14·342	285·235
Warwickshire	61·346	67·073	10·664	7·500	6·783	153·367
West Sussex	85·237	98·666	14·897	11·127	10·363	220·291
Wiltshire	76·276	79·803	11·741	9·610	8·093	185·524

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the amount spent per pupil in nursery, primary, secondary, further and higher education or their equivalent in each country of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on expenditue per pupil/student is shown in table P6 of the OECD publication "Education at a Glance", published in December 1993, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been spent on education for *(a)* under-fives, *(b)* five to 11s, *(c)* 11 to 15s, *(d)* 16-plus and *(e)* other education in each LEA in each of the last five financial years; and what is the estimated amount being spent in 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: Available expenditure data cover whole schools and cannot readily be disaggregated between particular age ranges. The latest year for which information on actual expenditure by local education authorities (LEAs) is available is 1991-92. The following tables indicate, for each LEA in England, the net school-based expenditure in nursery and primary schools combined and in secondary schools in each year from 1987-88 to 1991-92.

Net institutional expenditure in nursery and primary schools

	1987-88 *£000*	*1988-89* *£000*	*1989-90* *£000*	*1990-91* *£000*	*1991-92* *£000*
ILEA	260,407	266,748	312,424	—	—
Corporation of London	—	—	—	404	551
Camden	—	—	—	16,681	19,909
Greenwich	—	—	—	35,026	36,739
Hackney	—	—	—	29,298	34,108
Hammersmith	—	—	—	17,244	18,267
Islington	—	—	—	24,558	33,234
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	—	12,745	14,361
Lambeth	—	—	—	33,411	38,218
Lewisham	—	—	—	32,029	32,794
Southwark	—	—	—	35,663	36,146
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	36,491	44,346
Wandsworth	—	—	—	28,800	35,893
Westminster	—	—	—	18,400	25,781
Barking	15,406	17,134	18,847	20,543	22,307
Barnet	n/a	26,530	29,896	34,373	37,813
Bexley	17,930	19,311	20,660	21,891	24,194
Brent	28,379	30,375	29,363	34,711	35,069
Bromley	21,733	23,836	24,672	27,337	28,321
Croydon	25,383	28,663	29,194	35,590	39,991
Ealing	n/a	35,143	38,165	44,149	46,309
Enfield	21,105	23,809	25,806	30,649	35,480
Haringey	n/a	n/a	28,047	31,376	34,023
Harrow	19,549	20,920	21,974	27,037	30,541
Havering	18,863	20,614	21,710	24,306	26,136
Hillingdon	19,089	21,437	23,340	27,937	30,181
Hounslow	n/a	22,556	24,270	26,906	28,181
Kingston upon Thames	9,763	10,870	11,761	13,567	14,889
Merton	8,475	10,600	11,689	20,344	22,944
Newham	n/a	27,996	30,633	33,135	38,014
Redbridge	16,851	18,349	19,275	23,202	26,273
Richmond upon Thames	10,341	11,470	12,836	14,539	16,633
Sutton	11,276	12,759	13,786	15,846	17,138
Waltham Forest	21,565	n/a	25,179	28,190	29,683
Birmingham	92,442	104,685	115,195	131,807	144,562
Coventry	26,113	28,468	32,878	36,577	36,976
Dudley	24,535	27,345	29,979	34,651	37,935
Sandwell	28,533	31,951	35,807	41,765	45,262
Solihull	15,944	18,090	20,686	22,343	24,559
Walsall	26,680	30,390	32,384	39,752	37,099
Wolverhampton	n/a	27,176	30,398	32,025	35,798
Knowsley	17,292	19,599	20,441	23,308	24,403
Liverpool	47,753	50,937	56,792	60,599	66,260
St. Helens	15,676	17,497	19,356	20,218	22,494
Sefton	22,774	25,353	28,297	32,364	34,035
Wirral	26,169	31,000	36,164	38,281	39,858

	1987-88 £000	1988-89 £000	1989-90 £000	1990-91 £000	1991-92 £000
Bolton	22,204	25,364	28,609	31,501	35,917
Bury	16,498	18,166	18,444	18,815	20,834
Manchester	44,212	n/a	54,692	58,314	63,942
Oldham	22,161	25,244	29,169	31,581	36,812
Rochdale	17,822	20,613	23,041	24,804	27,542
Salford	n/a	n/a	26,341	28,442	29,655
Stockport	22,204	24,612	26,518	30,883	32,452
Tameside	19,717	22,606	25,471	27,749	30,386
Trafford	16,476	18,059	18,915	20,960	23,828
Wigan	26,149	28,806	31,006	32,838	36,122
Barnsley	18,279	20,199	21,984	24,881	27,392
Doncaster	26,803	30,495	33,190	33,954	36,470
Rotherham	23,692	25,722	28,801	31,235	34,216
Sheffield	n/a	51,097	55,357	59,325	64,089
Bradford	39,103	43,058	46,923	55,126	61,118
Calderdale	16,890	20,762	21,034	26,666	29,080
Kirklees	32,357	36,747	40,146	43,539	48,113
Leeds	50,351	57,263	63,016	72,682	84,732
Wakefield	26,783	n/a	33,723	35,404	40,178
Gateshead	18,180	20,045	21,415	24,058	26,982
Newcastle upon Tyne	24,199	26,492	28,374	33,139	36,395
North Tyneside	15,949	16,891	19,069	19,829	21,253
South Tyneside	14,477	16,091	18,151	19,159	21,627
Sunderland	26,232	28,741	33,380	37,121	41,490
Isles of Scilly	237	256	262	295	314
Avon	72,569	79,420	90,054	100,375	110,777
Bedfordshire	40,007	43,054	47,433	53,536	59,484
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	64,485	78,749	89,161
Buckinghamshire	57,171	63,166	67,421	77,578	80,221
Cambridgeshire	51,142	57,398	64,086	71,547	80,770
Cheshire	76,313	83,838	90,114	107,654	117,127
Cleveland	52,508	60,660	64,973	72,311	76,244
Cornwall	33,103	37,858	41,193	45,034	53,147
Cumbria	42,710	47,116	51,841	55,661	60,723
Derbyshire	75,474	83,733	97,302	108,559	115,371
Devon	65,253	72,082	80,867	98,140	105,867
Dorset	37,291	41,308	45,381	53,169	58,708
Durham	55,317	60,549	66,407	74,425	75,864
East Sussex	40,565	45,718	51,111	57,379	67,004
Essex	112,068	127,739	137,646	148,619	150,942
Gloucestershire	39,526	43,653	46,795	49,856	59,642
Hampshire	115,144	127,695	138,560	157,176	183,608
Hereford and Worcester	42,766	46,072	52,632	63,230	68,885
Hertfordshire	75,938	87,768	96,552	104,267	116,114
Humberside	70,884	90,812	97,704	100,303	112,520
Isle of Wight	6,219	7,164	7,651	8,542	10,324
Kent	98,319	107,687	118,248	131,949	151,814
Lancashire	107,842	120,601	134,923	164,612	193,646
Leicestershire	70,356	81,363	89,238	98,521	114,762
Lincolnshire	40,523	46,070	50,793	56,787	63,253
Norfolk	60,648	68,025	68,520	76,701	87,633
North Yorkshire	48,930	56,069	59,477	67,386	79,659
Northamptonshire	42,089	48,231	52,529	59,042	65,287
Northumberland	18,831	21,558	22,876	25,841	29,117
Nottinghamshire	81,025	89,747	102,133	115,045	135,624
Oxfordshire	38,678	42,364	45,639	60,348	63,895
Shropshire	30,832	35,827	38,565	45,411	50,490
Somerset	29,978	34,592	38,414	41,423	46,080
Staffordshire	80,882	89,306	101,306	113,199	126,416
Suffolk	37,843	42,262	45,766	53,445	51,390
Surrey	68,923	78,672	85,485	98,463	108,096
Warwickshire	41,124	44,765	49,917	54,007	59,842
West Sussex	43,201	49,677	56,026	61,701	67,710
Wiltshire	39,796	44,850	48,631	55,310	62,484

Net institutional expenditure in secondary schools

	1987-88 £000	1988-89 £000	1989-90 £000	1990-91 £000	1991-92 £000
ILEA	283,760	256,818	276,796	—	—
Corporation of London	—	—	—	0	0
Camden	—	—	—	22,472	24,625
Greenwich	—	—	—	31,934	31,664
Hackney	—	—	—	20,373	21,613
Hammersmith	—	—	—	13,142	13,220

	1987-88 *£000*	*1988-89* *£000*	*1989-90* *£000*	*1990-91* *£000*	*1991-92* *£000*
Islington	—	—	—	17,401	22,215
Kensington and Chelsea	—	—	—	9,042	9,696
Lambeth	—	—	—	15,346	17,084
Lewisham	—	—	—	27,539	25,721
Southwark	—	—	—	21,564	21,685
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	26,565	30,322
Wandsworth	—	—	—	24,640	25,631
Westminster	—	—	—	21,132	23,270
Barking	16,903	18,058	19,077	19,935	20,285
Barnet	n/a	27,759	33,946	33,742	38,030
Bexley	23,765	25,640	25,844	27,638	29,323
Brent	31,556	35,019	23,821	24,202	26,136
Bromley	29,563	30,187	29,943	32,666	28,008
Croydon	32,929	34,770	31,362	32,576	35,490
Ealing	n/a	27,433	25,614	28,256	31,413
Enfield	26,215	27,124	28,740	32,009	38,254
Haringey	n/a	n/a	23,460	21,674	22,998
Harrow	17,932	16,361	15,296	18,092	19,039
Havering	27,832	29,809	31,761	33,487	35,688
Hillingdon	23,730	25,161	25,952	28,672	22,706
Hounslow	n/a	21,598	24,227	25,828	28,451
Kingston upon Thames	13,576	14,500	15,087	15,949	17,953
Merton	16,409	16,682	20,877	16,412	18,883
Newham	n/a	28,516	29,894	31,278	32,219
Redbridge	23,947	24,724	24,284	28,324	32,336
Richmond upon Thames	9,087	9,734	12,113	13,734	15,023
Sutton	14,345	15,722	18,205	19,962	18,769
Waltham Forest	31,034	n/a	28,730	30,931	29,865
Birmingham	104,093	109,867	114,324	123,816	128,357
Coventry	35,060	37,330	39,747	41,867	38,260
Dudley	29,014	31,612	31,435	32,167	35,557
Sandwell	34,851	37,470	30,580	41,901	41,077
Solihull	21,532	23,071	25,725	28,734	29,901
Walsall	33,247	35,913	37,175	39,900	39,080
Wolverhampton	n/a	29,722	30,809	31,629	33,210
Knowsley	21,412	22,577	19,835	20,160	20,477
Liverpool	55,291	57,903	59,622	62,393	65,674
St. Helens	22,158	24,309	25,159	24,470	25,965
Sefton	29,089	30,307	32,094	37,633	37,745
Wirral	35,522	40,144	41,260	43,865	44,333
Bolton	27,239	29,672	31,166	32,063	35,266
Bury	18,554	19,191	19,000	18,358	19,553
Manchester	46,963	n/a	53,154	51,386	54,676
Oldham	22,433	24,501	26,529	29,212	35,408
Rochdale	27,283	29,178	29,588	27,792	26,689
Salford	n/a	n/a	28,447	27,746	28,475
Stockport	29,459	32,282	32,842	35,236	38,014
Tameside	23,318	24,094	24,845	25,460	27,796
Trafford	23,622	25,042	21,021	22,325	23,030
Wigan	38,255	38,671	42,616	43,377	46,974
Barnsley	24,398	25,245	25,053	23,031	24,718
Doncaster	33,296	35,163	37,055	37,824	41,040
Rotherham	28,002	29,896	32,244	34,395	38,284
Sheffield	n/a	50,352	48,150	50,085	52,044
Bradford	65,003	72,730	70,523	77,637	78,890
Calderdale	20,944	22,778	21,075	26,179	23,758
Kirklees	41,469	45,337	46,580	48,078	51,615
Leeds	79,962	86,075	88,526	97,879	101,801
Wakefield	33,943	n/a	37,583	41,029	43,804
Gateshead	20,888	22,283	21,883	24,004	24,449
Newcastle upon Tyne	30,838	32,139	32,814	32,829	34,092
North Tyneside	25,905	27,001	27,254	28,214	30,889
South Tyneside	15,736	17,031	18,104	18,402	18,300
Sunderland	32,072	33,346	34,521	35,354	37,795
Isles of Scilly	345	399	415	487	466
Avon	83,817	90,667	95,238	101,094	106,638
Bedfordshire	66,501	72,902	78,194	80,258	88,540
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	77,592	85,887	88,943
Buckinghamshire	61,299	67,691	62,201	65,433	65,733
Cambridgeshire	60,585	65,844	67,080	74,971	82,347
Cheshire	101,137	107,246	111,186	122,600	132,968
Cleveland	65,265	73,426	74,905	78,830	82,752
Cornwall	43,834	48,193	49,299	53,917	56,275
Cumbria	53,290	56,641	57,230	60,643	64,703
Derbyshire	99,842	109,447	113,603	115,144	119,162
Devon	86,555	92,366	94,509	106,525	110,872
Dorset	53,569	58,266	63,126	68,240	70,712

	1987-88 *£000*	*1988-89* *£000*	*1989-90* *£000*	*1990-91* *£000*	*1991-92* *£000*
Durham	59,213	62,446	63,689	69,228	74,351
East Sussex	52,485	56,504	59,476	66,567	69,165
Essex	158,603	174,762	176,303	188,251	215,389
Gloucestershire	51,393	55,333	55,400	56,888	50,885
Hampshire	131,610	141,754	149,246	161,119	172,725
Hereford and Worcester	70,427	73,331	78,023	86,582	93,051
Hertfordshire	100,831	114,416	123,816	130,444	138,069
Humberside	98,838	109,653	102,864	105,286	119,365
Isle of Wight	14,556	15,949	16,116	17,821	19,702
Kent	144,757	157,284	155,894	173,843	185,340
Lancashire	140,608	149,517	152,507	158,438	178,812
Leicestershire	101,376	110,501	113,314	123,271	134,347
Lincolnshire	55,407	60,579	58,243	62,614	63,114
Norfolk	67,455	73,180	73,547	78,277	82,917
North Yorkshire	66,355	72,595	76,075	86,319	93,071
Northamptonshire	64,577	70,504	73,838	77,212	81,837
Northumberland	40,437	45,088	45,861	50,744	55,959
Nottinghamshire	110,060	117,526	123,887	138,107	155,956
Oxfordshire	54,969	56,103	60,428	70,294	69,574
Shropshire	45,754	50,181	49,965	55,116	61,126
Somerset	43,334	47,873	48,294	50,894	53,387
Staffordshire	112,975	118,466	122,153	129,556	138,811
Suffolk	64,609	71,526	84,434	93,670	79,273
Surrey	74,083	81,389	75,709	88,312	87,425
Warwickshire	41,497	45,650	44,991	46,756	49,618
West Sussex	57,563	60,652	68,081	74,530	83,374
Wiltshire	52,416	57,379	56,382	61,611	63,152

Notes:

1. Figures for 1989-90 to 1991-92 are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department of Environment. They include school-based spending on salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books, equipment and other supplies and services. From 1990-91 they also include unspent balances held by schools under local management schemes. Figures exclude spending on home to school transport, school meals, LEAs' central administration and financing costs of capital expenditure. Figures for 1987-88 and 1988-89 are taken from the Cipfa handbook "Education Statistics Actuals" for that year.
2. "n/a" indicates that a return was not received from the LEA.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what representations he has received to meet a delegation from south-east London further education colleges; and what was his response;

(2) what plans he has to meet principals of further education colleges in south-east London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: I hope soon to be able to take up an invitation received last year to visit Southwark college and to meet a number of principals of other London colleges. In addition, I am currently considering an invitation received on 22 February to visit Woolwich college.

Legal Practice Courses

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many discretionary grants for the legal practice course have been issued each year for the last five years;

(2) what is the total amount of money paid out by local authorities in discretionary grants for the legal practice course in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Teacher Training

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further consideration he has given to initial teacher training bursaries for shortage subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales have considered the future of the bursary scheme, in the light of buoyant recruitment to initial teacher training, the rising cost of bursaries and the availability of public funds.

They have concluded that bursaries of £1,000 should continue to be available in the academic year 1994-95 for full-time one and two-year PGCE and BEd courses in physics, chemistry, integrated science, mathematics, technology, modern foreign languages and Welsh. They have also decided that courses in biology beginning after July 1994, and all part-time—including Open university—courses beginning after December 1994, should not attract bursaries.

My right hon. Friends plan to review the bursary scheme in consultation with the proposed Teacher Training Agency in 1995.

School Buildings

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has received from Ofsted on the number and location of schools in buildings which are considered detrimental to the delivery of the national curriculum; and what steps he is taking in response.

Mr. Forth: Ofsted published reports on national curriculum subjects and on individual schools routinely comment on the suitability of school accommodation for its purpose. Decisions on the capital programme take this evidence into account.

HEALTH

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the level of net hospital and community health service current expenditure on (i) mental health, (ii) community care, (iii) acute services, (iv) regional area and district health authority headquarters staff and (v) other items in each year since 1973-74 expressed in 1993-94 prices, adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* changes in input unit costs;

(2) what was the level of net hospital and community health service current and net NHS current expenditure for each year since 1973-74 expressed in 1993-94 prices, adjusted by *(a)* the gross domestic product deflator and *(b)* changes in input unit costs.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the tables. It is not possible to adjust for changes in input unit costs beyond 1990-91 for capital expenditure or for national health service current expenditure, or beyond 1991-92 for hospital and community health service current expenditure. The Government's spending plans for 1994-95 reflect the priority being given to health. The health service in England will receive a further £1·6 billion next year, bringing the total real terms increase since 1978-79 to 64 per cent.

HCHS net capital expenditure

	Cash		*Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices*		*Adjusted by input unit costs to 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1973-74	—	236	—	1,456	—	1,265
1974-75	—	242	—	1,248	—	1,043
1975-76	—	326	—	1,340	—	1,075
1976-77	—	355	—	1,286	—	1,046
1977-78	—	314	—	1,001	—	809
1978-79	—	357	—	1,024	—	824
1979-80	—	392	—	963	—	749
1980-81	—	536	—	1,113	—	814
1981-82	—	646	—	1,223	—	950
1982-83	—	676	—	1,195	—	979
1983-84	—	685	—	1,157	—	972
1984-85	—	760	—	1,223	—	1,035
1985-86	—	796	—	1,213	—	1,024
1985-86	888	—	1,354	—	1,142	—
1986-87	892	—	1,321	—	1,093	—
1987-88	902	—	1,268	—	1,051	—
1988-89	906	—	1,194	—	998	—
1989-90	1,191	—	1,467	—	1,202	—
1990-91	1,372	—	1,564	—	1,372	—
1991-92	1,469	—	1,575	—	—	—
1992-93	1,672	—	1,726	—	—	—
1993-94	1,912	—	1,912	—	—	—

HCHS gross capital expenditure

	Cash		*Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices*		*Adjusted by input unit costs to 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1973-74	—	236	—	1,456	—	1,265
1974-75	—	242	—	1,248	—	1,043
1975-76	—	326	—	1,340	—	1,075
1976-77	—	355	—	1,286	—	1,046
1977-78	—	314	—	1,001	—	809
1978-79	—	365	—	1,047	—	842
1979-80	—	402	—	988	—	768
1980-81	—	552	—	1,147	—	838
1981-82	—	666	—	1,261	—	980
1982-83	—	695	—	1,229	—	1,006
1983-84	—	718	—	1,213	—	1,019
1984-85	—	810	—	1,303	—	1,104
1985-86	—	881	—	1,343	—	1,133
1985-86	964	—	1,469	—	1,240	—
1986-87	1,041	—	1,542	—	1,275	—
1987-88	1,103	—	1,551	—	1,286	—
1988-89	1,186	—	1,563	—	1,307	—
1989-90	1,423	—	1,753	—	1,436	—
1990-91	1,551	—	1,768	—	1,551	—
1991-92	1,639	—	1,757	—	—	—
1992-93	1,785	—	1,843	—	—	—
1993-94	2,089	—	2,089	—	—	—

NHS net capital expenditure

	Cash		Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices		Adjusted by input unit costs to 1990-91 prices	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
1973-74	—	245	—	1,512	—	1,313
1974-75	—	246	—	1,269	—	1,060
1975-76	—	332	—	1,365	—	1,095
1976-77	—	361	—	1,308	—	1,063
1977-78	—	321	—	1,024	—	827
1978-79	—	365	—	1,047	—	842
1979-80	—	407	—	1,000	—	778
1980-81	—	552	—	1,147	—	838
1981-82	—	673	—	1,275	—	990
1982-83	—	700	—	1,238	—	1,014
1983-84	—	718	—	1,213	—	1,019
1984-85	—	793	—	1,276	—	1,080
1985-86	—	842	—	1,283	—	1,083
1985-86	927	—	1,413	—	1,193	—
1986-87	940	—	1,392	—	1,152	—
1987-88	926	—	1,302	—	1,079	—
1988-89	921	—	1,213	—	1,015	—
1989-90	1,221	—	1,504	—	1,232	—
1990-91	1,425	—	1,625	—	1,425	—
1991-92	1,523	—	1,633	—	—	—
1992-93	1,752	—	1,809	—	—	—
1993-94	1,965	—	1,965	—	—	—

NHS gross capital expenditure

	Cash		Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices		Adjusted by input unit costs to 1990-91 prices	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
1973-74	—	245	—	1,512	—	1,313
1974-75	—	246	—	1,269	—	1,060
1975-76	—	332	—	1,365	—	1,095
1976-77	—	361	—	1,308	—	1,063
1977-78	—	321	—	1,024	—	827
1978-79	—	373	—	1,070	—	861
1979-80	—	417	—	1,025	—	797
1980-81	—	568	—	1,180	—	862
1981-82	—	693	—	1,312	—	1,019
1982-83	—	719	—	1,271	—	1,041
1983-84	—	752	—	1,271	—	1,068
1984-85	—	845	—	1,359	—	1,151
1985-86	—	928	—	1,415	—	1,194
1985-86	1,013	—	1,544	—	1,303	—
1986-87	1,089	—	1,613	—	1,334	—
1987-88	1,129	—	1,587	—	1,316	—
1988-89	1,221	—	1,609	—	1,345	—
1989-90	1,454	—	1,791	—	1,467	—
1990-91	1,604	—	1,829	—	1,604	—
1991-92	1,688	—	1,810	—	—	—
1992-93	1,866	—	1,927	—	—	—
1993-94	2,038	—	2,038	—	—	—

HCHS net current expenditure

	Cash		Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices		Adjusted by input unit costs to 1991-92 prices	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
1973-74	—	1,633	—	10,078	—	13,141
1974-75	—	2,325	—	11,992	—	13,737
1975-76	—	3,050	—	12,541	—	13,991
1976-77	—	3,479	—	12,603	—	14,023
1977-78	—	3,892	—	12,411	—	14,446
1978-79	—	4,374	—	12,545	—	14,813
1979-80	—	5,221	—	12,831	—	14,673
1980-81	—	6,888	—	14,307	—	15,124
1981-82	—	7,597	—	14,388	—	15,416
1982-83	—	8,181	—	14,464	—	15,588
1983-84	—	8,595	—	14,522	—	15,582
1984-85	—	9,084	—	14,615	—	15,566
1985-86	—	9,579	—	14,601	—	15,647
1985-86	9,769	—	14,890	—	15,958	—
1986-87	10,513	—	15,568	—	16,050	—

	Cash		*Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices*		*Adjusted by input unit costs to 1991-92 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1987-88	11,628	—	16,348	—	16,361	—
1988-89	12,903	—	17,000	—	16,415	—
1989-90	13,812	—	17,015	—	16,530	—
1990-91	15,556	—	17,734	—	17,127	—
1991-92	17,707	—	18,985	—	17,707	—
1992-93	19,461	—	20,093	—	—	—
1993-94	20,132	—	20,132	—	—	—

NHS net current expenditure

	Cash		*Adjusted by GDP deflator to 1993-94 prices*		*Adjusted by input unit costs to 1990-91 prices*	
	A	*B*	*A*	*B*	*A*	*B*
1973-74	—	2,263	—	13,966	—	15,559
1974-75	—	3,091	—	15,943	—	15,990
1975-76	—	4,081	—	16,781	—	16,391
1976-77	—	4,671	—	16,921	—	16,588
1977-78	—	5,234	—	16,690	—	17,068
1978-79	—	5,908	—	16,945	—	17,435
1979-80	—	7,040	—	17,301	—	17,313
1980-81	—	9,148	—	19,001	—	17,757
1981-82	—	10,181	—	19,282	—	18,214
1982-83	—	11,119	—	19,658	—	18,962
1983-84	—	11,776	—	19,897	—	19,108
1984-85	—	12,614	—	20,294	—	19,291
1985-86	—	13,334	—	20,324	—	19,385
B:						
1985-86	13,249	—	20,195	—	19,261	—
1986-87	14,233	—	21,077	—	19,465	—
1987-88	15,742	—	22,132	—	19,934	—
1988-89	17,492	—	23,046	—	20,137	—
1989-90	18,637	—	22,959	—	20,221	—
1990-91	20,906	—	23,833	—	20,906	—
1991-92	23,836	—	25,556	—	—	—
1992-93	25,723	—	26,559	—	—	—
1993-94	27,283	—	27,203	—	—	—

Notes:

1. Figures in column A have been adjusted to reflect the changes which came into effect from April 1991 (see paragraphs 9 and 10 of the 1991 Departmental Report). Figures in column B do not reflect these transfers and are therefore not directly comparable with those for later years.
2. Figures for 1993-94 are estimates.

Community Care

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the local authorities participating in the study of community care, housing and homelessness, which is being undertaken by her Department's social services inspectorate and the NHS management executive.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 8 February at columns *195-97*. The study is being undertaken not only by the National Health Service Management Executive and the social services inspectorate, but also jointly with the Department of the Environment.

HIV

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pregnant women have been found to be HIV positive in each of the last five years; and what are the projected figures for the next two years.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the results of unlinked anonymised surveillance of pregnant women and neonates. All babies born to HIV-infected women will carry materanal antibodies to HIV at birth, regardless of whether they have been infected with the virus, so the dried blood spot figures reflect the infection status of the mother rather than the babies.

Many HIV-infected women do not know their HIV status. It is estimated that, up to 1992, in south east England, including London, the proportion of pregnant HIV-infected women whose infection was recognised at the time of birth was under 20 per cent.

The Department does not have projections of the number of pregnant HIV-infected women over the next two years.

Prevalence of HIV-1 Positive Women Identified from Unlinked Surveys in England 1988-93

Survey Group and Year	*Area/Region*	*Number tested*	*Number HIV infected*	*Prevalence per cent.*
Pregnant women attending antenatal clinics				
1990	[1]London	42,737	77	0·180
	Outside London	40,382	4	0·010
1991	[1]London	54,338	114	0·210

Survey Group and Year	*Area/Region*	*Number tested*	*Number HIV infected*	*Prevalence per cent.*
	Outside London	90,883	15	0·017
1992	[1]London	52,354	137	0·260
	Outside London	78,864	6	0·008
Dried blood spots neonates				
1988[1]	Inner London	12,721	4	0·030
	Outer London	18,288	6	0·030
	Outside London	20,649	1	0·005
1989[1]	Inner London	31,162	21	0·070
	Outer London	43,288	18	0·040
	Outside London	55,676	3	0·005
1990[1]	Inner London	28,384	39	0·140
	Outer London	38,769	16	0·040
	Outside London	49,789	5	0·010
1991	[1]Inner London	34,733	55	0·160
	[1]Outer London	47,945	50	0·100
	Outside London	70,076	5	0·007
1992	Inner London	47,769	102	0·210
	Outer London	59,177	58	0·100
	Outside London	143,156	12	0·008

[1] Survey coordinated by the Institute of Child Health, London (ICH).

[2] The survey is based mainly in the Inner London area.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the capitation position of each regional health authority in each of the last three years and at the latest available date showing *(a)* the percentage that they are above or below capitation and *(b)* the cash amount that this represented of current budgets.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. The figures for 1994-95 reflect the position for the present regional health authorities which will result from the allocations detailed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) on 7 December 1993 at columns *198-200.*

RHA distance from weighted capitation shares

Region	*1991-92* *£ million*	*Per cent.*	*1992-93* *£ million*	*Per cent.*	*1993-94* *£ million*	*Per cent.*	*1994-95* *£ million*	*Per cent.*
Northern	−0·4	0·0	−3·3	−0·3	−6·3	−0·5	−1·4	−0·1
Yorkshire	−7·4	−0·7	−3·8	−0·3	−3·1	−0·2	−1·9	−0·1
Trent	−9·3	−0·7	−4·7	−0·3	−10·9	−0·6	−4·7	−0·3
East Anglian	−3·9	−0·7	−2·0	−0·3	−4·7	−0·7	−2·3	−0·3
North West Thames	10·0	0·9	−1·5	−0·1	26·2	2·0	18·5	1·5
North East Thames	11·7	0·9	10·2	0·7	16·9	1·1	5·4	0·4
South East Thames	−7·8	−0·6	−4·1	−0·3	4·4	0·3	−2·9	−0·2
South West Thames	1·5	0·2	20·5	1·9	12·8	1·2	7·8	0·7
Wessex	−5·8	−0·7	−2·9	−0·3	−9·5	−0·9	−5·3	−0·5
Oxford	−3·8	−0·5	−2·3	−0·3	−3·1	−0·4	−3·1	−0·4
South Western	−6·6	−0·7	−3·3	−0·3	−7·8	−0·7	−2·6	−0·2
West Midlands	−1·9	−0·1	−5·2	−0·4	−9·6	−0·5	−5·2	−0·3
Mersey	11·9	1·6	6·7	0·8	−1·4	−0·2	−0·3	0·0
North Western	11·6	0·9	−4·3	−0·3	−3·9	−0·3	−2·1	−0·1

Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many diagnoses of Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy were made in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: I understand that it is very rare. Specific numbers of diagnoses are not known.

NHS Fundholders

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners in the Barnsley, East constituency are NHS fundholders; and what plans she has to make it obligatory for general practitioners who are fundholders to inform their patients of their status.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas and only regional information is available centrally. For local information in the Yorkshire region the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority.

We would expect GP fundholders to inform patients about their fundholding status in the most appropriate way, and the National Health Service Management Executive has produced a patient information leaflet to assist with this, copies of which are available in the Library.

Private Patients

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she is expecting the publication of "Private Patients in National Health Service Hospitals—Finished Consultant Episodes" for 1992-93; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: By the end of this financial year.

Oral Health

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to complete her consultations on the Bloomfield report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have completed the formal consultation. Our proposals will be announced in due course.

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to secure greater transparency in the affairs of non-elected bodies whose membership in whole in part is appointed by her or which exercise functions previously carried out by local authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's White Paper "Open Government" set out proposals for introducing greater public access to information held by Government local authorities and the national health service. From 1 April 1994 the Department of Health, including the NHS Management Executive and departmental agencies, will act upon the principles of the Government's code of practice. In addition, the Management Executive, in partnership with the NHS, is developing a code of practice for the NHS in response to the White Paper. This will be in place by the end of the year.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year from 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each of the national health service bodies (England) as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* The information is shown in the table. Projected expenditure is not available centrally.

Gross expenditure of national health service bodies (England)

	1990-91[1] *£ million*	*1991-92[1]* *£ million*	*1992-93* *£ million*
Regional Health Authorities[2]	549	1,042	1,099
District Health Authorities[2]	15,765	14,660	11,652
Dental Practice Board[3]	22	1,037	904
Family Health Services Authorities[4]	5,967	5,762	6,379
Health Education Authority	31	32	34
Mental Health Act Commission[5]	2	2	2
National Blood Authority	26	47	47
NHS Trusts[2]	—	2,431	5,979
National Health Service Supplies Authority[6]	—	1·4	419
Prescription Pricing Authority[7]	42	39	38
Special Health Authorities of the London post graduate teaching hospitals[2]	325	351	371
Special Hospitals Service Authority	103	111	119
United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority	—	2	3

Source:

Appropriation account figures of the Mental Health Act Commission and Special Hospitals Service Authority, annual accounts of all other NHS bodies 1990-91 to 1992-93 and annual financial returns of regional, district and special health authorities of the London postgraduate teaching hospitals (1991-92 and 1992-93).

[1] Figures expressed in 1992-93 prices using GDP deflators.

[2] Data for 1992-93 is provisional.

[3] In April 1991 the Dental Practice Board took over the main responsibility from FHSAs for making payments to dentists. Figures for 1991-92 and 1992-93 therefore include payments to dentists which were previously included in the FHSA accounts. The payments are net of dental charges collected and retained by dentists.

[4] These figures include payments for FHS services but are net of patient charges collected and retained by FHS contractors.

[5] Figures include administration support provided by Department of Health staff seconded to the Commission.

[6] The NHS Supplies Authority was set up in October 1991. The 1991-92 figure therefore reflects the first six months' expenditure.

[7] Administrative expenditure, including capital costs which vary from year to year.

Meningitis

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she had with the National Meningitis Trust prior to cancellation of the poster campaign on meningitis planned by her office; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Representatives of the trust met Departmental officials in September and December last year to discuss options for a meningitis campaign, and the trust provided the first draft for the information leaflet, "Knowing about Meningitis and Septicaemia", which has had a wide distribution. The trust also saw early ioeas for posters, which are among the futher steps under consideration.

Orthopaedic Services

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are waiting for orthopaedic care operations by local health authority areas.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on waiting times for in-patient and day case treatment by speciality for district health authorities is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". This is published twice yearly and copies are available in the Library.

Infertility

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information has been collected by her Department on levels of funding for NHS infertility treatment over the past five years.

Mr. Sackville: District health authorities and general practitioner fundholders are responsible for identifying the health needs of their local population and for commissioning the appropriate services. Details on the level of funding allocated for national health service infertility services in each area are not collected centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines have been issued by her Department regarding the exchange of human ova for infertility treatment: and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority issued general directions on 1 August 1991 to licensed centres, entitled "Giving and receiving money or other benefits in respect of any supply of gametes or embryos". Copies of these directions—Ref.D.1991/2—will be placed in the Library.

These directions were issued under section 12 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 which lists the conditions that must be satisfied before a centre is granted a licence for treatment, storage and/or research under the Act.

Water Fluoridation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require the publication of all responses received by individual health districts within the area covered by Yorkshire Water plc during the consultation process, concerning fluoridation of water supplies indicating (1) the responses in favour and (2) the responses against for each district *(a)* the number received from outside Yorkshire Water's area, *(b)* the number received from outside the individual district's area, *(c)* the number received from individual employees of the health service, *(d)* the number of anonymous letters, *(e)* the number of letters received from the same person and *(f)* the number of duplicate letters or cards; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fluoridation of water supplies is a local matter. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the relevant district health authorities for details.

Community Care

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue guidance to *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* private employers regarding procedures to enable community care staff to raise concerns about fraud or client care.

Mr. Bowis: It is employers' responsibility and that of professionals in all care sectors to ensure that any evidence of bad practice or misconduct is investigated appropriately and without delay.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on general practitioners, management and administration, secretary/clerical and receptionists for each year since 1 October 1990 in general practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 21 January at column *888*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of general practitioners, management and administrative staff, secretary/clerical and receptionists in general practice at 1 October 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not yet available.

Contraception

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence her Department has considered on the extent of the statistical relationship between contraceptive advice and *(a)* reduced pregnancies among girls aged under 16 years and *(b)* increased sexual activity among girls aged under 16 years.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware of a recent review by the World Health Organisation of 19 studies in different countries into the effects of sex education. The conclusion of the review was that sex education does not promote earlier or increased sexual activity in young people. Copies of the review will be placed in the Library.

Health Education

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on making health education available to all people aged over 13 years.

Mr. Sackville: Our policy for people of all ages is to enable them to make informed choices on matters affecting their health, by providing information appropriate to their needs and understanding.

Doctors (Freedom of Speech)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what differences there are in the provisions made for freedom of speech by *(a)* doctors employed by directly managed units and *(b)* doctors employed by NHS trusts under the General Whitley Council agreements;

(2) when and with whose agreement changes to the General Whitley Council arrangements regarding doctors' freedom of speech have been made since 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no General Whitley Council agreement relating to freedom of speech for staff.

"The Right to Complain"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to extend the principle of staff advocacy for service users outlined in "The Right to Complain" practice guidance on complaints procedures, issued by the social services inspectorate, to NHS staff and patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have asked Professor Wilson from Leeds university to carry out a review of the national health service complaints procedures and await his report.

Unused Medicines

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her estimate of the total value of medicines that are prescribed but remain unused by the patient during a course of treatment;

(2) what research has been done by her Department regarding the proportion of prescribed medicines which remain unused by the patient during a course of treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: As I have already made clear, the Department is in the process of developing a study to examine the proportion, and therefore the value, of prescribed medicines which remain unused by patients during courses of treatment. Details will be announced shortly.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines exist for the disposal of prescribed medicines that are not used or rendered unusable during a course of treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: For several years, members of the public have been encouraged to return unwanted medicines to community pharmacies for disposal, rather than adding them to household waste or the sewer system. Local disposal of unwanted medicines and poison—("DUMP" —campaigns have periodically raised the profile of this method of disposal, and since 1992 the regular collection and disposal of unwanted medicines through community pharmacies has been funded centrally, since these schemes reduce not only the risk of accidental poisoning but also of environmental damage associated with disposal to sewers.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has issued guidance to the profession on ensuring the correct disposal of waste medicines, recommending incineration for most medicines except where manufacturers advice differs. Waste prescription medicines are special waste and subject to the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Public-Media Relations

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how her Department is monitoring the implementation of the guidance for staff in relations with the public and the media; and if she will list those trusts and authorities which have adopted local procedures.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service employers are responsible for the implementation of the guidance for staff in relations with the public and the media".

Under-age Pregnancy

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence her Department has considered on the extent to which the rate of pregnancies in girls aged under 16 years in Holland is a result of health initiatives other than the inclusion of sex education in the school curriculum.

Mr. Sackville: We are aware that in the Netherlands sex education in schools plays an important part in a comprehensive approach to the health of teenagers.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were admitted to hospital as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty gas appliances for each year since 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

The figures are not available in the form requested. However, since 1989 the numbers of injuries caused by carbon monoxide poisoning relating to the supply and use of flammable gas reported to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, are as follows:

	Numbers
1988-89	94
1989-90	88
1990-91	131
1991-92	184
1992-93	[1]170

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[1] Provisional.

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths there were from carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty gas appliances in each year since 1989.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1989 the numbers of fatalities caused by carbon monoxide poisoning relating to the supply and use of flammable gas reported to the Health and Safety Executive, under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, are as follows:

	Number
1988-89	41
1989-90	34
1990-91	30
1991-92	33
1992-93	[1]39

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[1] Provisional.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Water (Protection Grants)

12. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many grants were given by her Department to the National Rivers Authority, local authorities and internal drainage boards towards the costs of approved sea defence, coastal protection, urban flood relief and arterial drainage works.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My Department approves about 200 such schemes each year providing protection to around 20,000 homes, 2,500 businesses and 40,000 hectares of farmland.

Dairying

13. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I hope to meet the president of the National Farmers Union on 28 February and no doubt we shall discuss the dairy sector.

Food (Deregulation)

14. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on deregulation policy in relation to food.

Mr. Soames: We announced food law deregulations last September. It involves taking a critical look at all existing regulations, while recognising the overriding need to continue to maintain food safety and protect the consumer.

Arable Area Payments

15. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many landowners in *(a)* Nottinghamshire, *(b)* the east midlands and *(c)* England are receiving annual payment under the arable area payments scheme in the latest financial year; and what amount has been paid for each of these areas.

Mr. Jack: I hope to be in a position to publish figures on a county basis within the next two weeks and I shall place the information in the House Library as soon as it is available.

Environment (Support)

16. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on progress in relating agricultural support to environmental needs.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am greatly expanding the range of environmental schemes available to farmers and have successfully pressed for environmental objectives to be integrated into other aspects of the common agricultural policy.

Agricultural Co-operatives

17. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals she has to increase support for agricultural co-operatives and share farming.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Group marketing grant gives considerable aid to co-operatives.

New, broader, marketing development scheme will provide another £10 million over the next three years.

Bananas

18. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations she has had with the chairman of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce in relation to the issuing of licences for the importation of bananas.

Mr. Jack: The board's officials have issued licences in 1993 and 1994 in accordance with EC regulations. Ministers have not been involved.

Agri-environment Programme

19. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost of the agri-environment programme in the United Kingdom in 1994-95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Forecast expenditure on the United Kingdom agri-environment programmes is £64 million in 1994-95, rising to over £100 million in 1995-96.

Organic Farming

20. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on supporting organic farmers already in production.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have received more than 240 letters on supporting organic farmers already in production.

I met representatives of the organic farming movement on 15 November last year and agreed that there should be further discussions with officials and another ministerial meeting in the spring concentrating on the role of organic farming in relation to reform of the European Community's common agricultural policy.

Set-aside

21. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to make changes to the current set-aside arrangements in order to make the system more sympathetic to wildlife; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For 1994 we have modified the management conditions for set-aside to make the system more sympathetic to wildlife.

In addition, the introduction of non-rotational set-aside will provide new opportunities for farmers to manage their land positively for conservation benefits, for example, to create wildlife corridors or "green veins" throughout the countryside, to provide habitats for birds.

The recent agreement at the December Council will permit member states to allow farmers to transfer their set-aside obligations to other farmers in areas where additional set-aside will bring environmental benefits.

Once detailed EC rules for transfers have been adopted, I shall be considering whether to introduce appropriate arrangements in the United Kingdom for 1995.

Pig Producers

22. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she plans to meet her French counterpart to discuss subsidies to French pig producers.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has no plans to discuss aid being paid to French pig producers with the French Minister for Agriculture but we have questioned the legality of the aid at meetings of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in October 1993 and January 1994.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she will take to improve the pig industry; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Pig producers in the European Community operate in a free market and their prices are determined by supply and demand. Production levels are high at the moment, because of recent expansion in most member states, including the United Kingdom. Producer prices will improve once supplies are cut back.

The European Commission has just announced a programme of special export refunds to Russia, Ukraine and Belorous which will remove 40,000 tonnes of pigmeat from the Community market.

The pig industry also benefits from Government spending on research and development in the pig sector. Spending in the current year by the Agriculture Departments amounts to £14 million. A further amount is spent by the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

Dioxin

23. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a further statement regarding the dioxin in the Bolsover-north Derbyshire area.

Mr. Soames: The most recent results for dioxin concentrations in milk from farms in the Bolsover area of Derbyshire were announced in the November edition of the Food Safety Directorate information bulletin and I wrote to the hon. Member on 15 December 1993 enclosing a copy of the announcement and details of the results.

These indicated that the degree of dioxin contamination in the area was falling.

The Ministry will undertake a further survey of milk from farms in the area this year.

"At the Farmer's Service"

24. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the publication of "At the Farmer's Service".

Mr. Jack: Some 16,500 complete sets and 19,000 individual sections of "At the Farmer's Service" have been distributed. No critical representations have been received.

Diet and Health

25. **Mr. Coe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if her Department intends to carry out research into the impact of agricultural policies on the diet and health of the citizens of the European Union.

Mr. Soames: My Department has already carried out a study on the effect of the common agricultural policy on nutrition in the United Kingdom.

The study concluded that the CAP does not have a major effect on either the total or the broad pattern of food consumption in the United Kingdom, nor does it present significant barriers to healthy eating.

There is a secure supply of a wide range of nutritious foods in the United Kingdom from which our consumers can construct healthy diets.

Similar exercises with regard to the citizens of other European Union countries are outside the responsibilities of the United Kingdom Government.

Battery Hens

26. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she proposes to improve the welfare of battery hens.

Mr. Soames: The commission has been reviewing the battery hens directive.

We await their proposals for a revision of the directive and for new standards for other systems.

We shall be pressing for the highest welfare standards to be set on a Community basis for laying hens in all systems of production.

Milk Marketing Scheme

27. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on changes in the format and timing of the implementation of the new milk marketing scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Milk Marketing Board submitted amendments to its reorganisation scheme on 9 February.

We shall be issuing a further consultation document as soon as we are in a position to do so.

If the reorganisation scheme were to be approved the existing milk marketing scheme would come to an end on vesting day.

Female Agricultural Workers

28. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest available figure for the average weekly earnings of female agricultural workers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The average weekly earnings for regular hired female agricultural workers, whole-time and part-time in the United Kingdom for the year ending September 1993 is estimated to be £111, working an average of 28·8 hours per week. This includes payments for basic, overtime and holiday hours, plus value of annual bonus, perquisites and other payments. It also includes the value of employer's contribution to employee's council tax in England, Wales and Scotland, if any.

Forestry

29. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met representatives of the Forestry Commission to discuss her proposals for the future of forestry in England.

Mrs. Shephard: I met the director general of the Forestry Commission earlier this month, when we discussed a range of subjects including the work of the forestry review group.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to her European counterparts in opposition to the EC's latest proposals on the transport of live animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Commission's proposals published in July 1993 were discussed in the December Agriculture Council. Regrettably, agreement could not be reached as it was clear that the measures proposed would have failed to improve the welfare of animals during transport.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to take measures to ensure that the journey time for animals being transported for slaughter does not exceed the maximum eight hours.

Mr. Soames: The Government will continue to press for improved Community rules on animal transport and strict enforcement in all member states. In the meantime our national measures, which require feeding, watering and resting of animals to take place at maximum 15 hour intervals during a journey, will remain in place. In preparing for further Community discussions the Government is taking full account of the case for journey limits.

Comfrey

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations she has received concerning the ban on comfrey and comfrey products; and what is the estimated number of consumers affected by the ban.

Mr. Soames: I refer to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 12 July 1993 at column 397. I continue to receive representations from the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy on this matter. Consumption data are not collected for comfrey, but I take action whenever necessary to protect consumers.

Badgers (Tuberculosis)

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement detailing the policy of her Department for identifying and destroying badgers which carry tuberculosis and infect livestock.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) on 8 December at columns *260-61*.

Radioactive Contamination

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what use has been made by her Department or consultants to her Department of satellite monitoring of grazing land to assess the degree of persistent radioactive contamination still present from the Chernobyl nuclear accident of 1986.

Mr. Soames: As part of a wider research programme this Department has engaged a contractor on a research project which uses global positioning satellite systems to record the grazing behaviour of the most highly contaminated sheep from a flock. The objective is to check whether the technique provides a means of identifying the areas of greatest post-Chernobyl contamination. In the light of the outcome of the project, appropriate means of treating contaminated areas will be considered.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the schemes her Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food operates a scheme to assist staff facing financial difficulties where the current market conditions result in their existing property realising less than the amount of the original mortgage.

The normal line of assistance by the Ministry to meet these shortfalls is an interest-bearing loan at commercial rates repayable over up to 12 years. However, where individuals would face genuine financial hardship as a result of being required to pay interest on a loan and a mortgage, an interest-free advance of salary up to a maximum of one year's gross pay repayable over up to 15 years may be granted. In very exceptional cases, where a combination of these measures is not sufficient to solve the problem, some level of write-off may be made.

In the financial years 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date, my Department has awarded one member of staff an advance of salary under this scheme. This was made in the year 1993-94 for an amount of £5,913. No write-offs have been made.

Hill and Upland Farms

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the equivalent numbers in terms of hill and upland sheep, cattle, and mixed cattle and sheep of four, 15, 16, 39, 40, 69, 70, 99, 100, 199 and 200 British farm size units.

Mrs. Shephard: British size units were used for farm classification in the United Kingdom between 1987 and 1992 and were based on 1980 standard gross margins, SGM. The current system of farm classification uses European size units, ESU, which are based on 1988 SGM. There are slight regional differences in the values, but in the north of England one ESU equals either 24·5 hill ewes or 3·7 hill beef cows. The relationship between the old BSU and the ESU measures is not straightforward but one BSU was equivalent to 57·1 hill ewes or 8·4 hill beef cows.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases the Child Support Agency has dealt with in *(a)* Birkenhead, *(b)* Bolton, *(c)* Bury, *(d)* Chorley, *(e)* Crewe, *(f)* Ellesmere Port, *(g)* Preston and *(h)* Warrington; and how many are pending in each of these towns.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. I would, however, refer the hon. Member to the national report of the agency's performance, which is placed in the Library each month.

Absent Parents

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in what percentage of the total number of cases where absent parents are in receipt of income support maintenance payments deducted from benefit have not been passed on to the parent with care;

(2) in how many cases to date the minimum child maintenance has been deducted from the benefit paid to absent parents on income support but not passed on to the parent with care.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 23 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about the payment of child maintenance by absent parents receiving income support.

Where the absent parent is receiving income support, and has been assessed to pay the minimum amount of £2·20 and the parent with care is not receiving benefit, payment is transferred to the parent with care quarterly in arrears.

There have been a number of cases where maintenance payments have not been forwarded. The Child Support Agency very much regrets that this should have occurred. Payments are now being made, and in all cases should be up to date within a fortnight. New arrangements have also been put in place to ensure that payments will be made on time in future.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Benefits

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* single people and *(b)* married couples had marginal tax rates from wages, including benefit withdrawal, of (i) 40 per cent. but less than 50 per cent., (ii) 50 per cent. but less than 75 per cent., (iii) 75 per cent. but less than 100 per cent. and (iv) 100 per cent. or more in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: Estimates for 1989-90, in the precise form requested, could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Information on marginal deduction rates for 1989-90 can be found in "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" Command 1014 published 30 January 1990, a copy of which is in the Library. Estimates in 1993-94 are in the table.

Marginal deduction rates for single people and couples—1993-94

Marginal deduction rate	*Single*[1]	*Couples*[2]
100 per cent. and over	0	0
75 per cent. to 99 per cent.	230,000	270,000
50 per cent. to 74 per cent.	55,000	35,000
40 per cent. to 49 per cent.	75,000	10,000

[1] Includes lone parents.
[2] Includes cohabitating couples.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he makes of the numbers of people and the proportion of claimants receiving the new lower rate of benefit under incapacity benefit between the 28 and 52 week who will be eligible for income support.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that around 25 per cent. of people awarded incapacity benefit after April 1995 will also be entitled to income support between the 28th and 52nd weeks of incapacity. This represents an average at a point in time of 20,000 people in 1995-96, and 30,000 in 1996-97.

Notes:

(1) Estimates rounded to the nearest 5,000.

(2) Estimates take account of the effect on incapacity benefit recipients of the planned changes in the qualifying conditions for the disability premium paid with the income related benefits.

Child Support Act

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the Government intend to publish their response to the first report of the Social Security Committee on the operation of the Child Support Act 1991, House of Commons Paper 69.

Mr. Burt: The Government have, today, responded formally to the Select Committee's report and a copy of the response has been placed in the Library.

Occupational Deafness

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will announce a decision on the recommendations by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, in Cm 817, to extend the list of prescribed occupations for which industrial injuries disablement benefit can be paid in respect of occupational deafness.

Mr. Scott: We have accepted the council's recommendations to extend the list of prescribed occupations to include those occupational activities mentioned in the report. Regulations will be laid to implement the recommendations from October 1994.

The occupational activities mentioned in the council's report are:

air arc gouging
the use of band saws, circular saws or cutting discs for cutting metal in the metal founding or forging industries
the use of circular saws for cutting products in the manufacture of steel
the use of burners or torches for cutting steel based products
work in the immediate vicinity of skid transfer banks
work in the immediate vicinity of knockout and shake out grids in foundries
mechanical bobbin cleaning
the use of vibrating metal moulding boxes in the concrete products industry
the use of high pressure jets of water or a mixture of water and abrasive material in the water jetting industry
work in ships' engine rooms
the use of circular saws for cutting concrete masonry blocks during manufacture
the use of pneumatic percussive tools on stone in quarry works
burning stone in quarries by jet channelling processes
in connection with work on gas turbines:

Performance testing
installation testing of replacement engines
acceptance testing of Armed Service fixed wing combat planes

work involving the use of, or in the immediate vicinity of, grinding tools on metal other than sheet metal or plate.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants for *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance have requested a medical; and what those figures represent as percentages of the total number of claimants for each of those allowances.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested.

About 20 per cent. of all claims for both disability living allowance and attendance allowance are decided after a report by an examining medical practitioner has been obtained. The information collected by the Department does not identify why such a report has been requested. This may be at the request of the customer, as part of the monitoring of the claims process, or to provide additional evidence for the adjudication officer when reaching his decision.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secetary of State for Social Security what was the total number and percentage of claims for disability living allowance where the adjudication officer required further evidence; and what were the number and percentage requiring *(a)* an examining medical practitioner report, *(b)* general practitioner factual reports, *(c)* other evidence and *(d)* both general practitioner and examining medical practitioner evidence.

Mr. Scott: Information is not held about the number of cases in which both a general practitioner's factual report and an examining medical practitioner report is required. The other information is in the table.

Decisions requiring further evidence
1 February 1992 to 31 January 1994

	Number	*Percentage of all decisions*
(a) An examining medical practitioner report	193,836	20
(b) General practitioner's factual report	262,587	27
(c) Other evidence	25,266	3
TOTAL	481,689	49

Source:
DSS (Analytical Services Division): 100 per cent. count of cases.
Due to rounding the percentages do not sum.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of disability living allowance claimants who are in receipt of other sources of income, by source and average amount of such other income.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many requests for *(a)* reviews and *(b)* appeals to a disability appeal tribunal have been received by his Department in each month since April 1993; and how many were outstanding at the end of each month;

(2) how many requests for *(a)* reviews and *(b)* appeals to a disability appeal tribunal have been received by each disability benefits centre area since April 1993; and how many are outstanding in each area.

Mr. Scott: Figures are not available for each separate disability benefit centre, however the national figures are in the tables.

Reviews	*Received*	*Outstanding*
1993		
April	16,982	47,307
May	19,664	37,928
June	22,368	31,895
July	21,342	27,285
August	21,664	30,824
September	24,180	32,823
October	24,640	35,413
November	27,573	35,908
December	17,189	29,119
1994		
January	24,449	24,996

Appeals

	Received	*Outstanding at* [1]*DLAU*	*Outstanding at* [2]*ITS*
1993			
April	2,710	4,649	4,574
May	2,756	4,906	6,680
June	3,247	5,468	8,283
July	3,019	5,173	10,138
August	2,182	3,761	12,075
September	2,061	2,655	13,494
October	2,081	2,481	14,530
November	2,519	2,630	14,975
December	1,728	2,209	15,594
1994			
January	2,367	1,906	15,790

Source: DSS (Analytical Service Division): 100 per cent. count of cases.
[1] DLAU is the Disability Living Allowance Unit
[2] ITS is the Independent Tribunal Service

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time between lodging an appeal and the disability appeal tribunal hearing in cases concerning disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: I am informed by the president of the Independent Tribunal Service that in January the average time from lodging a disability living allowance appeal to the date of hearing was 24 weeks.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of disability living allowance awards upon review were *(a)* maintained, *(b)* allowed, *(c)* disallowed, *(d)* increased, *(e)* varied or *(f)* reduced; and how many are outstanding.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table and relates to all review decisions. Decisions may be reviewed because the claimant's condition has deteriorated since the original decision was given or because additional evidence has been provided.

Review decisions 1 February 1992 to 31 January 1994

Type of decision	*Number*	*Percentage*
All decisions	291,887	100
Award maintained (original award upheld)	130,691	44·8
Allowed (original disallowance overturned)	76,764	26·2
Disallowed (original disallowance upheld)	8,137	2·8
Increased (original award increased)	55,564	19·0
Varied (rate of award unchanged but duration varied)	5,807	2·0
Reduced (original award reduced)	1,090	0·4
Number outstanding	24,966	

Source: DSS (Analytical Services Division): 100 per cent. count of cases.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of disability living allowance awards upon appeal were *(a)* maintained, *(b)* allowed, *(c)* disallowed, *(d)* increased, *(e)* varied or *(f)* reduced; and how many are outstanding.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table. It covers the period 1 February 1992 to 31 January 1994.

	Number	*Percentage*
Total number of decisions	13,892	100·0
Award maintained	5,096	26·7
Allowed	5,024	36·2
Disallowed	990	7·1
Increased	1,421	10·2
Varied	58	0·4
Reduced	2	0·0
Outstanding	15,790	—

Notes:
1. "Award maintained" is where an original award of benefit was upheld.
2. "Allowed" is where the original disallowance was overturned.
3. "Disallowed" is where an original disallowance was upheld.
4. "Increased" is where an original award was increased.
5. "Varied" is where the rate of the award was unchanged, but the duration altered.
6. "Reduced" is where the original award was reduced.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of new claims for disability living allowance are successful; what percentage of successful claimants received each component of the benefit; and what percentage of unsuccessful claims are followed up by an application for a review.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table. The percentage of unsuccessful claims which are followed by a request for review cannot be determined. The number of reviews shown include cases where benefit has been awarded but a higher rate or a change in the length of the award is sought. Moreover, reviews may arise for reasons other than dissatisfaction with a decision, for example, a change of circumstances such as a deterioration in their condition.

1 February 1992 to 31 January 1994

Disability living allowance components	*Number of awards*	*Percentage of total awards*
Higher rate care	17,000	[3]4
Middle rate care	26,000	[3]6
Lower rate care	45,000	[3]10
Higher rate mobility	124,000	[3]27
Lower rate mobility	22,000	[3]5
Higher rate care/higher rate mobility	66,000	[3]14
Higher rate care/lower rate mobility	14,000	[3]3
Middle rate care/higher rate mobility	34,000	[3]7
Middle rate care/lower rate mobility	30,000	[3]7
Lower rate care/higher rate mobility	47,000	[3]10
Lower rate care/lower rate mobility	30,000	[3]7
Total successful	[2]453,000	[3]54
Total unsuccessful	387,000	[3]46
Reviews received	317,000	n/a

[1] Claims is to disability living allowance as a whole and not to any particular component.

[2] Owing to rounding, figures may not sum.

[3] As a percentage of decisions made.

Source: DSS (Analytical Services Division). Based on a 100 per cent. count.

Shuttle Service

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out *(a)* the number of firms which submitted bids for the contract for the shuttle service between City station and Quarry house, Leeds, *(b)* the price and terms on which the contract was issued and *(c)* the role played by TFM Granada in the process of awarding the contract.

Mr. Burt: Six firms submitted bids for the contract. The contract was awarded on the basis that the successful company had priced the contract realistically and competitively and had a high standard in both buses provided and the drivers who operated them. In satisfying these criteria the company concerned represented the best value for money.

The role played by TFM Granada in these proceedings was that of facilities management. It was responsible for the placing of the initial advertisement, arranging submission of tenders and organising the boards to oversee the opening and evaluation of tenders.

After summarising the activities of the tender board and evaluation panel it presented an analysis of the contract award panel and implemented their findings. TFM was not a member of the contract award panel which comprised representatives of the Department occupying the building, including financial services.

The contract was issued for a three-year period and the cost for the first year is £23,224·36.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Lilley: I have no evidence of any such directions being issued in the Department of Social Security since 1979.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dental Decay

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table indicating for five-year-old children for *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available, the average number of teeth suffering from dental decay, analysed by region for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The most recent available information relates to 1989. The average number of decayed teeth in five-year-old children in Northern Ireland by health and social services board area is set out in the table.

	Number
Eastern	1·5
Northern	1·5
Southern	1·6
Western	1·6

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Statistics Advisory Committee.

Mr. Tim Smith: Members currently appointed to the Statistics Advisory Committee are:

Mr. D. E. Harvey *(Chairman)*
Dr. C. W. Jefferson
Mr. I. Carroll
Mr. G. F. Gilpin
Mr. W. A. Doran
Mr. R. M. Foreman
Mrs. J. Trewsdale
Mr. P. Gorecki
Mr. J. McGibbon
Mr. G. Fulton

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) who are the members currently appointed to Enterprise Ulster;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to Ulster sheltered employment;

(3) who are the members currently appointed to each of the committees for the employment of disabled people;

(4) who are the members currently appointed to the construction industry training board;

(5) who are the members currently appointed to the Training and Employment Agency advisory board.

Mr. Tim Smith: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. J. S. Crozier to Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, dated 23 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your questions about the members of Enterprise Ulster (No. 234), Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd (No. 266), the Committees for the Employment of Disabled People (No. 272), the Construction Industry Training Board (No. 273) and the Training and Employment Agency Advisory Board (No. 275). A list of the members of each of these bodies is set out below:

Enterprise Ulster

Mr. L. O'Hagan OBE—Chairman
Mr. P. McWilliams OBE
Mrs. P. Bateson
Mr. W. M. Scallon
Mrs. H. Sloan
Mr. T. Murray
Mr. J. Crooks
Mr. P. A. Ferris
Mr. J. A. Greeves

Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd

Mr. J. C. Morton—Chairman
Mr. S. R. Reed
Mrs. B. M. P. Grant
Mrs. I. Colvin
Mr. D. McClure
Mr. A. Thompson

North Eastern Committee for the Employment of Disabled People

Mr. M. Kelly—*Chairman*
Mr. J. J. Healy
Mrs. E. Kenny
Mr. T. Shawe
Mrs. E. Weir
Mr. K. McAdams
Mr. S. Lightowler
Miss R. Baxter
Mr. P. Hanna
Ms E. Lee
Miss E. J. Black
Mr. B. Graffin

Belfast Committee for the Employment of Disabled People

Mr. M. McIlwrath—*Chairman*
Ms P. Tolan
Mrs. A. Foreman
Mr. L. Dunbar
Mr. M. O'Brien
Mr. O. Adams
Mrs. G. Mills
Mr. J. Deery
Dr. P. Darragh

Southern Committee for the Employment of Disabled People

Mr. D. McClure—*Chairman*
Mr. H. Foster
Mr. F. McCormack
Mrs. M. McAnallon
Mr. S. Reavey
Mr. W. Keown
Mrs. E. Ringland
Mr. D. Preston

Western Committee for the Employment of Disabled People

Mr. M. Haverin—*Chairman*
Ms G. Mercer
Mrs. E. Waterson
Miss E. Dunlop
Mrs. E. Gallagher
Mr. S. Millar
Mr. N. Young
Miss B. McCollum
Mr. E. O'Neill

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Mr. W. F. Gillespie OBE—Chairman
Mr. S. Campbell
Mr. W. A. Doran
Mr. D. N. Dennison
Mr. D. McClure
Mr. T. Patterson
Mr. D. Poole
Mr. P. Rogers
Mr. J. Agnew
Mr. H. Burns
Mr. J. Crooks
Mr. T. D. Douglas MBE
Mr. J. Kirkwood
Mr. W. Martin
Mr. J. Patterson
Mr. K. Chambers
Mr. S. Cox
Professor B. Norton

Training and Employment Agency (T&EA)

Dr. S. J. Spence OBE—Chairman
Mr. B. Carlin
Mrs. S. Davidson
Professor W. Ewart
Professor J. Fulton
Mr. H. Hastings
Ms M. Lyons
Mr. A McClure
Mr. J. McCusker
Mrs. C. McKenna
Mr. A. Smith
Mr. J. Kirkwood

I trust this information is helpful.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Fisheries Conservancy Board are as follows:

Dr. J. Parsons (Chairman)
Mrs. C. M. Kennedy (Deputy Chairman)
Mr. A. Kilgore
Mr. J. S. McCreight
Mr. C. Refausse
Mr. J. Haughey
Mr. J. J. Conlon
Mr. P. A. Duffy
Sir Patrick Macnaghten
Reverend O. P. Kennedy
Mrs. K. Power-Brazil
Mr. R. Montgomery
Mr. W. Baird
Mr. R. Farrell
Mr. J. Mulvenna
Mr. E. B. Gracey
Mr. R. G. McAleese
Mr. R. T. Carlisle
Mr. G. P. Gallagher
Mr. P. Prunty
Mrs. J. McVitty
Mr. J. D. Houston

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the wages councils in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: None—All the wages councils in Northern Ireland were abolished on 7 February 1994.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current membership of the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Mr. John B. McGuckian *(Chairman)*
Mr. Paul McWilliams
Dr. John Spence
Mr. John Lavery
Mr. Roy Bailie

Mrs. Jennifer D'Abo
Mr. Trefor Campbell
Mr. John Freeman
Mr. Roger Aldridge
Mr. Terry Carlin
Mr. Roy McNulty
Dr. Maria Moloney

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current membership of the Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Mrs. A. F. Shaw *(Chairman)*
Mr. P. Killen, OBE
Mr. W. S. Donaghey
Mr. J. Robinson
Mr. L. McBrinn
Mr. P. Larkin
Ms R. Lilley
Mr. R. W. McGhie, MBE
Mr. P. Devine
Mr. J. A. Speers

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland are:

Robert G. Cooper
Ernie McBride
J. Paul M. Donaghy
Jane O'Dempsey
James O'Hara
Richard J. Gordon
Norman Dickinson
Myrtle Richardson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Fishery harbour authority.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Northern Ireland Fishery harbour authority are as follows:

Mr. C. Whitley *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. McMichael *(Vice-Chairman)*
Mr. W. Newell
Mr. P. Milligan
Mr. W. W. Cornwall
Mrs. A. E. McBride
Mr. J. Mawhinney
Mr. H. Annett

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the industrial research and technology unit.

Mr. Tim Smith: The current members of the board of the industrial research and technology unit are:

Professor Peter McKie *(Chairman)*
Professor Eric Beatty, MBE
Mr. Frank Graham
Mrs. Gillian Gracey
Mrs. Joan Ruddock
Mr. Jim McCusker
Professor Fabian Monds
Dr. Tom Little
Mr. Ken Atkins
Mr. William Morris
Mr. Jim Collins

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Labour Relations Agency.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members of the Labour Relations Agency are:

Mr. F. A. Mackle, OBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. P. Bloch
Ms A. Kilmurray
Mr. J. Nash
Mr. J. L. O'Hagan, OBE
Mr. R. Steele
Mr. E. Miller
Mr. J. G. Lyttle
Ms M. McIvor
Mr. S. W. Anderson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the scheme of compensation for loss of employment through civil unrest.

Mr. Tim Smith: The scheme of compensation for loss of employment through civil unrest consists of a chairman Dr. J. L. McQuitty, OBE QC and two members—one from each of the following panels:

Employers' representatives
Mr. J. Dunlop, CBE
Mr. P. Killen

Employees' representatives
Mr. A. Snoddy
Ms E. May

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who is the current Northern Ireland commissioner for the rights of trade union members.

Mr. Tim Smith: Mrs. M. A. Dinnsmore is the Northern Ireland commissioner for the rights of trade union members.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Lady Anne McCollom *(Chairman)*
Mr. Gary Mills *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. David J. Gray
Mrs. Brenda McErlane
Mr. Neil McLaughlin
Miss Mary McGrane
Mr. Daniel McGuinness
Mrs. Jean McVitty
Mr. W. Brian Oliphant
Mrs. Nuala O'Loan
Mr. Edward Rafferty
Mr. Denis B. Smith
Mr. Samuel R. Stewart
Mrs. Angela Welch

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tim Smith: The members currently appointed to the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mr. D. Connolly *(Chairman)*
Mr. W. Keys *(Vice Chairman)*
Mr. G. Murray
Mrs. V. Walker
Mr. J. McCosker
Mrs. E. McMichael
Mrs. J. Neill
Ms A. McLaughlin
Mr. A. Keery
Mr. T. Benson

Mrs. J. Baird
Mr. A. Kane
Mr. C. McFarland
Alderman J. Parkes
Councillor F. Cobain
Councillor Mrs. D. Field
Alderman F. Proctor

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Sir John Wheeler: Allowable expenses payable to staff who are transferred, in the public interest, to a new location are contained in the Northern Ireland civil service pay and conditions of service code, and the home civil service departmental pay and conditions of service code.

Departments can, however, make additional payments in cases where existing provisions do not adequately cover all of the necessary costs incurred by staff and where there is financial hardship. Each case is considered on its merits.

In 1992-93 there were no cases, while in 1993-94 to date additional payments amounting to £1,965·00 have been made to two members of staff.

Industrial Earnings

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the cash income and *(b)* the real income of industrial workers in Northern Ireland in the longest available series of years since 1964, taking the latest available year as the base year.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information requested is readily available only from the new earnings survey for 1971 onwards. The table provides details of the average gross weekly earnings of employees—on adult rates—who work in manufacturing industries. The information on the retail prices index, all items, required to convert these to real terms is published in table 6.4 of the *Employment Gazette* for 1993 and in table 26 of the *Annual Supplement to Economic Trends* for earlier years.

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates: Manufacturing Industries

	Full-time men £ per week	*Full-time women £ per week*	*Full-time adults £ per week*
1971	29·3	14·6	24·6
1972	32·3	16·8	27·2
1973	37·0	19·1	31·3
1974	42·7	21·9	36·4
1975	55·2	31·0	48·1
1976	68·1	40·6	59·9
1977	70·7	43·9	62·9
1978	83·2	51·8	73·5
1979	96·5	55·4	82·8
1980	111·3	66·4	96·0
1981	124·1	78·4	110·2
1982	131·8	84·2	117·4
1983	141·7	88·8	126·6
1984	155·0	93·0	137·5
1985	166·6	105·0	147·4
1986	171·4	107·6	151·6
1987	187·8	112·8	165·9
1988	195·4	116·5	169·5
1989	211·5	134·0	186·3
1990	235·4	143·0	205·7
1991	250·6	152·3	220·3
1992	275·0	167·5	241·8
1993	279·2	172·3	247·7

Farm Buildings and Machinery

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money was spent by Northern Ireland farmers on *(a)* new buildings and *(b)* farm machinery in real and cash terms in each of the latest 10 available years, taking the latest available year's figures as the base year.

Mr. Ancram: Estimates of capital investments in current terms in buildings and works and plant, machinery and equipment for the years 1984 to 1993 are given in the accompanying table, together with estimates in real terms in index number form.

Estimated annual capital investment in fixed assets and equipment in current terms, 1984-1993

£ million

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Total buildings and works	134·02	110·40	100·10	83·60	68·46	76·91	81·80	54·03	53·69	55·79
Total plant, machinery and vehicles	44·51	54·60	43·37	41·68	52·06	57·38	50·73	47·79	61·27	68·00
Total investment	178·53	165·00	143·47	125·28	120·52	134·29	132·50	101·82	114·96	123·79

[1] Provisional.

Estimated annual capital investment in fixed assets and equipment in real terms, index (1993=100)

£ million

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Total buildings and works	378·90	294·03	257·79	206·97	161·46	168·32	163·46	102·05	97·70	100·00
Total plant, machinery and vehicles	103·25	119·31	91·63	84·66	100·74	103·03	83·18	74·06	91·47	100·00

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Total investment	227·48	198·05	166·52	139·78	128·10	132·46	119·33	86·67	94·28	100·00

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Statute Law Committee for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

The Right Hon. Sir Brian Hutton (Chairman)
Mr. J. W. Bailie
The Right Hon. Lord Justice Carswell
His Honour Judge Chambers QC
Mr. E. A. Comerton QC
Mr. P. Coghlin QC
Mr. S. Fell
Dr. P. Freeman
Mr. G. T. A. Gray
Professor D. S. Greer
Miss E. M. Hughes
Mr. J. A. D. Kennedy
Mr. D. A. Lavery
Mr. G. Myles
Mr. W. G. Nabney
The Right Hon. Sir Robert Porter QC
Mr. J. Ross
Mr. J. L. Semple

Agricultural Land

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the price of each class of agricultural land sold in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years as defined by the terms non-less-favoured areas, new less-favoured areas and old less-favoured areas.

Mr. Ancram: Information on the price of agricultural land sold in Northern Ireland differentiated by less favoured areas category is not available. However, the overall average price of agricultural land sold in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years for which complete information is available was:

	£/ha
1988	2,855
1989	3,359
1990	3,464
1991	3,458
1992	3,613

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Sir John Wheeler: From records currently available formal directions have been issued on the following occasion—1982.

DEFENCE

Royal Air Force (Women)

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking fully to integrate women into the RAF; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Women in the Royal Air Force are eligible for nearly all branches and trades in the RAF and already compete on equal terms with men for appointments, training places and trades. In order to eliminate any possible artificial barrier to further integration, and to enhance career opportunities for women to reach the highest ranks, it has been decided, with the approval of Her Majesty the Queen, to discontinue use of the generic title "WRAF" with effect from 1 April 1994.

Gulf War

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Iraqi prisoners taken during Operation Desert Storm had been issued with uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment that was of the green/black camouflage variety for theatres of war in northern Europe.

Mr. Hanley: There is no record of Iraqi prisoners wearing uniforms or having been issued with associated equipment of the sort used by the United Kingdom or other NATO armed forces. It is, however, possible that United Kingdom or NATO clothing may have been provided to those Iraqi prisoners who at the time of capture were found to be inadequately clothed.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the United Kingdom's armed forces personnel who went to the Gulf to fight, or were in support, during Operation Desert Storm, had been issued by the time of their arrival in the Gulf with uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment, of the desert camouflage variety.

Mr. Hanley: Only a very small proportion of the armed forces personnel who went to the Gulf were issued with desert uniforms prior to deployment. The majority were issued initially with either temperate or tropical clothing and provided with desert clothing in theatre once this was available.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many prisoners taken during Operation Desert Storm were found to be wearing uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment, manufactured or used by *(a)* the United Kingdom's armed forces and *(b)* other NATO forces.

Mr. Hanley: There is no record of Iraqi prisoners being found to be wearing uniforms, or having been issued with associated equipment, of the sort used by the United Kingdom or other NATO armed forces.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what volume of uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment was declared surplus to requirements and disposed of to the Government of Iraq in the 10 years prior to Operation Desert Storm *(a)* comprising of a camouflage style appropriate for use in northern Europe and *(b)* comprising of a camouflage style appropriate for use in the tropics or desert theatres of war.

Mr. Aitken: My Department sold surplus combat clothing, No. 2 dress and combat kit, boots, DMS and webbing equipment to Iraq during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The equipment and materiel were surplus to service requirements and at the time there were no sales restrictions placed on the customer countries.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what volume of new uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment designed for use in desert theatres of war was ordered following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq; and at what cost.

Mr. Aitken: The cost of new uniforms and related equipment ordered following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and designed for use in desert theatres of war was £39,401,000. A breakdown of the items is shown in the table.

Item	*Quantity*
Jacket, Desert Combat	425,227
Trousers, Desert Combat	432,242
Hat, Desert Combat	97,878
Cover, Helmet Desert	58,125
Sweat Rags	854,452
Vest, Combat	407,041
Underpants, cotton	478,267
Headnet, Insect	44,333
Sunglasses/Cases	145,187
Goggles	79,887
Shoulder Mark, Desert	4,330 prs
Badges Rank, Desert	51,350
Combat Body Armour, Filler	50,744
Combat Body Armour, Cover	146,731
Chagel (Water Bag)	87,040
Water Bottles/Lids	88,044
Boots, Desert Combat	102,170
Boots, Chukka	65,989
Coveralls, Armoured Fighting Vehicle Crewman	7,700
Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) Suits	66,718
NBC Bandage Covers	55,000
Washnet, Soiled Linen	144,448
Socks, Lightweight	80,000
Face Veil, Desert	119,488
Jackets, Tropical	23,400
Trousers, Tropical	27,000

Staff Costs

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on pay and allowances of, and related equipment for, accredited service attachés, defence advisers and dedicated support staff in each of the past four financial years.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

	£
Financial year 1990-91	29,200,000
Financial year 1991-92	27,600,000
Financial year 1992-93	28,800,000
Financial year 1993-94[1]	29,900,000

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[1] Current forecast.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reports he has received of fighting around Prozar and Gorni Vakuf on 11 February; what reports he has received from UNPROFOR about the firing of shells by Muslim forces into civilian areas; and whether Her Majesty's Government will propose air strikes against Muslim forces at the next meeting of NATO.

Mr. Hanley: We have not received any reports of fighting around Prozar on 11 February. In Gorni Vakuf, small arms fire was reported on the 11th, and there have been periodic reports of the shelling of civilian areas by all three factions in Bosnia. The North Atlantic Council meeting of 9 February gave authority for air strikes, against whatever party, in the event of further bombardment of Sarajevo, or failure to withdraw heavy weapons from the 20 km exclusion zone.

Pregnancy

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *940*, whether the figures given of the number of women who left the armed forces since 1980 because they became pregnant also include female officers who prior to 1986 were employed in the armed forces as medical, dental, veterinary and legal specialists.

Mr. Hanley: No. The figures for the years 1980-81 to 1990-91 do not include female officers in the medical, dental, veterinary and legal specialisations who left the services as a result of pregnancy. The figures for these officers could only be provided at disproportionate cost and effort.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what textual errors have been identified in the text of the chemical weapons convention, Cm 2331.

Mr. Hanley: Six textual errors have been identified in the text of the chemical weapons convention published by HMSO as Miscelleneous No. 21 (1993), ref. Cm 2331. They are:

Page 29, Schedule 1, A, (1): "$\_C_{10}$" should read "$\leq C_{10}$".

Page 29, Schedule 1, A, (2): "$\_C_{10}$" should read "$\leq C_{10}$".

Page 29, Schedule 1, A, (3): "$\_C_{10}$" should read "$\leq C_{10}$".

Page 29, Schedule 1, B, (10): "$\_C_{10}$" should read "$\leq C_{10}$".

Page 30, Schedule 2, B, (9): "Quinuclidine–3–o1" should read "Quinuclidin–3–ol".

Page 30, Schedule 2, B, (14): "3,3–Dimethylbutane–2–o1" should read "3,3–Dimethylbutan–2–o1".

These errors all appeared in the English language version of the text, as deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Publications

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* monthly and *(b)* quarterly journals and publications his Department and the armed forces produce (i) for specific readership, (ii) for general readership and (iii) for regiments or specialist readerships; and if he will list them in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Information on all such journals and publications is not held centrally, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. There are, however, three publications, produced centrally, which are made available for sale to members of the general public. These are *Navy News*, *Soldier* and *RAF News*.

Malaysia

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with which countries Her Majesty's Government have entered into a memorandum of understanding concerning defence contracts; and when they were entered into.

Mr. Aitken: My Department, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, has entered into many memoranda of understanding which are relevant to defence exports. Some of these relate to specific defence contracts, others are more general or cover co-operation over a range of equipments. Not all these MOUs result in any contractual activity. Our records show that such memoranda of understanding have been signed with the following countries:

Algeria, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Republic of Ireland, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand, USA.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total estimated cost in 1993-94 of running the Malaysian project office; and what are its total running costs since inception.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 22 February 1994 at column *134*.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those companies about which the Government have given advice as to technical competence to the Malaysian Government since September 1988.

Mr. Aitken: My Department frequently advises on the technical competence of companies, but does not make firm recommendations. Advice is given on a Government to Government basis and is therefore confidential. The choice of contractor lies solely with the customer.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom companies have been awarded defence contracts since the 1988 memorandum of understanding was signed with the Malaysian Government; and what was the subject matter of each contract.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 21 February at columns *69-70*. Further details are a confidential matter between the supplier and the purchaser.

Ark Royal

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of Ark Royal.

Mr. Hanley: As we have previously made clear, the Royal Navy intends to maintain three Invincible class aircraft carriers, with two operational at any one time. In accordance with this long-standing practice, HMS Ark Royal will be placed in a state of extended readiness in the autumn. After a period of time in this state, she will, under current plans, be refitted and then returned to active service.

EMPLOYMENT

Remploy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the pay of Remploy workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The settlement for 1993-94 was 1·5 per cent.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people would have been registered as unemployed in January 1979 in *(a)* York parliamentary constituency, *(b)* York travel-to-work area, *(c)* north Yorkshire, *(d)* Yorkshire and Humberside and *(e)* Great Britain if the figures had been calculated on the same basis as currently; and what proportion of employees in employment in each case those figures represent.

Miss Widdecombe: Claimant unemployment figures based on the current coverage of the count are available from the Department's consistent seasonally adjusted series. This series is not available below the level of standard regions.

Seasonally adjusted narrow-based rates of unemployment, showing the claimant unemployed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed, can be calculated only from 1983 onwards.

The available information for the Yorkshire and Humberside region and for Great Britain is given in the following table:

Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment

Date	*Yorkshire and Humberside Level (000's)*	*Great Britain Level (000's)*
January 1979	94·8	1,047·8

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out in a table the employment change for each region and for Great Britain as a whole between December 1990 and December 1993 with *(a)* the percentage change in employees, *(b)* the percentage change in employees and self-employed together and *(c)* the total change; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Due to the amount of information requested, I will write to the hon. Member enclosing a regional breakdown. Information for Great Britain is as follows:

Changes in employment in Great Britain

	Employees in employment Per cent.	*Employees and self-employed Per cent.*	*Civilian work force in employment Per cent.*
December 1990—December 1991	−3·3	−3·5	−3·7
December 1991—December 1992	−2·8	−3·0	−2·9
December 1992—September 1993	+0·3	+0·5	+0·3

UN Conference on Women

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he plans to publish the United Kingdom report to the fourth United Nations conference on women.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State plans to publish the final report in June 1994. Copies of the report will be placed in the Library.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each training and employment council *(a)* the level of funding obtained by the TEC from his Department and other sources and *(b)* the number of staff employed for each year since their establishment.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 13 December 1993, *Official Report*, column *512*.

This provides details of the level of funding made available to each training and enterprise council by the Department for the last three years.

The Department does not maintain a record of TECs' income from other source. The TECs' published accounts, copies of which are held in the Library, contain all the information publicity available on this subject.

The Department does not collect information on the number of staff employed by TECs.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a copy of the planning guidance for training and enterprise councils for 1994-95.

Miss Widdecombe: I can advise my hon. Friend that arrangements have been made for a copy of the latest planning guidance for training and enterprise councils for 1994-95 to be placed in the Library.

Corby Jobcentre

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were signed off from the Corby jobcentre without reason being given after a restart interview during 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. William Powell, dated 24 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of people who were signed off without a reason being given after a Restart interview at Corby Jobcentre.

Unfortunately the information you request is not available. Statistics on people who leave the register after a Restart interview are collected only where we can demonstrate that the sign off was the direct result of the interview. Undoubtedly this somewhat underestimates the total effectiveness of Restart interviews, but the alternative would be to include numerous people who would have left the register anyway.

The figures I can therefore give you are that in 1993, 3,164 Restart interviews were carried out at Corby Jobcentre and from these interviews: 98 were placed into jobs; 98 took up other benefit; and 67 signed off as a direct result of Client Adviser action such as being places on a more appropriate benefit. In addition 1,005 started on one of the following Employment Department programmes: Jobclub, Restart Course, Jobplan Workshop, Job Review Workshop, Training for Work, Learning for Work, Community Action, Work Trials, Business Start-Up Scheme and Job Interview Guarantee scheme.

These figures reflect only the direct results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview.

I hope this is helpful.

Employment Programmes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people with disabilities participated in, or were helped by *(a)* rehabilitation courses organised through the Employment Service, *(b)* sheltered workshops, *(c)* sheltered employment placements, *(d)* Remploy, *(e)* the fares-to-work scheme, *(f)* the job introduction scheme, *(g)* the adaptations to premises and equipment scheme and *(h)* the special aids to employment scheme in each Employment Service area in London for each year since 1987-88 and in the current year to date; what was the expenditure on each of these programmes for each year since their introduction; what are their respective budgets for 1993-94; if he will list the name, address and size of contract of those external organisations contracted to deliver any of the above programmes in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, 24 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked me to reply to your question about how many people with disabilities participated in or were helped by a range of Employment Service (ES) services in London.

I regret that this information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

I am sorry that I am not able to reply positively on this occasion.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people participated in *(a)* job plan workshops, *(b)* job search seminars, *(c)* job review workshops and *(d)* community action in each Employment Service area in London for each year since their introduction; what was the expenditure on each of these programmes for each year since their introduction; what are their respective budgets for 1993-94; if he will list the name, address and size of contract of those external organisations contracted to deliver any of the programmes in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people participated in *(a)* restart courses, *(b)* job clubs, *(c)* job interview guarantee and *(d)* job start allowance in each Employment Service area in London in each year since 1987-88 and in the current year to date; what was the expenditure on each of these programmes for each year since their introduction; what are their respective budgets for 1993-94; if he will list the name, address and size of contract of those external organisations contracted to deliver any of the programmes in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson dated 24 Feburary 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about programmes operated by the Employment Service (ES) in London.

As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the Honourable member and arranged for a copy to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people participated in *(a)* employment training-training for work—and the former community programme, *(b)* employment action, *(c)* the business start-up allowance—formerly the enterprise allowance scheme, *(d)* youth training and *(e)* learning for work in the area covered by each training and enterprise council in London for each year since 1987-88 and for the current year to date; what was the expenditure on each of these programmes for each year since their introduction; what are their respective budgets for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I know of no such cases.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Information in the precise form requested is not available. However, I am able to provide the following information about equipment stolen in the last two financial years.

Item	£
EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT HEAD OFFICE	
1991-92	n/a
1992-93	
2 laser printers	3,420
Total	3,420
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE	
1991-92	
2 lap top computers	886
Total	886
1992-93	
17 personal computers and printers	29,476
2 video presenters/players	1,325
1 fax machine	1,000
2 camcorders	1,860
3 mobile telephones/vodaphone	606
2 microwave ovens, toaster, kettle	200
miscellaneous	410
Total	34,877
HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE	
1991-92	
2 personal computers	5,116
6 TV/video/cameras	1,858
1 scientific instrument	891
2 dictation machines	150
1 microwave oven	90
Total	8,105
1992-93	
18 cameras	1,925
1 TV/video	1,393
3 video cameras	2,245
8 scientific instruments	5,180
11 dictation machines	1,003
1 fax machine	459
2 telephone answering machines	360
Total	12,565

n/a Not available.

Health and Safety (Children)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of surveys on the percentage of school-age children in employment who have been involved in some form of accident at work.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* I am aware of one small survey of children in Birmingham, which is unrepresentative of the country as a whole. The survey report makes no distinction between minor cuts and bruises and serious accidents which should be reported to the enforcing authorities.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available concerning the number of accidents involving children of school-age in employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* The following tables show injuries to employed young people aged under 16—the statutory minimum school leaving age—reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates and to local authorities under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985. Over 80 per cent. of the accidents were to 15-year-olds, some of whom will have left school. There were 46 reports of accidents to children aged 10 to 14 in the six-year period shown.

Injuries to employees aged under 16 as reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities, 1987-88 to 1992-93—by industry

Industry	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Agriculture	14	2	9	6	2	11
Manufacturing	5	20	12	12	3	2
Construction	1	5	—	5	5	3

Industry	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Wholesale distribution	2	2	1	1	1	—
Retail distribution	17	20	17	16	6	8
Hotels and Catering	2	2	1	7	1	3
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	1	—	3	1	2	1
Transport and communication	1	2	2	—	—	—
Banking, finance and business services	—	—	—	2	—	—
Other services	8	5	12	7	8	7
Unclassified	—	—	2	1	2	1
TOTAL	51	58	59	58	30	36

[1] provisional.

Injuries to employees[1] aged under 16 reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities, 1987-88 to 1992-93 (provisional)—by severity of injury

Year	Fatal	Major[2]	Over three day[3]	Total
1987-88	1	22	28	51
1988-89	—	19	39	58
1989-90	1	25	33	59
1990-91	—	17	41	58
1991-92	—	13	17	30
1992-93[4]	1	10	25	36

[1] Including trainees.

[2] Injuries which require a stay in hospital of over 24 hours.

[3] Injuries which cause absence from work for more than three days.

[4] Provisional.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Visits Abroad

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visits abroad the Minister for Overseas Development made during 1993; and what was *(a)* the cost to public funds of each visit and *(b)* the purpose of each visit.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development made 21 official visits abroad to 25 countries during 1993 at a total cost of £57,814·11; 13 visits were for bilateral discussions, three for international conferences, three for European Community meetings. The remaining visits were to accompany HM the Queen for part of her state visit to Hungary and to represent the Government at President Ozal's funeral.

Costs attributable to accompanying officials are not included in these figures.

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many aid flights into and out of Sarajevo airport there have been in each of the weeks since the beginning of such operations;

(2) how many aid flights there were into and out of Sarajevo airport during the week from 5 February to 12 February.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Sarajevo airlift began in June 1992. The latest available figures we have are for the period ending 10 February. As of 10 February 7,697 flights had been made by all aid donors delivering 87,461 tonnes of relief supplies. Weekly breakdowns of the totals are not readily available. The United Kingdom contribution to this effort has been 1,089 flights carrying 14,644 tonnes. Between 5 and 10 February there were 123 flights into the airport delivering 1,614 tonnes.

Aid and Trade

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid and trade provision grants have been allocated to *(a)* Balfour Beatty, *(b)* Cementation, *(c)* John Laing, *(d)* NEI, *(e)* John Brown Engineering, *(f)* Biwater and *(g)* other large engineering firms in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: All of the information requested is contained in the detailed list of ATP projects placed in the Library of the House in October 1993, pursuant to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 28 October 1993 at column *732*.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the countries that received British aid last year, with the amount of aid each received, the proportion of the total aid budget that constitutes and the placing the country occupies in an index of world poverty according to gross domestic product per capita; and how much each country received under the aid and trade provision *(a)* last year and *(b)* as an average over the previous five years at constant 1993 prices.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is as follows:

Bilateral Aid Programme and ATP 1992-93

	ODA Bilateral Programme 1992-93 £000	As a percentage of the Total Bilateral Programme	Aid and Trade Provision 1992-93 £000	ATP average over the last 5 years at constant 1992-93 prices £000	GNP per capita 1992 US$
Mozambique	31,441	3·03	0	0	60
Ethiopia	15,865	1·53	0	0	110
Tanzania	23,734	2·29	0	0	110

	ODA Bilateral Programme 1992-93 £000	As a percentage of the Total Bilateral Programme	Aid and Trade Provision 1992-93 £000	ATP average over the last 5 years at constant 1992-93 prices £000	GNP per capita 1992 US$
Nepal	13,718	1·32	0	0	170
Sierra Leone	1,978	0·19	0	0	170
Uganda	32,295	3·12	0	0	170
Bhutan	680	0·07	0	0	180
Burundi	205	0·02	0	0	210
Guinea-Bissau	9	0·00	0	0	210
Malawi	18,313	1·77	0	647	210
Bangladesh	57,739	5·57	0	0	220
Chad	291	0·03	0	0	220
Madagascar	734	0·07	0	0	230
Laos	70	0·01	0	0	250
Rwanda	312	0·03	0	0	250
Burkina Faso	345	0·03	0	0	290
Zambia	42,738	4·12	0	0	290
Mali	800	0·08	0	0	300
Niger	208	0·02	0	0	300
India	93,981	9·07	867	4,979	310
Nigeria	13,951	1·35	0	0	320
Guyana	2,873	0·28	0	0	330
Kenya	32,294	3·12	3	6,544	330
China	34,920	3·37	26,471	18,480	380
Gambia	4,394	0·42	0	0	390
Togo	115	0·01	0	0	400
Benin	109	0·01	0	0	410
Central African Republic	16	0·00	0	0	410
Nicaragua	1,008	0·10	0	0	410
Pakistan	18,619	1·80	1,447	739	410
Ghana	29,323	2·83	8,254	3,516	450
Tajikistan	100	0·01	0	0	480
Maldives	678	0·07	0	0	500
Comoro Islands	26	0·00	0	0	510
Guinea	400	0·04	0	0	510
Mauritania	109	0·01	0	0	530
Sri Lanka	8,480	0·82	573	3,008	540
Zimbabwe	39,171	3·78	2,924	8,738	570
Honduras	1,887	0·18	0	0	580
Lesotho	7,194	0·69	0	0	590
Egypt	7,599	0·73	1,122	3,070	630
Indonesia	21,872	2·11	9,778	6,742	670
Ivory Coast	487	0·05	0	0	670
Bolivia	3,458	0·33	0	0	680
Kiribati	1,169	0·11	0	0	700
Solomon Islands	2,357	0·23	0	0	710
Philippines	9,038	0·87	7,741	5,093	770
Senegal	965	0·09	0	0	780
Cameroon	3,351	0·32	0	79	820
Cape Verde	97	0·01	0	0	850
Uzbekistan	267	0·03	0	0	860
Western Samoa	112	0·01	0	0	940
Papua New Guinea	198	0·02	0	0	950
Peru	1,983	0·19	0	6	950
Guatemala	122	0·01	0	0	980
Congo	281	0·03	0	0	1,030
Dominican Republic	55	0·01	0	0	1,040
Morocco	2,118	0·20	1,462	2,980	1,040
Ecuador	1,684	0·16	0	0	1,070
Swaziland	3,274	0·32	0	29	1,080
Jordan	4,249	0·41	472	508	1,120
El Salvador	192	0·02	0	0	1,170
Vanuatu	3,963	0·38	0	0	1,220
Colombia	1,413	0·14	314	935	1,290
Jamaica	3,046	0·29	0	0	1,340
Paraguay	629	0·06	0	0	1,340
Tonga	177	0·02	0	0	1,350
Namibia	3,637	0·35	0	0	1,610
Tunisia	285	0·03	25	416	1,740
Algeria	377	0·04	0	0	1,830
Thailand	2,135	0·21	200	1,677	1,840
Turkey	9,276	0·90	9,030	6,560	1,950
St. Vincent and Grenadines	871	0·08	0	0	1,990
Costa Rica	976	0·09	0	0	2,000
Fiji	2,359	0·23	0	0	2,010
Iran	159	0·02	0	0	2,190
Belize	4,458	0·43	0	0	2,210

	ODA Bilateral Programme 1992-93 £000	As a percentage of the Total Bilateral Programme	Aid and Trade Provision 1992-93 £000	ATP average over the last 5 years at constant 1992-93 prices £000	GNP per capita 1992 US$
Grenada	1,519	0·15	0	0	2,310
Panama	845	0·08	641	695	2,440
Dominica	2,907	0·28	0	0	2,520
South Africa	11,709	1·13	0	0	2,670
Mauritius	1,545	0·15	0	65	2,700
Chile	988	0·10	0	0	2,730
Brazil	4,332	0·42	0	0	2,770
Botswana	6,129	0·59	549	592	2,790
Malaysia	20,463	1·97	17,798	12,194	2,790
St. Lucia	2,320	0·22	0	0	2,900
Venezuela	163	0·02	0	0	2,900
Uruguay	168	0·02	0	0	3,340
Mexico	2,272	0·22	0	0	3,470
Surinam	10	0·00	0	0	3,700
Trinidad and Tobago	341	0·03	0	0	3,940
St Kitts—Nevis	1,953	0·19	0	0	3,990
Gabon	9	0·00	0	0	4,450
Antigua and Barbuda	1,121	0·11	0	0	4,870
Seychelles	1,064	0·10	0	34	5,480
Argentina	90	0·01	0	0	6,050
Slovenia	45	0·00	0	0	6,330
Oman	750	0·07	0	0	6,490
Barbados	355	0·03	0	0	6,530
Cyprus	910	0·09	449	306	9,820
Bahamas	188	0·02	0	0	12,020
Israel	8	0·00	0	0	13,230
Hong Kong	359	0·03	0	0	15,380
Singapore	248	0·02	0	0	15,750
Afghanistan	2,171	0·21	0	0	[1]n/a
Albania	394	0·04	0	0	n/a
Angola	1,824	0·18	0	0	n/a
Anguilla	2,080	0·20	0	0	n/a
Bermuda	12	0·00	0	0	n/a
British Virgin Islands	1,125	0·11	0	0	n/a
Brunei	6	0·00	0	0	n/a
Burma	79	0·01	0	82	[1]n/a
Cambodia	2,066	0·20	0	0	[1]n/a
Caribbean	2,773	0·27	0	0	n/a
Cayman Islands	119	0·01	0	0	n/a
Cook Islands	50	0·00	0	0	n/a
Cuba	9	0·00	0	0	n/a
Djibouti	55	0·01	0	1	n/a
Eritrea	1,979	0·19	0	0	n/a
Falkland Islands	58	0·01	0	0	n/a
Francophone Africa	17	0·00	0	0	n/a
Gibraltar	1,676	0·16	0	0	n/a
Haiti	97	0·01	0	0	[1]n/a
Iraq	3,485	0·34	0	0	n/a
Lebanon	245	0·02	0	0	n/a
Liberia	416	0·04	0	0	n/a
Malta	224	0·02	0	0	n/a
Mongolia	740	0·07	0	0	n/a
Montserrat	3,271	0·32	0	0	n/a
Pitcairn Islands	56	0·01	0	0	n/a
SADCC	6,001	0·58	0	0	n/a
Somalia	15,047	1·45	0	0	[1]n/a
South Pacific	6	0·00	0	0	n/a
St. Helena	8,654	0·84	0	0	n/a
Sudan	8,888	0·86	0	0	[1]n/a
Syria	16	0·00	0	0	n/a
Tristan da Cunha	406	0·04	0	0	n/a
Turks and Caicos Islands	8,009	0·77	0	0	n/a
Tuvalu	109	0·01	0	0	[1]n/a
Vietnam	2,313	0·22	0	0	[1]n/a
West Bank and Gaza	1,530	0·15	0	0	n/a
Windward Islands	352	0·03	0	0	n/a
Yemen	7,683	0·74	2,856	1,061	[1]n/a
Former Yugoslavia	19,321	1·86	0	0	n/a
Zaire	265	0·03	0	0	[1]n/a
Regional Allocations					
Africa Regional	2,393	0·23	96	65	0
America Regional	1,064	0·10	0	0	0
Asia Regional	2,245	0·22	0	0	0

	ODA Bilateral Programme 1992-93 £000	*As a percentage of the Total Bilateral Programme*	*Aid and Trade Provision 1992-93* £000	*ATP average over the last 5 years at constant 1992-93 prices* £000	*GNP per capita 1992* US$
East African Community	961	0·09	0	0	0
Middle East	117	0·01	0	0	0
Oceania Regional	2,004	0·19	0	0	0
CDC Exchequer Advances	75,000	7·24	0	0	—
World Unallocated	156,187	15·08	422	253	—
Total	1,035,792	100·00	93,493	90,095	—

[1] Published World Bank figures were not available. Other sources have been used to define this as a Low Income Country according to the DAC GNP per capita thresholds.

Anguilla

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications of the forthcoming elections in Anguilla for the delivery of agreed aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The country policy plan, CPP, agreed with the Anguilla Government establishes the framework for the United Kingdom's bilateral aid programme with Anguilla. Following the elections in 1994, we shall continue to discuss the CPP with the new administration with a view to reconfirming our joint commitment to good government and the effective use of aid resources.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to whom the United Kingdom-based deputy commissioner of police in Anguilla reports.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: When appointed the United Kingdom-funded deputy commissioner of police will report to the Commissioner of Police, as is usual practice.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why a United Kingdom-based officer was chosen for the position of deputy commissioner for police in Anguilla; and how widely the job was advertised in the United Kingdom and in the Caribbean.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In consultation with the Government of Anguilla a decision was taken to create two police posts; a local deputy commissioner to be responsible for support and management and a British deputy commissioner to be responsible for operational services. The availability of an experienced British officer will help strengthen police capacity and local training capabilities in line with the experience of the other Caribbean dependent territories.

The job was not advertised. Selection was made from a short list of candidates compiled from ODA's register of qualified people who have expressed a desire to work overseas under the aid programme.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the salary, including allowances, of the United Kingdom-based deputy commissioner of police in Anguilla; and what is the salary including allowances of the Anguillan commissioner of police.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am unable to reveal renumeration details for individual technical co-operation officers but the average annual cost, including salary, accommodation and air fare is £70,000. In line with usual ODA practice, agreed with recipient Governments, the salary of the United Kingdom-funded deputy commissioner of police in Anguilla will be based on equivalent posts in the United Kingdom. The salary and allowances of the commissioner are entirely a matter for the Government of Anguilla.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans exist for upgrading the present court facilities in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The court building is part of the House of Assembly project. I refer the hon. Member to my answer on Monday 21 February at column. *26.*

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training exists for local Anguillans in the top posts in customs.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A comprehensive training programme exists for the three Customs administrative trainees which includes practical "on the job" training. Proposals for their attendance at United Kingdom training courses are currently under consideration by the Government of Anguilla.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is part of the job description of the new United Kingdom-based banking supervisor to train local Anguillans in offshore financial services.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Provision is made in the terms of reference of the superintendent of offshore finance in Anguilla for the development of sectoral training and employment to ensure that "Belongers" participate fully in the growth of the financial services industry there.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the capital projects started or finished within the six months leading up to the general election in Anguilla.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A general election in Anguilla has not yet been called.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons the top customs posts in Anguilla have gone to United Kingdom-based staff; and how widely these posts were advertised in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Two officers on secondment from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are serving as technical co-operation officers in Anguilla. The posts were advertised in a departmental trawl. These appointments were agreed with the Government of Anguilla under a standing arrangement common to all aid recipient Caribbean Dependent Territories whereby United Kingdom customs officers are made available to strengthen local customs departments, particularly in the area of enforcement.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom-based deputy commissioner of police in Anguilla took up his post; and for how long is his contract.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: He is due to take up post on 1 March 1994; his contract is for two years.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Anguilla Parliament has no Parliament building; and what plans there are to build one.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agreement for the construction of separate accommodation for Anguilla's House of Assembly features in the country policy plan, CPP, signed between the Government of Anguilla and ourselves in August 1993. The relevant section of the CPP calls for the drawing up of detailed plans for the building in the financial year 1994-95, with construction schedule to commence the following year.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the wind generator project on St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The ODA agreed in 1992 to provide development aid funds for the provision of a wind turbine generator for location on Deadwood plain, St. Helena. The project included the procurement and installation of a 300kW generator and appropriate training and maintenance. Consultants were appointed to advise on the specification of the generator and assist with the tendering arrangements, inspection and commissioning. A tender exercise carried out in 1993 was unsuccessful and we are now considering other possible options for meeting the requirement.

Somaliland

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further programmes of support are planned for the use of British aid in the establishment of a police force in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have agreed to help with the provision of basic training and equipment for the police in north-west Somalia—"Somaliland"—within the framework of UNOSOM's overall programme to rehabilitate Somalia's judicial and legal sector. But two planning missions to develop a programme of assistance have been constrained by poor security and problems with local support. We are currently considering what form our future assistance should take in the light of this.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the programme of the Food and Agricultural Organisation in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On the basis of information received from the Food and Agriculture Organisation, FAO, the north-west of Somalia, "Somaliland", receives aid through FAO's programme to Somalia which currently totals £5·4 million. Many projects cover more than one region including the north-west. In addition, projects specific to the north-west are:

Urgent rehabilitation of abattoirs and Brucellosis monitoring in the north (Hargeisa): £112,000

Fishing gear for fishermen at Berbera and neighbouring fishing communities: £10,000

Income generating activities in Boroma districts: £11,000

Emergency provision of hand tools to returnee farmers in rain-fed areas of north-west Somalia: £52,000

Hargeisa pesticide spill control: £243,000.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to upgrade the level of British assistance to Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have committed approximately £3·8 million of bilteral humanitarian assistance to north-west Somalia—"Somaliland"—since May 1991 mainly through British and international non-governmental organisations.

We intend to continue to help meet humanitarian needs as they arise and to help support the police sector providing conditions in the region permit the effective delivery of aid.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much time has been spent in Somaliland by the leader of the World Health Organisation in Somaliland; how much time has been spent on a per diem basis in neighbouring countries; and if he will report the findings.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Two international staff members are serving in the World Health Organisation's sub-offices in Hargeisa and Bossaso. The WHO representative to Somalia has visited the north-west—"Somaliland"—several times to monitor WHO programmes and report on progress. It is not possible to provide details of time spent, by WHO representatives, per diem in neighbouring countries.

During these meetings, and through regular contact with Somaliland representatives at the WHO sub-offices, a plan of action has been agreed in line with needs, including support for tuberculosis control, malaria control and improvements to existing health care systems.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the detailed programme of action of the World Health Organisation in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The World Health Organisation has established, with the authorities in the north-west, "Somaliland", a detailed action plan to strengthen NGO capacity in disease control and treatment. In addition WHO will continue to focus on the provision of primary health care in 1994, by supplying essential drugs and medical supplies and training NGO staff.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the programme of assistance being given by the European Union to Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The north-west of Somalia, "Somaliland", receives aid through the European Community programme to Somalia. In 1993, the EC provided to Somalia almost 3,000 tonnes of food aid, and 3·8 mecu of emergency assistance. The Community also committed 38 mecu to a rehabilitation programme. The EC does not keep statistics by region within a country.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the cost and achievements of the World Health Organisation in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The north-west of Somalia, "Somaliland", receives aid through the World Health Organisation's programme to Somalia. Since 1991, WHO has provided approximately US$ 5·3 million of emergency assistance to Somalia, concentrating on drug supply, tuberculosis and malaria control and support to health care systems.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the obstacles to intervention by the World bank and other multilateral institutions to giving assistance to Somaliland; and what action he is taking to overcome those difficulties.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, provide assistance to the north-west of Somalia, "Somaliland", as part of their assistance to Somalia as a whole. Among the obstacles affecting their ability to assist Somalia are the unsettled security situation; lack of an effectively functioning Somali Government; and Somalia's arrears to the bank. We are supporting international efforts to restore stability in Somalia. In response to donor pressure, the bank is co-ordinating the development of a comprehensive framework for rehabilitation and reconstruction to help focus the international community's efforts in a post-conflict Somalia.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sums of money have been provided in humanitarian aid or for other purposes in *(a)* Somaliland and *(b)* other regions of Somalia directly or via non-governmental organisations during the present financial year and in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* Since April 1993, we have committed £2·959 million of bilateral humanitarian assistance to Somalia of which £0·645 million has been committed to the north-west region, "Somaliland", through NGOs. The table sets out figures showing the ODA programme of aid to Somalia for each of the past five financial years. Separate figures for the north-west region are available only from May 1991 in respect of humanitarian assistance.

£000

Financial year	*Humanitarian aid* *Total*	*of which assistance to north west*	*Other assistance*[2]	*Total ODA aid programme*
1988-89	237	—	5,546	5,783
1989-90	—	—	2,632	2,632
1990-91	115	—	1,304	1,419
1991-92	2,680	[1]1,819	295	2,975
1992-93	13,945	[1]1,319	1,102	15,047

[1] In addition £1·95 million was allocated in 1991-92 and £1·5 million in 1992-93 to support ICRC activities in Somalia.

[2] Includes technical co-operation; programme aid; joint funding scheme and £1 million contribution to ICRC in 1992-93 (United Kingdom bilateral development programme closed in January 1991).

Nigeria

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 7 February, *Official Report*, column 67, if he will give further details of the water projects in Nigeria funded by the Overseas Development Administration since 1980 giving the dates the funding started, the amounts of funding involved, whether the funding was under the aid and trade provision, and which British companies won the contracts in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before 1988-89 British aid to Nigeria was confined to technical co-operation of about £3 million a year centred on small education and training initiatives. Nigeria has received no assistance under the aid and trade provision.

The following is the only water project to be funded by ODA since 1988-89:

Project	*Starting date*	*Aid funding £ million*	*United Kingdom company*
Site investigations, training and supervision of minor remedial work on Tiga dam, Kano state	1990	0·21	Babtie, Shaw and Morton

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 7 February, *Official Report*, column 67, if he will give further details of the power projects in Nigeria funded by the Overseas Development Administration since 1980 giving the dates the funding started, the amounts of funding involved, whether the funding was under the aid and trade provision, and which British companies won the contracts in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before 1988-89 British aid to Nigeria was confined to technical co-operation of about £3 million a year centred on small education and training initiatives. Nigeria has received no assistance under the aid and trade provision.

Power projects funded by ODA since 1988-89 are as follows:

Project	*Starting date*	*Aid funding £ million*	*United Kingdom Company*
Institutional Strengthening of National Electric Power Authority (NEPA)	1989	8·5	British Electric International. Northern Ireland Electricity (since April 1993).
Review of requirements of Petroleum Training Institute, Warri	1990	0·02	College of Petroleum Studies

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 7 February, *Official Report,* column 67, if he will give further details of the narcotics control project in Nigeria funded by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1990 ODA has periodically funded the United Kingdom training of Nigerian drug law enforcement officers on courses arranged by the Home Office and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Cost to date are about £60,000.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 7 February, *Official Report,* column 67, if he will give further details of the public administration projects in Nigeria funded by the Overseas Development Administration since 1980 giving the dates the funding started, the amounts of funding involved, whether the funding was under the aid and trade provision, and which British companies won the contracts in each case.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Before 1988-89 British aid to Nigeria was confined to technical co-operation of about £3 million a year centred on small education and training initiatives. Nigeria has received no assistance under the aid and trade provision.

Public administration projects funded by ODA since 1988-89 are as follows:

Project	*Starting date*	*Aid funding £ million*	*United Kingdom company*
Institutional development of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON)	1988	1·400	Critical Skills Development. Aston University. Crown Agents.
Assistance with civil service reform in core departments.	1989	0·815	Thames Valley University.
Help with in-servcie training at the Institute of Administration (IOA), Ahmadu Bello University	1989	0·400	Birmingham University.
Institutional strengthening of the Centre for Management Development (CMD)	1990	0·715	Hull University
Help in establishing new Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA)	1989	0·145	Environmental Resources Limited
Provision of team member for World Bank poverty assessment	1993	0·120	Singleton Consultant

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report,* column 67, if he will give further details of the police training provided to Nigeria funded by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since 1991 ODA has committed £1 million to helping with the establishment of a central planning unit at Jos, the training of Nigerian police force, NPF, officers to manage it and help with the reorganisation of the NPF detective training school at Enugu. British police officers have been involved.

South Africa

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the projects that have been approved for Overseas Development Administration assistance in South Africa by name, executive organisation, value and duration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested by the hon. Member could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Our aid programme for South Africans began in 1979, aimed at enabling the non-white community to take its rightful place in the economy and government of the country. The programme has involved numerous small projects implemented mainly through local community groups, non-governmental organisations and some universities.

This year we expect to spend about £15 million bilaterally on a wide range of activities in support of the transition to a multi-racial democratic society including the training of crowd control marshals, peace monitors and provision of election observers. In addition our share of the EC aid programme to South Africa is around £11 million.

I have placed copies of our information notes, "British Aid to South Africa" and "British Aid for the Elections", in the Libraries of both Houses.

Burundi

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present position regarding the security of aid workers in Burundi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We understand that there are still sporadic outbreaks of fighting in southern Burundi, but that the overall security situation has improved and that aid workers are now operating with relative freedom.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many years lease remains on the building of the Commonwealth Institute; and what planning restrictions exist on the building.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The lease, dated 9 January 1958, for the site occupied by the Commonwealth Institute runs for a period of 999 years from 1 August 1957.

Alterations to the institute as built and the use to which the site can be put are constrained by a number of the clauses within the lease, and by the building's grade II listed status.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what limitations exist under statute on the purpose for which the Commonwealth Institute building has to be used.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No limitations exist under statute. However, clause 16 of the lease for the site occupied by the Commonwealth Institute stipulates

"at all times during the continuance of the term to use and occupy the premises for the purposes of the Commonwealth Institute as from time to time declared by law or for the purposes of an art gallery or museum and for no other purposes whatsoever without the consent of the lessor in writing".

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is estimated to be the cost of restoring the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commonwealth Institute's management estimate the cost of works to bring the building up to a satisfactory state of repair to be a minimum of £3 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if primary legislation is necessary to close the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commonwealth Institute Act 1958 would require amendment or repeal should the institute be obliged to close.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what alternative use the Government have for the Commonwealth Institute building.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wishes the institute to continue to use the Commonwealth Institute building.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government are obliged to maintain the institute's building after grant has been withdrawn and the Commonwealth Institute has closed.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Responsibility for the Commonwealth Institute building rests with the Commonwealth Institute trustees, of which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is one. He is also responsible for the institute under the 1958 Commonwealth Institute Act.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government's price to the Commonwealth Institute in real and constant price terms since 1979.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Foreign and Commonwealth Office grants to the Commonwealth Institute in cash terms since 1979 are detailed below:

Financial year	*Grant in aid* £
1978-79	1,222,000
1979-80	1,402,013
1980-81	1,680,450
1981-82	1,971,520
1982-83	2,183,000
1983-84	2,497,000
1984-85	2,342,000
1985-86	2,515,000
1986-87	2,673,000
1987-88	2,665,000
1988-89	2,665,000
1989-90	2,524,000
1990-91	2,759,000
1991-92	2,716,000
1992-93	3,092,000
1993-94	3,674,000

The GDP deflators required to calcualte real terms figures are shown on page 121 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95 (HC31). Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which areas in Sudan about which the Overseas Development Administration is concerned for humanitarian reasons, are currently out of reach to international aid agencies because of blocking action by the Government in Khartoum.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government of Sudan has refused permission for the United Nations Operation Lifeline Sudan, OLS, to fly relief assistance into nine Sudan People's Liberation Army, SPLA-held locations in south Sudan in February. These are Boma, Kajo-Keji, Kaya, Maban, Mundri, Maridi, Nimule, Pariang and Thiet. Fighting around Kapoeta is also restricting surface access.

Access to Government-held areas in the south is subject to permit. Aid agencies experience frequent unexplained delays and refusals by the Government in the issuing of permits. OLS plans to increase areas accessible to aid by rail via Wau and by barge via the Nile have been halted by recent military activity.

Access is still denied to the Nuba mountains, except the towns of Dilling and Kadugli.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the latest refugee movements from Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are now about 176,000 registered southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda, including 64,000 in the main influx area of Koboko. About 100 new refugees are currently arriving each day. It is understood from local representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees in Uganda that substantial numbers are walking south towards the border and will cross into Uganda in the next couple of months.

We are watching these developments with concern and have already provided more than £500,000 worth of assistance to non-governmental organisations working in the affected area.

Slovakia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been given under the know-how and the Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring funds to Slovakia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Between 1990 and 31 December 1992, when the Czechoslovak Federal Republic was dissolved, the know-how fund committed £15·1 million to the Federal Republic.

Since 1 January 1993, the know-how fund has approved over 80 projects in Slovakia costing £4·9 million in the banking and finance; employment and small business; environment; good government; and management and education sectors. EC PHARE has committed 128 million ecu to Slovakia since 1990 covering enterprise restructuring and development; banking and finance; environment; agriculture; infrastructure; and human resource development.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present position regarding the supply and security of humanitarian aid in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In United Kingdom financial year 1993-94 we have allocated £10 million of humanitarian aid, mostly to provide food, seeds and tools and health supplies. Our assistance is channelled through United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations, which are responsible for ensuring that it reaches its intended beneficiaries.

Recent breaches of the informal ceasefire have temporarily interrupted badly needed relief flights to certain cities. In the meantime peace talks between the Government and UNITA continue in Lusaka. We are encouraging both sides to reach an early agreement, which will allow wider and more effective distribution of humanitarian relief and the recovery of the economy.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Overseas Aid

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which projects which have received Overseas Developoment Administration assistance since 1983 have involved *(a)* AMEC plc, *(b)* British Gas plc, *(c)* J. Henry Schroder Wragg and Co. Ltd., *(d)* Department of Civil Engineering, University of Strathclyde, *(e)* Kleinwort Benson Group plc, *(f)* British Aerospace plc, *(g)* Sir William Halcrow and Partners Ltd., *(h)* High Point plc, *(i)* Biwater Ltd., *(j)* Samuel Montagu, *(k)* George Wimpey plc, *(l)* National Grid Company, *(m)* North West Water group, *(n)* Rolls-Royce India Ltd., *(o)* London Regional Transport, *(p)* GEC Alsthom, *(q)* Mott McDonald and *(r)* John Brown plc; and what were the dates, locations and value of each project.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* Table 1 provides available data under our regular country programmes (excluding aid and trade provision, which is centrally managed) on contracts undertaken direct by ODA with United Kingdom firms as part of technical co-operation covering contracts on-going in 1991 and new contracts since that date involving the named companies. Data on all projects since 1983 is not available centrally and could only be assembled at disproportionate cost.

Table 2 provides data on aid and trade provision projects which have received Overseas Development Administration assistance since 1983 involving the named companies. For ATP projects details of the banking institutions involved are not part of centrally maintained information and could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

For aid other than technical co-operation and ATP, contracts are placed with United Kingdom firms by overseas Governments or their institutions and not by ODA; our financial aid is made to the recipient country government as a contribution to the cost of these contracts. Information on which United Kingdom firms received these contracts is not maintained centrally in ODA. Such information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Projects which have received ODA technical co-operation assistance on-going in 1991 and involved listed companies

Company project	*Country*	*Start date*	*Value £*
British Gas plc			
Gas distribution phase I and II	Indonesia	1 December 1986	2,225,913
Ankara natural gas	Turkey	3 January 1990	206,785
Twinning British Gas/Calcutta Gas	India	3 June 1991	323,196
J. Henry Schroder Wragg & Co.			
Privatisation in Poland (Tonsil), (Fampa), (Metal Mill, Warszawa), (Krosno)	Poland	1 August 1990	225,000
Privatisation of Wielkopolski Bank Kredytowy (WBK): Poznan	Poland	5 March 1992	551,500
Advice on mass privatisation: Adviser to Minister	Hungary	15 March 1993	550,000
Advice on accelerated privatisation	Hungary	29 September 1993	500,000
Kleinwort Benson Group plc			
Stab fund call down consultancy	Poland	27 October 1993	480,000
Sir William Halcrow & Partners plc			
Mini hydros study	Indonesia	4 September 1987	115,464
Medamit 2 hydroelectric project	Malaysia	24 August 1990	244,000
West coast road phase II—appraisal and design study—stage B	St. Lucia	26 June 1991	94,463
Mini hydros	Indonesia	11 March 1992	1,210,195
Port of Klaipeda: Marine operations expert to port authority: Lithuania	Former Soviet Union	10 November 1992	15,520
Environmental management consultant: Dnipro river: Ukraine	Ukraine	14 June 1993	43,593
National water plan water resources management strategy	Zimbabwe	15 July 1993	20,051
Biwater Ltd.			
Cairo wastewater: Contract 18	Egypt	17 August 1992	1,449,610
Samuel Montagu			
Privatisation of ONT Carpati SA and Ursus SA: Consultant adviser	Romania	17 March 1992	658,445
Privatisation (Tarom): Consultant adviser	Romania	28 January 1993	414,000
St. Petersburg investment fund	Former Soviet Union	25 May 1993	136,700
Voucher privatisation in St. Petersburg (management)	Former Soviet Union	21 June 1993	1,400,000
St. Petersburg investment fund management project (Pifcorp) phase II	Russia	11 October 1993	900,000
National Grid Company			
Polish Power Grid Company	Poland	10 November 1991	20,850
Electric utility twinning: Transmission system	Poland	7 September 1992	90,600
Electric utility twinning: System operation and control	Poland	7 September 1992	187,400
Assistance to power grid: Utility collaboration agreement	India	23 December 1993	85,970
North West Water Group			
Water resource utilisation modelling project	Malaysia	15 March 1990	47,006
Punjab urban development: Lahore twinning and technical assistance: Phase II	Pakistan	17 October 1990	1,869,006
Cairo wastewater operational support	Egypt	15 August 1991	129,487

Company project	*Country*	*Start date*	*Value £*
GEC Alsthom			
Training operations assistance for AZFC beneficiation operations—W. Sabaeya phosphate mine (GEC)	Egypt	9 June 1991	218,900
Modifications to beneficiation plant—W. Sabaeya phosphate mine	Egypt	18 March 1992	494,974
Mott McDonald			
Sukkur barrage rehabilitation	Pakistan	1 September 1985	795,279
Non Kelli Kabusha irrigation studies	Sudan	4 June 1986	213,900
Northern region irrigation rehabilitation Kelli Sayal and Kabushia rehabilitation phase II IM	Sudan	14 June 1986	262,300
Karachi leak detection training	Pakistan	10 August 1988	130,749
Sukkur main canal control and telecommunication system	Pakistan	1 May 1989	253,556
Qinghe pollution control	China	7 June 1989	381,836
Mayfair and Claw dams—Phase II and III	Zimbabwe	23 October 1989	532,083
Right bank outfall drain: River Indus	Pakistan	16 November 1989	1,726,732
Deep tubewells: Extended phase	Bangladesh	13 March 1990	3,900,000
Nile water resources management	Egypt	28 August 1990	217,500
Project co-ordinator technical assistance to the roads department	Botswana	28 September 1990	30,700
ATP project appraisal: Engineering services agreement	United Kingdom	14 December 1990	Agreed fee rates
Assistance to Shanghai water supply company	China	19 December 1990	256,472
Beijing metro modernisation third party inspection	China	14 January 1991	25,000
FAP north west regional study: Main study	Bangladesh	11 March 1991	1,402,493
Short study for assess future needs and rehabilitation of electrical workshops and laboratories	Egypt	1 July 1991	39,305
Waste disposal: Kumasi	Ghana	11 July 1991	432,608
Shanghai telecommunications factory 520: Project monitoring	China	19 November 1991	31,204
Kiev region food project: Meat sector	Former Soviet Union	1 February 1992	399,000
Kiev region food project: Overall management and co-ordinator sector	Former Soviet Union	1 February 1992	115,300
Left bank outfall drain: Reassessment study	Pakistan	24 March 1992	32,800
Kiev region food project: Livestock sector	Former Soviet Union	23 June 1992	308,467
Shanghai environmental project	China	19 November 1992	2,385,748
Improvement of food quantity, quality and availability in Russia	Former Soviet Union	4 December 1992	566,000
Road rehabilitation in Niassa and Zambia: Pre-appraisal expert on labour in	Mozambique	30 April 1993	45,606
Madras Environmental Twinning: Sludge disposal consultancy	India	30 April 1993	117,138
Left bank outfall drain—Operation and maintenance planning	Pakistan	6 September 1993	95,000
Drobex technical consultant—Poultry processing	Poland	1 October 1993	5,470
Contract administration and management—Short course	Botswana	17 November 1993	24,340
Assistance to the roads department: Project co-ordinator	Botswana	26 November 1993	27,304
Appraisal of feeder roads	Mozambique	19 January 1994	52,936
Ankara metro monitor	Turkey	21 January 1994	102,128
Limpopo railway rehabilitation phase III: Technical assistance to BMS	Mozambique	1 March 1994	1,065,000

Aid and trade provision projects since 1983 and involved listed companies

Country	*Project*	*Company*	*Date agreement concluded with overseas government*	*Export value (£ million)*	*ATP value (£ million)*
Turkey	Natural Gas Conversion	AMEC International Construction	5 May 1988	68·000	58·700
Turkey	Ankara Natural Gas Project Study	British Gas	1986	0·350	0·350
Caribbean	BAE 748 Aircraft (LIAT)	British Aerospace	28 May 1985	10·336	3·838
Malaysia	Rural Water Supply Scheme	Biwater International	29 August 1986	194·000	59·460
Sri Lanka	Hill Country Water	Biwater International	29 December 1988	6·084	2·129
China	Yue Yang Power	GEC Alsthom	6 August 1991	0·953	0·450
Kenya	Kipevu Power Station	John Brown Engineering	29 August 1986	7·618	1·959
China	Shengli Power Plant	John Brown Engineering	17 March 1987	14·913	4·247
Panama	Gas Turbine Power Station	John Brown Engineering	30 October 1987	14·222	6·727
China	Chongqing Power Station	John Brown Engineering	17 May 1988	21·595	6·500
Philippines	Gas Turbines Power Station	John Brown Engineering	2 May 1989	37·500	13·125
Morocco	Gas Turbines	John Brown Engineering	2 February 1990	18·564	7·276

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 15 February column *683-84* if he will place in the Library a paper which breaks down the expenditure on each aid project in the British Virgin Islands in each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I have placed a paper containing this information in the Libraries of both Houses.

WALES

Arts Council

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who are the members currently appointed to the Welsh Arts Council.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The current membership of the Welsh Arts Council is:

Mr. Mathew Prichard, CBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. David J. B. Lewis, *(Vice Chairman)*
Mrs. Sherilyn Bankes
Ms Jane Davidson
Mr. Meirion Edwards
Lord Elis-Thomas
Mr. Peter Griffiths
Mr. Hugh Hudson-Davies
Mrs. Caroline Ireland
Mr. R. Gerallt Jones
Mr. Robert Maskrey
Professor Gwyn Thomas
Mr. H. Tregelles Williams
Mr. David T. Williams

The Welsh Arts Council is a committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain. Appointments to the Welsh Arts Council are made by the Arts Council of Great Britain, with the approval of the Secretary of State for Wales.

These arrangements will change on 1 April 1994 when the Arts Council of Wales will replace the Welsh Arts Council. Appointments to the Arts Council of Wales will be made by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Periodontal Diseases

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures to indicate the change in incidence of periodontal diseases in the Welsh population between 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is not available centrally. Information on the incidence of periodontal disease is collected in a United Kingdom survey carried out every 10 years. The last report "Adult Dental Health" covered the years up to 1988 and is held in the Library of the House.

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of five-year-old children in Wales had experience of dental decay *(a)* in 1990 and *(b)* in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information is available from the biennial survey of five-year-olds in Great Britain conducted by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry. The most recent survey related to the financial year 1991-92 when 60 per cent. of five-year-old children in Wales had experience of dental decay. The figure for 1989, the date of the previous survey, was 57 per cent.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating for five-year-old children for *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available, the average number of teeth suffering from dental decay, analysed by region for Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information, which relates to the financial year 1991-92, is given in the following table. The figures are taken from the biennial survey of five-year-olds in Great Britain conducted by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry.

Average number of teeth with dental decay in five-year-old children

	Number
Clwyd	1·43
East Dyfed	2·09
Gwent	2·31
Gwynedd	1·44
Mid Glamorgan	2·10
Pembrokeshire	1·49
Powys	1·39
South Glamorgan	1·67
West Glamorgan	2·08
Wales	1·92

Survey of School Governors

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how it is feasible for a school governor, who sits on the board of governors of more than one school, to answer accurately the provisions of section 4 of the survey of school governors being organised by his Department.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The questionnaire that governors have been invited to complete recognises from the outset that some governors sit on more than one governing body. In order to minimise the burden on such governors, they have been asked to complete one questionnaire only. Clearly the answers so obtained are less accurate than if the governors had filled in forms in respect of each school.

School Holidays

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to change the pattern of school holidays in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. This is a matter for local education authorities and the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools.

Physical Education A-levels

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the difficulties facing A-level students studying physical education through the medium of Welsh, and for whom no Welsh language examination papers are available; how such a position has arisen; and what steps are being taken to avoid such problems in the future.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 14 February. Additional representations have been received from parents of two pupils.

The position has arisen as a result of the decision by the Associated Examinations Board—AEB—to withdraw its temporary arrangement with the Welsh Joint Education Committee to assess pupils taking GCE A-level physical education examinations through the medium of Welsh. I understand that agreement has been reached between the two bodies on the arrangements for 1994.

Staff Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Redwood: Advances of salary are made to departmental staff on permanent and compulsory transfer for direct house purchase. Such loans are advanced mostly when staff move to a higher-priced housing area or when, because of individual circumstances, they would not otherwise be able to move home. Staff must take the maximum mortgage they can afford, loans are limited to half of the annual salary of the staff concerned except those posted to London who can obtain an extra £1,000 if they would be limited to less than £9,500. Loans must be repaid within 12 years of the date of transfer with deferment of repayment not later than four years from the date of transfer. Staff must also contribute the net proceed of sale of the old property.

Loans are also subject to the following conditions:

the advance is repayable on demand:

if the borrower ceases to be a civil servant, the outstanding balance will be recoverable at once or if necessary be taken from any payments due to him or her, including pension benefits;

and if completion of purchase is not made, the advance will be repaid immediately.

There were four loans approved in 1992-93 with a total value of £41,201 and two in 1993-94 with a total value of £4,715.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 18 February 1994 by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster at column *1010.*

Electricians and Engineers

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the level of skill training in electricians and engineers in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: We have taken account of several labour market surveys which underline that the engineering industry, including electrical engineering, employs over a third of the Welsh work force, and that skills shortages exist. We are introducing modern engineering apprenticeships with £3·6 million of Welsh Office funding in 1994-95 in order to work with employers in improving the supply of young people qualified to national vocational qualification level 3.

Public Bodies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what remuneration in terms of salaries, company cars or other benefits are given to each individual appointed to each of the Welsh non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Redwood: Remuneration, where applicable, for members of Welsh executive NDPBs is shown in "Public Bodies: Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales" which is in the Library of the House. Appointees are entitled to reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses incurred in carrying out the appointment.

Schools Inspectors

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on Welsh Office circular 64/93 regarding inspection of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Welsh Office circular 64/93, which provides advice on procedures under the Education Act 1993 to be followed when a school is identified as requiring special measures, was issued as a draft for consultation to local education authorities and other interested organisations in November 1993. Three responses were received which mainly sought clarification on the role of the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales, the monitoring of action plans and timescales. The final circular, issued in January, was amended to include fuller details on these points. Only one school, Glasbury-on-Wye in Powys, has to date been identified as requiring special measures. It is due to distribute its action plan by 26 March.

Inward Investment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to study the recently published report on inward investment and industrial innovation in Wales prepared by the centre for advanced studies at the university of Wales in Cardiff.

Mr. Redwood: I have read the report with interest.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales where members of the public can view or obtain audited accounts of each grant-maintained school.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The governing body of each grant-maintained school in Wales must ensure that each year's audited accounts are available at the school for inspection by any member of the public.

Housing (Weather-proofing)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional housing moneys he will make available to Alyn and Deeside to make older housing stock warmer, draught-proof and damp-proof and capable of withstanding the impact of severe cold weather; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for the council to determine its local priorities for such repair and improvement from the resources it has available.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what actions he will take or policy changes he will make to implement the requirements of European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government are committed to implementation of the habitats directive. The Government set out their proposals in a public consultation paper issued in October, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, and will introduce whatever measures it considers necessary to comply with the requirements of the directive.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what additional financial resources he will make available in Wales to implement the European Union directive—92/43/EEC—on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The directive will be implemented in Wales within planned financial resources.

Religious Education

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about religious education in schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 14 February.

Moel Findeg Country Park

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the decision not to grant the Clwyd county council application for 100 per cent. supplementary credit approval for the Moel Findeg country park scheme in Clwyd.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No.

Forestry

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current estimated area of forestry land; what the figure was in 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are currently 248,000 hectares of forestry land in Wales; and there were 232,000 hectares in 1980.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *866*, for which sites of special scientific interest he refused a section 29 order under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and on what dates; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The two sites of special scientific interest which have been refused a section 29 order are:

Site	*County*	*Date of refusal*
Clegir Mawr	Gwynedd	19 March 1986
Llandegla Moor	Clwyd	12 August 1987

Regional Development Funding

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the reasons for his decision not to include Wales among those regions for which the British Government sought objective 1 status within the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The United Kingdom Government included Wales among the regions for which objective 1 status was sought early last year, but the European Commission decided not to accept the case.

Railways

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with British Rail the desirability of retaining all existing stations on the main rail link to Fishguard following proposals for closure of Barry Port and other stations on the Swansea to Carmarthen stretch; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand from British Rail that there are no proposals for closing any station on the line.

Llandudno Pavilion

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance the Welsh Office will be offering to Llandudno following the burning down of the old pier pavilion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The building is privately owned and its future is a matter for the owners. No request for Welsh Office assistance has been received.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Redwood: From records currently available, formal directions have been issued on the following occasions: In October 1985 and in April 1988.

A55

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to construct a bridge over the A55 to link Pinfold lane south and north; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A scheme to provide a bridge over the A55 to link Pinfold lane south and north and Northop hall is currently being designed in detail. Subject to the outcome of the necessary statutory procedures it is intended to start work on the scheme in 1995.

Cadw

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the grants paid by Cadw in Ynys Môn for the last three years, giving *(a)* the address of the property, *(b)* the amount of the grant, *(c)* the purpose for which the grant was made and *(d)* whether the propery is a private property or open to the public.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for this subject has been delegated to Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. I have asked the chief executive, John Carr, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. A. J. Carr to Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, dated 23 February 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about grants paid by Cadw in Ynys Mon during the last three years.

The following properties in Ynys Mon have received historic buildings grants to assist owners with repairs and restoration. The grants have been offered under either the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 towards the cost of repairs to buildings of outstanding historical or architectural interest; or under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 towards external works to buildings situated in designated Conservation Areas where these are considered to make a significant contribution to the preservation or enhancement of that area.

Address of property	*Amount of grant paid* £	*Purpose of grant*	*Category of ownership*
1991-92			
Beaumaris Old Gaol	1,000	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
Beaumaris Old Gaol	106	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
Church St. Amlwch	797	1990 Act repairs	Local authority
Glyn, Llanbedrgoch	133	1953 Act repairs	Private
Ty Fry, Rhoscefnhir	4,403	1953 Act repairs	Private
St. Eilians Church, Llanelian	715	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Gwylogs Church, Llangwyllog	2,064	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
Museum of Childhood Beaumaris	460	1990 Act repairs	Private
1992-93			
Beaumaris Court House	1,153	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
Beaumaris Old Gaol	900	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
Beaumaris Old Gaol	900	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
St. Davids Church, Penmon	1,800	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
1992-93			
St. Davids Church, Penmon	200	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Rhwydrys Church, Llanrhwydrys	6,612	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
English Methodist Church, Amlwch	6,155	1990 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
Beaumaris Court House	350	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
1 Victoria Terrace, Beaumaris	15,785	1953 Act repairs	Private
St. Davids Church, Penmon	200	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Rhwydrys Church, Llanrhwydrys	6,612	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
English Methodist Church, Amlwch	6,155	1990 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
1993-94			
Beaumaris Court House	350	1953 Act repairs	Local authority
1 Victoria Terrace, Beaumaris	15,785	1953 Act repairs	Private
St. Eilian's Church, Llaneilian	145	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead	2,547	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Rhwydrys Church, Llanrhwydrys	4,113	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead	1,264	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
St. Cybi's Church, Holyhead	3,010	1953 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
Y Bryn, Beaumaris	1,473	1990 Act repairs	Private
English Methodist Church	799	1990 Act repairs	Ecclesiastical
TOTAL	56,884		

Grants awarded for outstanding buildings under the 1953 Act are subject to a condition requiring access by the public. Arrangements are published in the annual reports of the Historic Buildings Council for Wales, the Department's independent advisers in the built heritage.

In the same period, the following monuments in Ynys Mon have received grant under Section 24 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Towards the cost of their preservation, maintenance and management.

Name of monument	*Amount of grant paid* £	*Purpose of grant*	*Category of ownership*
1991-92			
Towyn-y-Capel Mound Trearddur, Angelsey	1,367·38	General management works	Private
Old Parish Church and Churchyard Llanfihangel Ysceifiog	602·00	Repair and Consolidation Work	Private
1992-93			
Penmon Priory and Dovecote Barn, Llangoed	3,095·00	Repair and consolidation work (Phase I)	Local Authority Public right of access
Penmon Priory and Dovecote Barn, Llangoed	3,350·00	Repair and consolidation work (Phase II from 1 June 1992)	Local Authority Public right of access

Name of monument	*Amount of grant paid £*	*Purpose of grant*	*Category of ownership*
St. Dwynwen's Church Llanddwyn	4,620·00	Repair and consolidation works (Phase II from 1 June 1992)	Local Authority Public right of access
Total	13,035·00		

The following scheduled ancient monuments in Ynys Mon have received financial support under the terms of a Management Agreement under Section 17 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Agreements which are between the Department and the occupier of a monument provide for a programme of positive works to the monument, information and facilities for use by the public and where appropriate can include for public access.

Address of property	*Amount of grant paid £*	*Purpose of grant*	*Category of ownership*
1990-91			
Dinas Cadnant Hillfort, Menai Bridge	370	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Burial Chamber 180m NE of Pen-y-Berth, Llanfair-Pwllgwyngyll	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
1991-92			
Pen-y-Ffynwent Barrow, Rhosybol	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Pen-y-Ffynwent Enclosure, Rhosybol	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
1992-93			
Y Werthyr Hillfort, Llechylchedd	339	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Cremlyn Standing Stone, Beaumaris	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Perthi Duon Burial Chamber, Brynsiencyn	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Dinas Cadnant Hillfort, Menai Bridge	370	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Burial Chamber 180m NE of Pen-y-Berth, Llanfair-Pwllgwyngyll	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
1993-94			
Caer Idris Hillfort, Llanidan	680	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Pen-y-Ffynwent Barrow, Rhosybol	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership
Pen-y-Ffynwent Enclosure, Rhosybol	120	Section 17 Management Agreement	Private ownership

National Health Service

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific actions he has taken to further his crusade to improve the national health service as outlined in his statement on Tuesday 16 November.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Hospital activity in the year to date is higher than planned, with more out-patients, in-patients and day cases being seen than originally anticipated. Next year will see an increase in the planned provision for the NHS of £100,000,000 or 5·1 per cent. in cash terms, a figure well in excess of the increase in the cost of living. It is intended that this latest real-terms increase, in line with the maifesto commitment, will provide for 16,000 additional in-patients, 11,600 more out-patients, as well as further expansion of day cases.

SCOTLAND

Spectacles

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children in Scotland between the ages of two and 12 years wear spectacles; what percentage of the total in that age group these figures represent; and what was the figure in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Building Standards advisory committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The membership of the Building Standards Advisory Committee is as follows:

Professor C. C. Robertson, DA FRIBA FRIAS FRAIA FCIOB *(Chairman)*
Mr. W. Brannan, MCIOB MICT
Mr. J. D. Calder, DipBS FRICS
Mrs. J. B. Deans, MBE BArch PPRIAS RIBA ACIArb FRSA
Dr. E. W. Marchant, RIBA ARIAS MIFireE MSFSE
Ms M. E. Marshall, MA(Hons) MSc MRTPI
Ms E. M. Masterman, MA(Hons)
Mr. W. I. Mitchell, DipTP RIBA ARIAS
Mr. A. C. Peaston, MIBC
Miss J. H. Renton, LLB
Mr. M. Scott, GIFireE
Mr. M. A. Underwood BSc DipTech(CEng)
Mr. D. Walker
Mr. R. S. Webb, BEng MSc CEng FCIBSE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of Scottish Natural Heritage.

Sir Hector Monro: The members of Scottish Natural Heritage are as follows:

Magnus Magnusson, KBE, *Chairman*
Professor Christopher Smout, *Deputy Chairman*
Alan Blackshaw, OBE
Councillor Nan Burnett, OBE
Bruce Cowe, MBE
The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Dalkeith
Roy Dennis, MBE
Professor George Dunnet, OBE
Mr. David Laird
Sir John Lister-Kaye, Bt
Councillor Duncan McPherson, CBE
Dr. Bill Mutch, OBE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council are at present as follows:

Chairman
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC, Minister of State at the Scottish Office

Nominated by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Councillor A. Milne
Councillor W. E. Axon
Councillor G. Bird
Councillor P. Donnelly
Mr. J. R. McCluskey

Nominated by the National Association of Fire Officers
Mr. G. Newton
Mr. P. Kelman
Mr. R. Anderson
Mr. J. Hood
Mr. D. Hutchison

Nominated by the Fire Brigades Union
Mr. D. Patton
Mr. A. Campbell
Mr. R. Robertson
Mr. A. Munro
Mr. T. Tierney

Nominated by the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association
Mr. J. White

Nominated by the Institution of Fire Engineers
Dr. R. W. Docherty

Secretary
Mr. R. L. Knowles, Scottish Office Home and Health Department

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council.

Sir Hector Monro: New appointments were made to the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council on 18 January 1994. The current members, who will serve for two years, are:

Chairman
James Stobo, OBE, DL, FRAg.S

Independent Member
Donald J. R. MacRae

Specialist Members
J. Alan Twatt
John W. Hay

Workers Representative
Hugh D. Wilson

Grower Representatives
Alistair D. Strachan
Ian R. Stirling
Michael I. C. Salveten, BSc(Agr)Hons
Alexander P. Bayne
Robert Niven
James M. G. Grant

Merchant Representatives
J. Guthrie H. Fenton, *(Deputy Chairman)*
David Peebles
James O. Robertson
Gordon C. Smillie
James B. Hollywood
Iain Melrose

All of the appointments are made by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Grower representatives are selected from nominations by the National Farmers Union of Scotland, merchant representatives from nominations by the Scottish Potato Trade Association and the workers representative is provided by the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Board of Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust.

Mr. Stewart: The current members of the Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust are:

Sir Alwyn Williams *(Chairman)*
Professor George Ashcroft
Professor Michael J. Baker

Professor Sir Donald Campbell
The Lord Goold
Mrs. Mary Haggart
Dr. Janet Morgan
Professor Delphine Parrott

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Hannah Research Institute.

Sir Hector Monro: There are currently nine Members of the Board of the Hannah Research Institute. They are:

Sir William Kerr Fraser *(Chairman)*
Professor J. S. Gillespie
Professor Max Murray
J. Caldwell, Esq
Fraser Evans, Esq
C. H. McGhie, Esq
Frank Harding, Esq
J. R. Laidlaw, Esq

Co-opted
Thomas S. Bryson, Esq

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The current membership of the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland is listed below:

Professor Ian Percy *(Chairman)*
Mr. Angus Pelham-Burn *(Deputy Chairman)*
Mr. James D. S. Bennet
Mrs. Marcia Campbell
Professor John B. Sewel
Mrs. Lorna W. Jackson
Mr. Malcolm McIver
Mr. John I. M. Little
Mr. William W. Japp
Mr. Dugald M. Eadie
Miss Margaret C. Thomson
Mr. Robert M. Maiden

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Panel of Economic Consultants.

Mr. Stewart: The members currently appointed to the Secretary of State's Panel of Economic Consultants are:

Professor Kevin Allen of the University of Strathclyde; Mr. Brian Ashcroft, Director of the Fraser of Allander Institute; Professor Andrew Bain of the University of Glasgow; Professor David Bell of the University of Stirling; Professor Laurie Hunter of the University of Glasgow; Professor Alex Kemp of the University of Aberdeen and Professor Donald MacKay, Chairman of PIEDA.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Parole Board for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 4 February 1994, *Official Report*, columns *963-66*.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Council for Educational Technology.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current members appointed to the Scottish Council for Educational Technology are:

Mr. James Graham *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Pat Lowrie
Mr. Tom Wilson
Mrs. Lyn Tett
Mr. Richard Staite
Mrs. Pamela Malton
Professor Andrew McGettrick
Mr. John Anderson
Mr. Duncan Clarke

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The present membership of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland is as follows:

The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, PC *(Chairman)*
Dr. John M. Coles
Professor Rosemary J. Cramp, CBE
Hon. Lord Cullen, LLD, FRSE
Professor J. D. Dunbar-Nasmith, CBE
Mrs. J. M. S. Durham
Dr. Deborah J. Howard
The Hon. Peregrine Moncrieffe
Mr. Roland Paxton
Professor T. C. Smout, FRSE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The present membership of the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland is as follows:

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn, QC, MP *(Chairman)*
Mr. James Hunter Blair, DL
Sir Ilay Campbell, Bt
Councillor Mrs. Patricia Chalmers, JP
Mr. Marc Ellington, DL
Councillor Ian S. Hutchison, OBE, JP
Mr. Kit Martin
Mr. J. Angus Mitchell, CB, CVO, MC
Miss Georgina Nayler
Rev. Charles Robertson
Professor Alistair Rowan
Mrs. Fiona Walker

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Police (Scotland) Examination Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Police (Scotland) Examination Board are as follows:

Independent Members appointed by the Secretary of State
Mrs. L. Mckay, (Chairman), Depute Principal, Glenrothes College
Mr. J. McCool, Bell College of Technology

Appointed by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland
Mr. G. A. Esson, QPM LLB, Chief Constable, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary
Mr. J. Richardson, Assistant Chief Constable, Strathclyde Police

Appointed by the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Chief Superintendent I. Wilkie, Grampian Police
Vacancy

Appointed by the Scottish Police Federation
Inspector D. Hendry, Central Scotland Police
Inspector E. Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary

Officials of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department
Mrs. E. J. Lugton
Mr. W. Brash

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Valuation Advisory Council.

Mr. Stewart: The names of those currently appointed by my right hon. Friend as members of the Scottish Valuation Advisory Council are:

The Hon. Lord Clyde—*Chairman*
Professor Gordon S. Milne—*Deputy Chairman*
Councillor James F. G. Anderson, CBE
Kenneth M. Barclay
John A. H. Butters
David B. Chynoweth
Brian Gill, QC
Christopher S. Haddow, QC
Ralph A. Hillis, MBE TD
Geoffrey E. F. Johnston
Councillor John W. MacDougall
John Montgomery
Councillor Pearl B. Paul
Councillor David Sneller
Albert V. Tait

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Medical Practices Committee.

Mr. Stewart: The members currently appointed are:

Dr. J. Callander *(Chairman)*, Dr. P. Dolan, Dr. G. McIntosh, Dr. J. Rennie, Mrs. E. C. G. Craghill and Mr. C. A. Crole.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Crime Prevention Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Scottish Crime Prevention Council are as follows:

Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC (Chairman),
Minister of State at the Scottish Office.

Mr. Peter Burt,
Treasurer and Chief General Manager, Bank of Scotland. (Representing the Committee of Scottish Clearing Bankers).

Mr. David Essery,
Under Secretary, Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

Councillor Brian Fallon,
Lothian Regional Council. (Representing the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities).

Mrs. Juliet Grant-Hutchison,
Solicitor and member of the STUC General Council. (Representing the Scottish Trades Union Congress).

Mr. Roger Kent, CBE
Convener, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Mr. David MacLehose,
Director, Confederation of British Industry, Scotland.

Sir James Mellon, KCMG,
Chairman, Scottish Homes.

Mr. William McD Moodie, CBE, QPM,
Chief Constable, Fife Constabulary. (Representing the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland).

Mr. Brian Smellie,
Managing Director, James Gray and Sons Ltd. (Representing the British Retail Consortium).

"Judy",
The victim of a serious sexual assault known publicly only by that name.

Only Lord Fraser, Mr. Essery and "Judy" were appointed to the Council by the Secretary of State for Scotland. All other members of the Council were nominated by the individual organisations invited to participate.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the advisory committee on sites of special scientific interest.

Sir Hector Monro: The members of the advisory committee on sites of special scientific interest are as follows:

Professor F. T. Last, FRSE, *Chairman*
Dr. J. M. Boyd, CBE FRSE
Professor J. M. M. Cunningham, CBE FRSE
Professor D. S. Ingram, FRSE
Professor J. A. Raven, FRS FRSE
Professor W. Ritchie, FRSE
Dr. C. D. Waterston, FRSE

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national galleries of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is as follows:

Mr. Angus Grossart, CBE, *(Chairman)*
Mr. Richard Cole-Hamilton, CBE
Professor Eric Fernie
The Hon. Mrs. Lavinia Gibbs
Mr. Eric Hagman
Dr. Thomas Johnston
Lord Macfarlane of Bearsden
Mr. John Packer, CBE
Dr. Michael Shea, CVO
Professor Alan Tait

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will include in the code of conduct and accountability for NHS boards and their members, a requirement that board members should declare any relevant interest before an item of business is discussed and take no part in the debate or vote.

Mr. Stewart: Such a requirement is already imposed on NHS board members by regulations but the issue is also covered in the draft codes of conduct and accountability which have been issued for circulation.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish agricultural wages board.

Sir Hector Monro: The following independent members are appointed by the Secretary of State:

R. A. Bennett Esq. CBE QC *(Chairman)*
Mrs. C. Davis MA DipEd
D. G. Mackay Esq.
W. B. Page Esq.
Professor A. W. J. Thomson OBE BA MS PhD

In addition, the following members are nominated by the National Farmers' Union of Scotland and the Rural, Agricultural and Allied Workers National Trade Group (Scotland) of the Transport and General Workers' Union as employers' and employees' representatives respectively:

F. R. Evans Esq.
J. Goodfellow Esq.
D. A. Hinton Esq.
J. A. Kilgour Esq.
W. McMonagle Esq.
J. McMyn Esq.
I. A. Melrose Esq.
Mrs. A. Mitchell
E. J. Stephen Esq.
R. Stewart Esq.
A. Train Esq.
H. D. Wilson Esq.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the justices of the peace advisory committees.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: My right hon. Friend appoints the members of 56 justices of the peace advisory committees, one in each commission area in Scotland, the total membership of which is over 320; the names of members are published locally. To provide the names of members of all these committees could be achieved only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member wishes to know the names of the members of a particular advisory committee I should be glad to arrange this.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish standing committee for the calculation of residual values of fertilisers and feeding stuffs.

Sir Hector Monro: The current members appointed to the Scottish standing committee for the calculation of residual values of fertilisers and feeding stuffs are as follows:

Professor D. Atkinson, BSc, PhD, MIBiol, MIEEM, MIPSS *(Chairman)*
Mr. A. S. Chalmers, FRICS
Mr. A. W. Clark, NDA
Mr. A. Gray, NDA, NDD
Dr. J. W. S. Reith, BSc, PhD, FRSC

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Red Deer Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: The current membership of the Red Deer Commission is:

Mr. Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington, OBE *(Chairman)*
Mr. Alexander Calder
Mrs. Julia Crowe
Mr. Ian Evans
Mr. Stephen Gibbs
Mrs. Heather Gow
Mr. John McDiarmid
Mr. John MacKenzie
Mr. Archibald MacLeod, OBE
Mr. Richard Sidgwick
Mr. Ian Smith
Professor Brian Staines
Lord Strathnaver

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Scottish Crop Research Institute.

Sir Hector Monro: There are currently 15 members of the board of the Scottish Crop Research Institute. They are:

Mr. J. L. Millar, *Chairman*

Professor J. D. Hayes
Professor D. L. Lee
Professor T. A. Mansfield
Professor J. W. Parsons
Professor J. A. Raven
Professor Heather Dick
Mr. J. B. Forrest
Mr. A. Inverarity
Mr. A. Logan
Mr. J. I. Godfrey
Mr. L. M. Thomson
Mr. A. M. Jacobsen
Mr. G. Rennie
Mr. T. P. M. Mitchell

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland are:

Madam Speaker ex-officio, *Chairman*
The Hon. Lord Davidson
Professor Urlan A. Wannop
Mr. Adam R. Napier

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the consultative committee on freshwater fisheries for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Membership of the Consultative Committee for Freshwater Fisheries is:

Mr. A. V. Tokely *(Chairman)*

Mr. W. Brown
Mr. K. Burns
Mr. A. E. Campbell
Mr. A. J. Imrey
Mr. A. D. Jamieson
Mr. T. E. Mathie
Dr. D. D. Muir
Mr. I. Hay

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the national library of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is as follows:

Appointed by the Crown
The Right Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres PC *(Chairman)*
Professor Kathleen J. Anderson OBE
Mr. Ruari McLean CBE DSC
Mr. Jack Dale
Mr. John Menzies

Appointed by the Faculty of Advocates
Judge David Edward CMG QC
Mr. Brian Gill QC
The Hon. Lord Clyde
Mr. Nigel Morrison QC
The Right Hon. the Lord Emslie MBE PC

Appointed by the Universities
Mr. Neil Dumbleton
Professor John Butt
Professor Alexander Forrester
Professor John Small CBE

Appointed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Mr. David Ferguson
Councillor Rosemary McKenna

The following members of the board are not appointees:

Co-opted
The Right Hon. the Earl of Perth
Mr. Anthony Ritchie CBE
Mrs. Dorothy Dunnett OBE
Sir Donald M. McCallum CBE
Mr. Michael Strachan CBE

Ex-officio
The Lord President of the Court of Session
The Lord Advocate
The Secretary of State for Scotland
The Dean of the Faculty of Advocates
The Minister of the High Kirk (St. Giles'), Edinburgh
The Member of Parliament for Central Edinburgh
The Crown Agent
The Lord Provost of Edinburgh
The Lord Provost of Glasgow
The Lord Provost of Dundee
The Lord Provost of Aberdeen

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Law Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The current membership of the Scottish Law Commission, who are appointed by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, is set out below:

The Hon. Lord Davidson *(Chairman)*
Dr. E. M. Clive
Professor P. N. Love
Sheriff I. D. Macphail, QC
Mr. W. A. Nimmo-Smith, QC

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the royal botanic garden.

Sir Hector Monro: There are currenly nine members of the board of the royal botanic garden, Edinburgh. They are:

Sir Peter Hutchison *(Chairman)*
Dr. Jean Balfour
Mr. William Berry
Mr. Christopher D. Brickell
Mr. David N. Clark
Mr. James G. B. Gibson
Mr. David B. Nichol
Professor Malcolm B. Wilkins
Professor Michael M. Yeoman

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Crofters Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: The members currently appointed to the Crofters Commission are as follows:

Mr. Hugh A. M. MacLean *(Chairman)*
Mr. Alasdair Cameron
Mr. William T. Ritchie
Father John Angus Macdonald
Mrs. Agnes Rennie
Mr. Ian Mackinnon, MBE
Dr. Jessie Watt

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the fisheries committee on hydro-electric schemes.

Sir Hector Monro: Membership of the Secretary of State's fisheries committee on hydro-electric schemes is:

Mr. R. McGillivray, CEng, FICE, FIWEM *(Chairman)*
Dr. P. R. O. Barnett, BSc, PhD
Mr. G. N. J. Smart
Dr. L. Laird, MA, PhD, FIFM
Mr. O. Russell
Mr. F. G. Johnson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Hill Farming Advisory Committee for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The current members of the Hill Farming Advisory Committee for Scotland are as follows:

Mrs. P. Alexander
Mr. A. W. Barbour, CBE
Mr. A. Beaton
Mr. J. B. Cameron, CBE
Mr. T. A. Cameron, *(Chairman)*
Mr. T. Elliot, MBE, JP
Mr. W. Elliot, CBE
Mrs. F. Fleming
Mr. J. F. S. Gourlay
Mr. R. J. Lennox, OBE, JP
Mr. J. T. Mackie
Mr. R. McLauchlan
Professor T. J. Maxwell
Mr. G. M. Murray, MBE, JP
Mr. J. R. Seton
Mr. I. R. Thomson
Mr. R. W. Weir

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: The present membership of the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland is as follows:

Professor Eric C. Fernie, FRSE *(Chairman)*
Members:
Mrs. Kathleen Dalyell
Professor Alexander Fenton, CBE FRSE
Mr. John H. A. Gerrard, FRIAS
Mr. Tony R. H. Godden, CB
Lady Jane Grosvenor
Mr. David Hayes
Mr. Robert D. Kernohan, OBE
Mr. Lionel J. Masters
Mr. Roger J. Mercer
Dr. Janet Morgan
Professor Christopher D. Morris
Mrs. Edwina V. W. Proudfoot
Dr. Anna Ritchie
Mr. David Sellar
Mr. James Simpson, FRIAS

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish police college board of governors.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Scottish police college board of governors are as follows:

Scottish Office Home and Health Department (Ex Officio)
Mr. J. Hamill (Chairman)
Mr. P. M. Russell

Appointed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Councillor E. B. Fallon
Councillor J. Jennings
Mr. A. V. Tait, Depute Secretary (Finance), COSLA

Appointed by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland
G. A. Esson Esq, QPM LLB, Chief Constable, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary
Sir William Sutherland QPM, Chief Constable, Lothian and Borders Police
Leslie Sharp Esq, QPM LLB, Chief Constable, Strathclyde Police

Appointed by the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Chief Superintendent J. Johnstone MBE, Lothian and Borders Police
Chief Superintendent J. Urquhart, Strathclyde Police.

Appointed by the Scottish Police Federation
Mr. James Fraser
Mr. Eric Adam, Fife Constabulary
Mr. Eric Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary

Independent Members appointed by the Secretary of State
Mrs. L. Mckay, Depute Principal, Glenrothes College
Ms Jeane Freeman, Director, APEX SCOTLAND

Scottish Police College (Ex Officio)
Mr. H. I Watson QPM, Commandant
Mr. A. Walker QPM, Deputy Commandant

Assessor
HMCIC J. M. Boyd CBE, QPM

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The membership of Scottish Homes is as follows:

Sir James Mellon *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Frances McCall, MBE
Professor Duncan MacLennan, MA MPhil FRSA

Dr. Tom N. A. Begg, OBE JP BA PhD
Mrs. Heather Sheerin, OBE
Mrs. Daphne M. W. Sleigh
Mr. Cameron H. Paker, OBE
Professor John Rankin Small, CBE
Mr. Alastair C. Dempster, FCIBS
Mr. Peter McKinlay *(Chief Executive)*

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Macaulay land use research institute.

Sir Hector Monro: There are currently 15 members of the board of the Macaulay land use research institute. They are:

Mr. J. M. Crawford
Professor J. M. Cunningham *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. Lind
Professor P. A. Racey
Mr. A. K. Rae
Professor J. I. Sprent
Dr. P. B. Tinker
Professor D. I. Bateman
Mr. J. R. Carr
Mr. J. F. S. Gourlay
Professor H. M. Keir
Dr. D. T. M. Lloyd
Mr. I. Miller
Professor J. H. D. Prescott
Professor W. H. van Riemsdijk

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The current membership of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is as follows:

The Honourable Lord Osborne *(Chairman)*
Frederick C. Marks, OBE *(Deputy Chairman)*

Members
Stuart McDowall, CBE
Professor Susan J. Smith
Adam Napier

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the National Board for Nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The members currently appointed are:

Miss Catherine A. Asher, OBE *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Evelyn C. Mitchell
Mrs. Isobel A. Mackinlay
Miss Karen S. McErlean
Mr. Magnus Shearer
Professor William S. Stevely
Mr. Robin R. W. Stewart
Miss Linda E. Sydie
Mr. Peter S. Taylor
Mrs. Celia M. L. Urquhart-Logie

Coal Suppliers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the list from which suppliers are selected for invitation to tender from the supply of coal.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not hold such a list because it purchases only limited amounts of coal and most of the supply is obtained under a call-off contract negotiated by the fuel branch of the Department of the Environment which is available to all Government Departments.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the length of the period contracted for those firms which were successful in bidding for contracts to supply coal to the NHS towards the end of last year;

(2) what is the length of the period contracted for those firms which were successful in bidding for contracts to supply coal to the NHS towards the end of the year;

(3) whether the contractors selected to supply coal to health boards and trusts towards the end of last year were checked to establish their credentials as suppliers;

(4) by whom the supplies of coal from the firms selected by the Common Services Agency are being checked on delivery to ensure they match the quality specified in the invitation to tender;

(5) if it is common practice to invite tenders for the supply of goods to the NHS from two or more firms which are subsidiaries of the same parent firm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The contracts to supply coal to the NHS in Scotland were awarded for three years from 1 October 1993. Before the contracts were let checks in compliance with EC regulations and normal commercial practice were carried out on all potential suppliers. Where tenders are received from companies which are subsidiaries of the same parent company no differentiation is made if the companies are separately constituted and articled.

Normal delivery and analytical tests checks on the quality of the coal supplied are carried out by health board and hospital trust engineering staff. The Common Services Agency also requires all contractors to co-operate fully in any solid fuel efficiency tests which are required. In addition, random sampling for analysis of the coals supplied will be carried out by the Common Services Agency or its authorised agents. It is also a requirement that contractors provide period test results of sampling carried out by themselves. Financial penalties can be imposed if performance falls below the quality and standards specified in the contract.

Pain Clinics, Edinburgh

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pain clinics are available in Edinburgh; on what sites; how many patients were treated at each in 1992 and 1993; and how many are likely to be treated in 1994.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table. Information on the number of patients likely to be treated in 1994 is not held centrally.

Number of patients treated at pain clinics in Edinburgh 1992 and 1993

	New patients	
	1992[1]	*1993*[2]
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh	127	162
Western General, Edinburgh	437	434

[1] Year ending 31 September 1992.
[2] Year ending 31 September 1993.

Dental Decay

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table indicating for five-year-old children for *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* the most recent date for which information is available, the average number of teeth suffering from dental decay, analysed by region for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The most recent information, collected through the Scottish Health Board's dental epidemiological programme, relates to the year 1991-92. The average number of decayed teeth per five-year-old child in each health board area for that year is as follows:

	Number
Argyll and Clyde	2·11
Ayrshire and Arran	2·37
Borders	0·91
Dumfries and Galloway	1·79
Fife	1·90
Forth Valley	1·74
Grampian	1·77
Greater Glasgow	2·05
Highland	1·65
Lanarkshire	2·39
Lothian	1·78
Orkney	0·99
Shetland	1·02
Tayside	1·55
Western Isles	2·28

EC Supplies Directive

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the criteria laid down by the EC supplies directive for the selection of those invited to tender and the adjudication of the awards.

Mr. Lang: The EC supplies directive has been implemented in the United Kingdom by the Public Supplies Contracts Regulations 1991—Statutory Instrument 1991/2679. From 14 June 1994 the consolidated supplies directive 93/96/EEC will come into force. Both documents are available in the Library.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place copies in the Library of the documents produced by Scottish Enterprise on its strategic thinking for training.

Mr. Stewart: It is for Scottish Enterprise to determine the distribution of any documents it produces on its strategic thinking for training.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations Scottish Enterprise has made to him about the quality or structure of Government training schemes.

Mr. Stewart: It is a statutory duty for Scottish Enterprise to monitor and satisfy itself on the quality of training on Government schemes which are delivered by the local enterprise companies. The structure of such schemes is laid down annually in the contract between Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies. In respect of training this contract closely follows that between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and the training and enterprise councils. Revisions to the contract are the subject of frequent consultations between my officials and those of Scottish Enterprise.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the long-term unemployed have been on Government training schemes in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the allowances paid to 16 and 17-year-olds on youth training or its equivalent in each of the last 10 years in real and constant price terms.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table:

Youth Training Scheme/Youth Training—Minimum allowance levels (£)

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	[3]*1992-93*
Minimum allowance (YT/YTS)[1]	25·00	26·25	27·30	27·30	28·50	29·50	29·50	29·50	29·50	29·50
At 1992-93 price level	41·70	41·75	41·10	3[illegible]79	39·40	38·04	35·68	32·98	30·82	29·50
Minimum allowance (YT/YTS)[2]	—	—	—	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00	35·00
At 1992-93 price level	—	—	—	51·02	48·39	45·12	42·34	39·13	36·57	35·00

[1] Minimum level of allowance payable to first year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to 16 year old trainees thereafter.

[2] Minimum level of allowance payable to second year trainees until 29 May 1990. Payable to trainees aged 17 and above thereafter.

[3] 1992-93 price levels obtained by application of appropriate GDP deflator index.

Note: The Youth Training Scheme (YTS) was replaced by Youth Training (YT) on 29 May 1990.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to the Government in real and constant price terms of each place for 16 and 17-year-olds on youth training in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is available only from April 1991 when Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise took over responsibility for the delivery of youth training in Scotland. The available information is shown below:

	Cash £	*1993-94 Prices* £
1991-92	2,658	2,850
1992-93	2,824	2,916
[1]1993-94	2,633	2,633

[1] estimated.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to informing hon. Members of the unit cost of training places placed by LECs in their areas.

Mr. Stewart: The cost of training places is a commercial contractual matter between the local enterprise companies and their training providers. I have no plans to collect this information centrally for the information of hon. Members.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what rights of appeal exist for a trainee against the quality of training offered by a local enterprise company.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise are required to ensure that all local enterprise companies operate a complaints procedure for dealing with all complaints made to them, and to satisfy themselves from time to time that the complaints procedure is being operated properly by the local enterprise companies.

Specific details of these complaints procedures, including right of appeal for a trainee against the quality of training being offered, are a matter between the individual local enterprise company and Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to informing hon. Members of which firms tendered for training contracts to LECs; and at what prices.

Mr. Stewart: I have no plans for informing hon. Members which firms tendered for training contracts. This, and the price paid for training, is a commercial contractual matter between the local enterprise companies and their training providers.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available about the cost, quality, range and outcomes of Government training schemes at local enterprise company, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Office levels.

Mr. Stewart: The information available at local enterprise company and Scottish Enterprise level is an operational matter for these organisations and I will ask the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to write to the hon. Member.

The information held at Scottish Office level for youth and adult training is as follows:—

Cost	Youth training £ million	Adult training (training for work) £ million
1992-93	100·019	96·981

Outcomes

A wide range of management information is collected on youth and adult training programmes. The information is set out below:

Youth training and training for work management information—Monthly

Youth Training

- Total starts
- Starts in guarantee group
- first-time entrants
- leavers
- Training weeks delivered
- SVQ qualifications (or equivalent gained by:
  - Word start
  - Number start Foundation
  - Level qualifications
  - Level 1: endorsed category B young people
  - Level 2
  - Level 3
  - Level 4 or above
- At end of period, number of trainees in training

Additional Requirements for Skillseekers

During the period, the total number of credits issued

Training for Work

- Total starts
- Starts in:—
  - a. Priority Group 1 unemployed for 12 months or more having been through an ES Jobplan Workshop
  - b. Priority Group 2—people with disabilities
  - c. unemployed 6 months or more but not in a. or b.
  - d. others
- leavers
- Participant weeks delivered
- Training allowance weeks delivered
- For all participants, the SVQ qualifications (or equivalent) gained by:
  - Word start
  - Number start
  - Level 1
  - Level 2
  - Level 3
  - Level 4 or above
- Positive outcomes achieved shown separately by:
  - i. employment
  - ii. self-employment
  - iii. further education or training
- At end of the period, number of trainees in training

Quarterly

At the end of periods 3, 6, 9, and 12 the number of:

Starts broken down by

- Male/Female
- Disability
- Ethnic
  - white
  - ethnic minority groups prefer not to say
- Endorsed
- Urban Programme Area (UPA)

At the end of the period

- Employed status in training
- Endorsed in training (by category)
- In-training aimed at SVQ or other accepted Qualification at level 1, 2, 3, 4 and Wordstart/Number start foundation level qualifications (shown separately)
- Job outcomes for the trainees
- Job outcomes for the disabled
- Job outcomes for ethnic
  - white
  - ethnic minorities
  - prefer not to say

Additional Requirements for Skillseekers

The total number of young people confirmed as eligible to use their credit

At the end of periods 3, 6, 9, and 12 the number of:

Starts broken down by

- Male/Female
- Labour Market Returners Ethnics
  - white
  - ethnic minority groups
  - prefer not to say
- Urban Programme Area
- endorsed
- disabled
- others

At the end of the period

- Employed status in training endorsed in training shown separately by Category L or N trainees in training aiming at SVC or other accepted qualifications at levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 and wordstart/numberstart (shown separately)
- Job outcome for all trainees

Job outcomes for the disabled
Job outcomes for ethnic
white
ethnic minorities
prefer not to say

Six monthly

At the end of the period the number of trainees in training shown by:

male
female
standard occupational classification (SOC) categories
Age 16
Age 17
Age 18 or over

At the end of the period the number of participants shown by:

male
female
standard occupational classification (SOC) categories

In respect of quality, the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 lays upon Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise the duty, which may not be delegated, of keeping under continuous review the suitability and adequacy of any training provided by agents of the two bodies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for an independent inspectorate to monitor the quality of training offered by LECs.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. The Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990 lays upon Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise the duty, which may not be delegated, of keeping under continuous review the suitability and adequacy of any training provided by agents of the two bodies.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contracts awarded to training companies have been cancelled on the grounds of poor quality.

Mr. Stewart: The cancellation of contracts between local enterprise companies and training companies on the grounds of poor quality is an operational matter within the responsibilities of local enterprise companies. I have asked the chairmen of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the procedures to be followed by local enterprise companies in the allocation of training contracts.

Mr. Stewart: Local enterprise companies are encouraged to operate competitive tendering for their contracting for goods and services where feasible. Procedures for doing so, however, are a matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given to the possibility of future contracts between Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and LECs permitting the latter to publish the price of training contracts.

Mr. Stewart: Operating contracts are a matter for the enterprise bodies. There is no provision in the current local enterprise company contracts preventing them from publishing the price of their training contracts.

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a full list of persons appointed to date to national health service trusts.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *53*, with the following additions listed below. Information on executive director appointments is not held centrally.

Highland Communities NHS Trust
Non-Executive Directors:
Dr. John Berkeley
Mr. David Brown
Mrs. Barbara Bruce
Mr. George Haggart
Miss Christine MacDonald

Perth and Kinross Healthcare NHS Trust
Non-Executive Directors:
Mr. Ian Agnew
Mr. John burns
Mrs. Chandra Caldwell
Mrs. Christine Grant
Mr. John Rae

Health Boards

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will request health boards and trusts to open their meetings to the public.

Mr. Stewart: The meetings of health boards are subject to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 which provides that meetings should be open to the public, but that the public may be excluded from the whole or part of a meeting because of the confidential or other special nature of the business to be discussed.

NHS trusts are required to have one public meeting a year in accordance with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. In addition, many NHS trusts have developed programmes of public meetings and regular meetings with local health councils.

Staff Loans

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Lang: In providing relief to staff facing serious financial hardship as a result of a compulsory transfer my Department follows the guidelines set down by Her Majesty's Treasury. These relate to the offer of a loan at commercial rates of interest, to meet the shortfall against their mortgages and to provide a modest deposit. In cases of hardship where an interest-bearing advance could not be afforded, the offer of an advance of salary may be made. Each case is considered on its own merits. Assistance is not given to enable staff to improve their standard of property nor to protect them from the vagaries of the housing market. Loans can be written off when the cost of continuing to service a bridging loan would be greater than the cost of compensation for a reduction in price to affect the sale of the property.

No loans have been offered to my Department's staff in 1992-93 or 1993-94, to date.

Contracting Procedures

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures he has laid down to Scottish Enterprise and local enterprise companies about the award of contracts and consultancies; and if he will place them in the Library.

Mr. Stewart: Procedures laid down for Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies regarding the award of contracts and consultancies are contained in Scottish Enterprise's management statement and the associated manual of project and programme rules. Copies have been placed in the Library.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board area in Scotland the number of applications which have been *(a)* received, *(b)* approved and *(c)* accepted for establishing general practitioner fundholding status; if he will list the general practitioner fundholding practices currently operating in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Information is held centrally only on those GP practices whose applications have been approved by health boards under the National Health Service (Fundholding Practices) (Scotland) Regulations 1993. So far 102 GP practices have been approved by health boards under the regulations, of which 32 have been given a date to commence operating a fund between 1 April 1994 and 31 March 1995.

The 70 fundholders currently operating in Scotland are listed in the table below.

HEALTH BOARD

Ayrshire and Arran

Dr. Cleland and Partners, The Clinic, High Street, Mauchline; combined with Dr. Richardson and Partners, The Clinic, Institute Avenue, Catrine.
Dr. McSherry and Partners, 9 Frew Terrace, Irvine.
Dr. Thomson and Partners, 8 Cathcart Street, Ayr.

Argyll and Clyde

Dr. McBlane and Partners, 45 West Princes Street, Helensburgh.
Dr. Bidwell and Partners, The Health Centre, Station Road, Dumbarton.
Dr. Harper and Partners, 46-62 Bank Street, Alexandria.
Dr. Jackson and Partners, Campbletown Health Centre, Stewart Road, Campbletown.
Dr. Frew and Partners, Oban Times Building, Oban.

Borders

Dr. Brogan and Partners, The O'Connell Street Medical Centre, O'Connell Street, Hawick.

Fife

Dr. Carter and Partners, The Health Centre, 80 Main Street, Kelty.
Dr. Jackson and Partners, Inverkeithing Medical Group, 5 Friary Court, Inverkeithing.
Dr. Aitken and Partners, Glenwood Health Centre, Napier Road, Glenrothes.

Forth Valley

Dr. Brown and Partners, Meadowbank Health Centre, Salmon Inn Road, Polmont, Falkirk.
Dr. MacKinnon and Partners, The Clinic, Stirling Road, Fallin.
Dr. Gormley and Partners, The Laich Medical Centre, Clifton Road, Lossiemouth.

Greater Glasgow

Dr. Steingold and Partners, Castlemilk Health Centre, 71 Dougrie Drive, Castlemilk, Glasgow.
Dr. Thompson and Partners, 18 Union Street, Kirkintilloch.
Dr. Cairns and Partners, Shettleston Health Centre, 420 Old Shettleston Road, Glasgow.
Dr. Jamieson and Partners, Bridgeton Health Centre, 201 Abercromby Street, Glasgow.

Highland

Dr. MacVicar and Partners, Ardlarich Medical Practice, 15 Culduthel Road, Inverness.

Lanarkshire

Dr. Duncan and Partners, Cander Centre, King Street, Stonehouse.
Dr. MacInnes and Partners, 30 Lauchope Street, Chapelhall.
Dr. Muir and Partners, The Surgery, John Stret, Bellshill.
Dr. Hannah and Partners, Health Centre, 138-144 Windmillhill Street, Motherwell.
Dr. Parker and Partners, 75 Union Street, Larkhall.
Dr. Paterson and Partners, The Health Centre, Market Place, Carluke.
Dr. MacAlister and Partners, Old Mill Surgery, 100 Old Mill Road, Uddingston.
Dr. Miln and Partners, Blantyre Health Centr[illegible] Victoria Street, Blantyre.
Dr. Logan and Partners, Wishaw Health Centre, Kennilworth Avenue, Wishaw.

Lothian

Dr. Melvin and Partners, Blackhall Medical Centre, 51 Hillhouse Road, Edinburgh.
Dr. Dyson and Partners, Bangholm Medical Centre, Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh. Combined with—Dr. Ostrowski and Partners, Bangholm Medical Centre, Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh.
Dr. Doull and Partners, Whinpark Medical Practice, Whinpark Medical Centre, 6 Saughton Road, Edinburgh.
Dr. Patterson and Partners, 161 Colinton Road, Edinburgh.
Dr. Adams and Partners, Health Clinic, Ashgrove, Blackburn.
Dr. Baird and Partners, Kingsgate Medical Centre, 37-39 King Street, Bathgate.
Dr. Milne and Partners, Health Centre, Glebe Road, Kirkliston, West Lothian. Combined with—Dr. Reid and Partners, Winchburgh Health Centre, Winchburgh.
Dr. McKitterick and Partners, Bathgate Health Centre, Mid Street, Bathgate. Combined with—Dr. Ferguson and Partners, Broxburn Health Centre, Holmes Road, Broxburn.
Dr. Johnston and Partners, West Wing, Esk Medical Centre, Musselburgh.

Tayside

Dr. Burt and Partners, Green Street Surgery, Forfar.
Dr. Birse and Partners, Ravenswood, Forfar. Combined with—Dr. Cruickshank and Partners, Low Road Surgery, Forfar.
Dr. Taig and Partners, Coldside Medical Practice, 129 Strathmartine Road, Dundee.
Dr. Leadbitter and Partners, Hillbank Health Centre, Dundee.
Dr. Andrews and Partners, Brechin Health Centre, Brechin.
Dr. Crosby and Partners, Carnoustie Health Centre, Carnoustie. Combined with—Dr. Thornton and Partners, Carnoustie Health Centre, Carnoustie.
Dr. Shaw and Partners, Reform Health Care, 9 Reform Street, Blairgowrie.
Dr. Dunbar and Partners, Downfield Medical Practice, 325 Strathmartine Road, Dundee.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish health boards concerning the impact of general practitioner fundholders on waiting lists for treatment within their health board areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I have received no such representations from health boards.

Planning Permission

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what process the Scottish Office used to decide on the increases in the fee scale for applications for planning permission approved by Parliament in December 1993;

(2) how much additional revenue the Scottish Office expects to be raised by the introduction of the revised fee scale for planning permission; to which bodies this additional revenue will accrue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 February, *Official Report*, c. 880.

Salmon

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken to protect the viability of the British salmon farming industry.

Sir Hector Monro: The present imbalance between supply and demand for salmon on the European market is a source of concern both to the Government and salmon producers in this country. Over recent months the Government have worked energetically to find a means of resolving this complex problem. Most recently I have held constructive discussions with Mr. Jan Olsen, the Norwegian Fisheries Minister, when we agreed that the present difficulties ought to be addressed urgently by our respective industries. I hope that this initiative will lead to the reopening of an inter-industry dialogue aimed at correcting the present market imbalance and ensuring that steps are taken to prevent its recurrence in future.

Bird Deaths

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number and species of birds found dead recently on the east coast of Scotland; and what information he has on the cause of those deaths.

Sir Hector Monro: The precise number of dead sea birds found recently on the east coast is not known but total fatalities have been estimated to be in the region of 50,000.

Losses have been noted from a number of species but mostly from razorbill, shag, little auk and, in particular, guillemot.

A number of birds have been sent for veterinary analysis but the results are not yet available. All birds examined have been emaciated to some degree and starvation would seem to be the likely cause of death.

There is a natural cycle of sea bird mortality in winter and this is likely to have been aggravated by recent severe weather. In addition, on-shore winds are likely to have increased the proportion of dead birds which are washed on to eastern beaches.

Police Statistics

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police officers were available in *(a)* Angus and *(b)* Tayside for beat duties last year; what are the projected figures for this year; and what are the comparable figures for those allocated to desk duties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 February 1994]:* In December 1993, 692 officers in Tayside police were on beat duties, including 149 in Angus, and six on desk duties. The remaining officers in the force cannot readily be classified in either category. The force plans to release 24 additional officers for operational duties during 1994-95 by increasing its civilian establishment.

Court of Session

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ensure that the dues of court paid in the Court of Session are directly referable to the civil element of the judicial work of Lords of Council and Session.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* The Government plan to include the costs of the civil element of the judicial work of Lords of Council and Session in the calculation of dues of court paid in the Court of Session. These costs will be phased into the fees structure over a three-year period.

Sheep Quotas

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has made to the European Commission about the requirement of those sheep producers wishing to register the transfer of quota during the second period initially to apply to the national reserve; and what reply he has received.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* We recognised that the timing of the first notification periods meant that some producers were unable to use it as they had not received their quota in time. We asked the Commission to agree to a second notification period, but it was prepared to do so only for those who received their initial allocation late or for producers who are unsuccessful with their application for an allocation of quota from the national reserve. Members of producer group partnerships will also be permitted to lease quota between them to ensure the quota held by each partner matches the partnership's flock apportionments.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 25 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Commercial Court (Lloyd's Litigation)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the likely effect of impending Lloyd's litigation on the work load of the Commercial court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Mr. Justice Cresswell, the judge in charge of the Commercial court list, is currently conducting a review of the Lloyd's litigation. An assessment of the potential impact on the court's work load will be made at the conclusion of his review, but it is not currently expected to have an adverse impact on other users of the court.

South Yorkshire Courts

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures are being taken by courts in south Yorkshire to protect child witnesses with particular reference to the use of screens, television link equipment, and pre-recorded interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In the area of south Yorkshire screens and video playback equipment to protect child witnesses are available at Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Rotherham magistrates courts. Live television link equipment will also be available at Rotherham magistrates court from May 1994. Screens, live Television links, and video playback equipment are in place at the Crown court at Sheffield. Screens are also available at the Crown court in Doncaster, and at the family hearing centres at Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley county courts.

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which courts in south Yorkshire have child liaison officers to protect child witnesses; if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Child liaison officers are in place at all Crown court centres. In the south Yorkshire region, the Crown court sits at Sheffield combined court and Doncaster where there are child liaison officers in post.

Legal Aid Scheme

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the hourly rate for work carried out under the civil legal aid scheme in England and Wales for *(a)* advocacy and *(b)* non-advocacy, chambers work; and what provision there is for uplift to be applied in the hourly rates of remuneration in England and Wales under the legal aid system in operation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are a variety of prescribed rates which are contained in the regulations set out in the table. The regulations also provide for the circumstances where an uplift may be granted and the amount by which the prescribed rate may be uplifted. Where the prescribed rates do not apply the rates allowable are at the discretion of the taxing authority.

Stautory Instrument number and Title

1991/2038

The Legal Aid in Family Proceedings (Remuneration) Regulations 1991 (as amended SI 1994/230)

1994/228

The Legal Aid in Civil Proceedings (Remuneration) Regulations 1994.

ENVIRONMENT

North Yorkshire County Council

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the expenditure by North Yorkshire county council in each of its departments during the financial years 1992-93 and the anticipated outcome for 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not available centrally.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *879*, for which sites of special scientific interest he refused a section 29 order under the Wildlife and Countryside Act; on what dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is as follows:

NCOs refused	*Date of refusal*
Went Ings Meadows, South Yorkshire	30 August 1983
Sherburn Willows, North Yorkshire	8 February 1985
Brimham Rocks, North Yorkshire	27 February 1985

The three orders were refused because the former Nature Conservancy Council failed to provide evidence that the sites concerned were of national importance.

Allotment Land

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests he has received for the disposal of allotment land by local authorities under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 from 1 January to 31 December 1993; in how many cases consent to dispose was granted; and what was the total acreage in each case.

Mr. Atkins: Sixty-two applications were received by my Department's regional offices; consent was given for the sale, appropriation or lease in every case and involved a total of 142·14 acres.

Government Car Service

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of Monday 14 February, *Official Report*, column *582*, what is his policy on making internal documents available for inspection by hon. Members.

Mr. Baldry: The car log sheets used by the Government car service contain detailed information about the movement of Ministers. Security considerations preclude the release of these internal documents.

Pennine Trails

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement on the national Pennine bridleway trail; how it will link up with the trans-Pennine trail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *869*. If the Pennine bridleway is approved it will intersect with the proposed trans-Pennine trail.

Repossession (Assistance)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department plans to take to help borrowers faced with shortfalls following repossession.

Sir George Young: Low interest rates and improved employment prospects resulting from the Government's economic policies mean that fewer people are getting into difficulties with their mortgage. Those who are will be in a better position to repay any arrears and, as house prices recover, will be less likely to suffer a shortfall in the event of repossession. Individual mortgages are private contracts entered into by the borrower and the lender. It is for these parties, together with any indemnity insurer, to determine how any shortfall following repossession action should be treated.

Council Tax

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints have been made about the council tax in each individual council that is responsible for the collection of the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals have been lodged since the 1992 valuations of homes for the purpose of assessing council tax in each district and borough of Dorset and Hampshire; and how many of these cases in each district and borough have now received a final adjudication.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 February at column *967*.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department expects the currently outstanding appeals against house valuations for the purposes of assessing council tax to be concluded in each district and borough of Dorset and Hampshire.

Mr. Baldry: As I announced on 11 January, we expect four out of five appeals to be dealt with before the end of the year and the remainder to be settled as rapidly as possible thereafter.

Northumberland Coast

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will hold a public inquiry into the proposal to designate the Northumberland coast as a special protection area.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 24 February 1994]*: I have no plans to do so. All representations made to English Nature and to my right hon. Friend will be carefully considered before a decision is made on whether to designate this area as a special protection area for birds in accordance with the United Kingdom's obligations under the EC birds directive.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the social security benefit rates for 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on 30 November 1993 at columns *437-50*; and to the pursuant reply on 16 December at column *840*.

Family Credit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by occupation, the numbers of successful claimants for family credit; and if he will distinguish within these categories the number of clergy men and women who are successful claimants.

Mr. Burt: An analysis of family credit recipients, by the occupation of the main earner, is contained in table B.5A of "Family Credit Statistics, Final Quarterly Tables, April 1993", a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not available about the number of clergy men or women receiving family credit and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *214-15*, if he will list the number of industrial injuries disablement benefits paid relating to prescribed disease D1—asbestos industry only—and D3 in each area in each year.

Mr. Scott: Information is not collected in the precise format requested. The available information is in the table and relates only to new medical assessments made by special medical boards in Great Britain.

Special medical boards
Great Britain
Number of cases, analysed by Special Medical Board, of asbestos-related diseases D1 and D3 assessed as having 1 per cent. or more disablement

	D1	*D3*
1992		
All boards	354	551
Cardiff	53	42
Swansea	12	4
Glasgow	96	77

	[1]D1	D3
Stoke	13	30
Sheffield	43	87
Manchester	46	70
Newcastle	42	55
London	49	186
1991		
All boards	330	519
Cardiff	32	67
Swansea	6	3
Glasgow	68	58
Stoke	14	20
Sheffield	45	74
Manchester	63	56
Newcastle	53	61
London	49	180
1990		
All boards	306	462
Cardiff	27	53
Swansea	6	3
Glasgow	90	53
Stoke	11	19
Sheffield	36	69
Manchester	59	48
Newcastle	18	57
London	59	160
1989		
All boards	268	441
Cardiff	36	51
Swansea	3	6
Glasgow	75	55
Stoke	11	26
Sheffield	35	76
Manchester	35	46
Newcastle	25	47
London	48	134
1988		
All boards	202	479
Cardiff	22	32
Swansea	3	9
Glasgow	42	73
Stoke	17	19
Sheffield	25	49
Manchester	30	61
Newcastle	17	74
London	46	162

Based on a 100 per cent. count.

[1] Asbestos industry only.

D1 = Pneumoconiosis.

D3 = Diffuse mesothelioma.

Note: Benefit is payable for these conditions where disablement is assessed at 1 per cent. or more.

Administration Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column 698, if he will express the administration costs as a percentage of total budgets for each benefit in each year.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

£ million

	Estimated administration costs of benefits							
	1988-89		*1989-90*		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	Admin cost	*Admin cost as percentage of benefit expenditure*	*Admin cost*	*Admin cost as percentage of benefit expenditure*	*Admin cost*	*Admin cost as percentage of benefit expenditure*	*Admin cost*	*Admin cost as percentage of benefit expenditure*
Child Benefit and One Parent Benefit	105	2·2	111	2·3	107	2·2	118	2·2
Income Suport	1,114	14·7	1,180	15·4	1,348	15·2	1,373	11·8
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit	154	4·3	182	4·5	208	4·5	275	[1]4·9
Family Credit	24	6·1	30	7·1	[1]46	9·3	[2]33	5·3
Social Fund	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	132	47·1	163	45·2

[1] Figure differs from information in 1993 departmental report as benefit expenditure figure since revised.

[2] Includes increased capital investment for information technology and publicity costs.

Disability

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many new claims for disability living allowance to each disability centre in each month since April 1993 have either *(a)* resulted in an award or *(b)* been rejected; and in each case whether (i) examining medical practitioner evidence was provided, (ii) general practitioner factual reports were provided or (iii) the claim was decided solely on the statement of evidence provided by the claimant;

(2) how many new disability living allowance claims have been refused, broken down by reason for refusal, in each month since June 1993 at each disability benefits centre and for the country as a whole.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 24 February 1994.

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Your first question refers to new claims received. I have appended at Table 1 details of all new claims received in each Disability Benefit Centre (DBC) in each month since April 1993 showing how many *(a)* resulted in an award of *(b)* were rejected; and in each case whether (i) EMP evidence was provided, (ii) GP factual reports were provided or (iii) the claim was decided solely on the statement of evidence provided by the claimant.

Table 2 shows the number of claims refused, broken down by reason for refusal, in each month since June 1993, at each DBC, and for the country as a whole.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Table 1

DBC	Awards Types of evidence 1	2	3	Refusals Types of evidence 1	2	3
April 1993						
Edinburgh	338	355	191	360	482	165
Newcastle	495	338	93	463	359	115
Leeds	1,232	517	414	1,385	591	371
Manchester	363	520	365	629	648	238
Bootle	1,080	398	496	778	542	343
Birmingham	2,093	808	1,235	1,200	463	846
Bristol	628	318	80	587	234	40
Cardiff	680	271	112	737	374	122
Wembley	1,436	713	535	743	492	338
Sutton	1,351	921	377	888	426	218
Glasgow	402	423	283	541	869	209
May 1993						
Edinburgh	265	342	220	313	431	152
Newcastle	584	297	86	469	371	120
Leeds	1,025	465	338	1,412	493	310
Manchester	305	482	360	622	499	288
Bootle	698	379	376	600	497	318
Birmingham	1,540	586	1,047	982	317	670
Bristol	465	360	58	435	235	37
Cardiff	1,401	236	108	1,648	309	99
Wembley	1,191	802	576	605	541	349
Sutton	1,859	579	628	1,086	176	412
Glasgow	529	449	365	771	678	327
June 1993						
Edinburgh	331	411	257	450	542	234
Newcastle	688	305	145	538	389	152
Leeds	1,117	484	333	1,561	542	345
Manchester	381	505	406	662	680	292
Bootle	752	475	522	798	625	431
Birmingham	1,458	716	1,275	1,099	428	965
Bristol	497	389	82	551	210	46
Cardiff	771	295	108	1,053	374	141
Wembley	1,304	872	690	828	579	446
Sutton	1,325	421	678	957	98	462
Glasgow	458	491	329	818	1,020	393
July 1993						
Edinburgh	283	333	183	381	507	195
Newcastle	442	299	157	540	364	181
Leeds	858	518	364	1,343	608	345
Manchester	321	582	392	696	836	315
Bootle	488	436	595	683	620	584
Birmingham	1,446	710	1,228	1,121	487	1,001
Bristol	511	291	106	490	230	55
Cardiff	729	400	190	998	541	177
Wembley	1,094	847	620	691	579	417
Sutton	1,116	451	632	844	124	438
Glasgow	326	360	286	502	628	285
August 1993						
Edinburgh	207	278	198	332	419	215
Newcastle	462	323	144	493	392	179
Leeds	775	533	474	1,166	592	346
Manchester	301	487	369	573	640	304
Bootle	454	355	441	705	523	452
Birmingham	1,067	624	1,078	975	440	851
Bristol	378	315	100	307	189	39
Cardiff	258	178	122	393	237	158
Wembley	1,178	775	669	734	488	433
Sutton	956	462	508	901	157	447
Glasgow	268	406	335	536	803	398
September 1993						
Edinburgh	208	309	143	345	440	154
Newcastle	462	327	148	555	395	200
Leeds	771	522	389	1,168	595	384
Manchester	346	497	335	709	622	246
Bootle	300	340	549	671	532	584
Birmingham	1,172	626	1,315	1,124	450	1,038
Bristol	546	399	86	631	246	42
Cardiff	554	296	201	1,123	427	230
Wembley	1,251	840	578	741	585	398

DBC	*Awards* *Types of evidence* *1*	*2*	*3*	*Refusals* *Types of evidence* *1*	*2*	*3*
Sutton	912	596	605	829	189	468
Glasgow	177	391	276	491	681	399
October 1993						
Edinburgh	187	338	120	334	380	117
Newcastle	384	294	128	519	364	137
Leeds	795	604	456	1,103	571	345
Manchester	291	474	277	678	589	222
Bootle	292	373	453	800	545	520
Birmingham	1,081	702	1,045	1,059	593	855
Bristol	319	346	100	397	242	62
Cardiff	574	362	219	863	495	179
Wembley	1,163	719	432	741	558	295
Sutton	727	606	461	754	256	377
Glasgow	206	361	234	537	649	291
November 1993						
Edinburgh	267	377	153	341	470	149
Newcastle	342	278	92	481	324	138
Leeds	926	648	370	1,019	566	292
Manchester	297	530	317	618	600	256
Bootle	541	389	469	654	478	489
Birmingham	988	687	1,003	1,149	660	905
Bristol	289	341	112	388	259	54
Cardiff	666	374	97	895	459	96
Wembley	1,130	831	446	746	543	321
Sutton	782	723	432	754	295	361
Glasgow	394	438	231	735	688	263
December 1993						
Edinburgh	235	326	132	311	344	136
Newcastle	262	286	96	327	243	112
Leeds	830	541	374	680	553	309
Manchester	333	445	227	515	493	156
Bootle	386	377	400	632	403	460
Birmingham	943	709	797	900	588	659
Bristol	321	284	85	393	195	59
Cardiff	551	315	71	608	349	79
Wembley	958	665	348	589	509	279
Sutton	701	589	361	651	320	266
Glasgow	508	340	157	597	491	182
January 1994						
Edinburgh	163	363	144	233	391	122
Newcastle	315	361	161	330	326	120
Leeds	731	616	376	684	538	326
Manchester	366	480	312	506	585	188
Bootle	349	372	433	538	425	408
Birmingham	952	758	745	764	611	627
Bristol	416	453	118	434	225	62
Cardiff	694	398	97	612	352	120
Wembley	1,002	854	274	646	685	224
Sutton	667	712	322	623	301	302
Glasgow	341	429	197	442	621	217

Key:
***1*=Evidence from claimant**
2=GP Factual Report
3=EMP
***Source:* 100 per cent. count**

Table 2

DBC	*Refusals by reason* *Medical grounds*	*Lay grounds* [1]*R and P*	*Lay grounds* [1]*Age*	*Lay grounds other*	*Total*
June 1993					
Edinburgh	1,238	4	40	2	1,284
Newcastle	1,082	0	60	1	1,143
Leeds	2,463	1	97	1	2,562
Manchester	1,642	3	54	1	1,700
Bootle	1,899	1	90	0	1,990
Birmingham	2,532	8	191	3	2,734
Bristol	859	2	38	1	900
Cardiff	1,657	3	82	2	1,744

DBC	*Medical grounds*	*Lay grounds* [2]*R and P*	*Lay grounds* [1]*Age*	*Lay grounds other*	*Total*
Wembley	1,898	23	152	3	2,076
Sutton	1,572	7	140	1	1,720
Glasgow	2,235	1	91	4	2,331
Other MUs	110	2	14	0	126
Great Britain	19,187	55	1,049	19	20,310
July 1993					
Edinburgh	1,090	6	42	5	1,143
Newcastle	1,086	49	39	0	1,174
Leeds	2,319	4	81	2	2,406
Manchester	1,857	6	47	3	1,913
Bootle	1,932	4	75	1	2,012
Birmingham	2,651	9	152	4	2,816
Bristol	800	2	55	0	857
Cardiff	1,825	2	84	0	1,911
Wembley	1,732	17	137	3	1,889
Sutton	1,458	3	120	3	1,584
Glasgow	1,440	0	57	0	1,497
Other MUs	86	5	16	0	107
Great Britain	18,276	107	905	21	19,309
August 1993					
Edinburgh	966	5	49	2	1,022
Newcastle	1,064	10	41	0	1,115
Leeds	2,138	7	103	2	2,250
Manchester	1,521	4	59	3	1,587
Bootle	1,734	3	78	1	1,816
Birmingham	2,300	7	148	6	2,461
Bristol	566	4	53	1	624
Cardiff	845	2	48	0	895
Wembley	1,690	17	103	2	1,812
Sutton	1,577	5	730	1	1,656
Glasgow	1,744	1	71	0	1,816
Other MUs	76	4	19	0	99
Great Britain	16,221	69	845	18	17,153
September 1993					
Edinburgh	943	0	47	0	990
Newcastle	1,152	8	46	1	1,207
Leeds	2,160	8	110	0	2,278
Manchester	1,583	6	70	3	1,662
Bootle	1,817	0	67	2	1,886
Birmingham	2,637	11	147	3	2,798
Bristol	944	5	46	2	997
Cardiff	1,863	2	80	3	1,948
Wembley	1,798	17	107	5	1,927
Sutton	1,588	7	108	5	1,708
Glasgow	1,576	2	59	0	1,637
Other MUs	115	1	19	0	135
Great Britain	18,176	67	906	24	19,173
October 1993					
Edinburgh	842	3	36	3	884
Newcastle	1,030	7	41	1	1,079
Leeds	2,042	9	86	3	2,140
Manchester	1,495	5	53	7	1,560
Bootle	1,895	0	80	0	1,975
Birmingham	2,535	12	143	3	2,693
Bristol	720	1	50	1	772
Cardiff	1,603	1	77	1	1,682
Wembley	1,653	28	121	2	1,804
Sutton	1,510	5	101	5	1,621
Glasgow	1,481	1	48	1	1,531
Other MUs	102	3	15	0	120
Great Britain	16,908	75	851	27	17,861
November 1993					
Edinburgh	969	1	35	3	1,008
Newcastle	9,440	6	34	0	984
Leeds	1,897	5	95	3	2,000
Manchester	1,480	7	57	4	1,548
Bootle	1,648	0	65	0	1,713

DBC	*Medical grounds*	*Lay grounds* [2]*R and P*	*Lay grounds* [1]*Age*	*Lay grounds other*	*Total*
Birmingham	2,743	92	164	13	2,929
Bristol	717	1	39	2	759
Cardiff	1,544	0	67	2	1,613
Wembley	1,654	15	118	0	1,787
Sutton	1,499	8	91	6	1,604
Glasgow	1,694	2	38	3	1,737
Other MUs	124	2	16	0	142
Great Britain	16,913	56	819	36	17,824
December 1993					
Edinburgh	798	0	24	4	826
Newcastle	683	5	47	1	736
Leeds	1,559	7	78	3	1,647
Manchester	1,166	5	38	0	1,209
Bootle	1,526	0	49	0	1,575
Birmingham	2,168	10	106	5	2,289
Bristol	655	1	22	0	678
Cardiff	1,113	1	43	0	1,157
Wembley	1,441	19	94	2	1,556
Sutton	1,319	5	60	7	1,391
Glasgow	1,275	0	48	1	1,324
Other MUs	129	4	16	2	151
Great Britain	13,832	57	625	25	14,539
January 1994					
Edinburgh	750	3	21	0	774
Newcastle	780	8	43	1	832
Leeds	1,571	8	75	5	1,659
Manchester	1,288	8	50	1	1,347
Bootle	1,396	0	46	0	1,442
Birmingham	2,036	13	122	6	2,177
Bristol	735	3	36	2	776
Cardiff	1,137	4	51	1	1,193
Wembley	1,637	23	104	4	1,768
Sutton	1,296	9	70	5	1,380
Glasgow	1,284	2	[illegible]	2	1,324
Other MUs	132	0	14	0	146
Great Britain	14,042	81	668	27	14,818

[1] Age over 66.

[2] Residence/presence conditions not satisfied.

MU = Management Unit.

Source: 100 per cent. Count.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement about the Child Support Agency performance in meeting the target set out in its customer charter in respect of the letter dated 17 January to the Child Support Agency from the hon. Member for Woolwich, CSA Ref. 1522TYR1002505852 and in respect of the letters dated 6 December 1993, 3 January 1994, 8 January, 15 January and 11 February from the hon. Member's constituent, Mr. Y.;

(2) if he will set out the provisions in the customer charter for the Child Support Agency for *(a)* replying to correspondence, *(b)* acknowledging written complaints and *(c)* replying in full to written complaints; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. John Austin-Walker, dated 24 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about your constituent Mr. Y., and the provisions regarding correspondence in the Child Support Agency Charter.

The Agency's Charter contains a stated aim to respond to correspondence within 10 working days of receipt, and the Agency aims to acknowledge written complaints within two days of receipt. Because the Agency is a new organisation providing a completely new service, it will not be possible to state with confidence before the end of the first year the average length of time taken to reply to correspondence.

I replied to your letter about Mr. Y. on 23 February, and I am sorry that the Agency did not meet the targets set in its Charter standards in the correspondence with him.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Testing Stations

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the testing stations within each of the new operational regions established by the Vehicle Inspectorate on 1 November 1993.

Mr. Key: I have asked the Vehicle Inspectorate chief executive to write to the hon. Member with this detailed information.

Port of Liverpool

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what financial support the port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. has received from *(a)* the European Community and (b) his Department in each financial year from 1990-91 to 1993-94;

(2) what financial support the port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co. is expected to receive from *(a)* the European Community and *(b)* his Department in 1994-95 and in subsequent years.

Mr. Norris: Financial support from the European regional development fund—ERDF—to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Co.—MDHC—is set out in column 1 to the following table. The sums are those which MDHC are entitled to claim under MIDO1, MIDO2 and RENAVAL in each of the calendar years 1990 to 1995.

Financial support from the Department of Transport to the port of Liverpool is shown in column 2 in the table. The port was previously within the dock labour scheme and qualified, under the Dock Work (Compensation Payment Scheme) Regulations 1989, for contributions towards the costs of severances of former registered dock workers made redundant following abolition of the scheme. Column 2 shows the amounts paid in the calendar years 1990, 1991 and 1992 to MDHC and to the eight other employers in the port.

Year	*(1)* *ERDF sums which MDHC are entitled to claim*	*(2)* *Dock labour severance payments made to*	
		(a) *MDHC*	*(b)* *Other Liverpool port employers*
1990	140,522	3,447,500	2,625,000
1991	672,460	157,500	612,500
1992	1,238,521	500,000	200,000
1993	1,948,375	—	—
1994	2,178,833	—	—
1995	18,575	—	—

Birmingham International Airport

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in talks with the United States Government on access by United States airlines to Birmingham international airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Liberalisation of routes from the United States to United Kingdom regional airports has been a consistent priority of this Government. In December the United Kingdom tabled a proposal which would give immediate open access to regional routes, including to Birmingham. We hope that the United States Government will consider our proposal seriously.

Driving Regulations

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what mechanisms exist to monitor the degree of compliance or non-compliance with regulations concerning *(a)* operators acting illegally without an operator licence, *(b)* parking and routing restrictions, *(c)* drivers' hours, *(d)* overloading, *(e)* general conditions placed by the licensing authority on operators and *(f)* payment of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Key: The Vehicle Inspectorate is the Department's vehicle and traffic enforcement agency. In the 12 months ending 31 March 1993, the inspectorate inspected 295,125 heavy goods vehicles and 40,508 public service vehicles, the majority of which were "O" licensed vehicles. The results of inspections by the vehicle inspectorate provide the traffic commissioners with details of traffic and roadworthiness offences by licensed heavy goods and passenger vehicle operators. The performance of operators is monitored by the licensing review board in each traffic area office which can make recommendations for disciplinary action by the traffic commissioner.

In respect of specific aspects of compliance and non-compliance listed in the question, the position is as follows:

(a) operators acting illegally without an operator licence

The Vehicle Inspectorate's traffic examiners carry out roadside and other spot checks on lorries and also visit operators' premises. Intelligence from co-operation with other enforcement organisations including the police is used to target co-ordinated enforcement checks against suspected illegal operations.

(b) parking and routeing restrictions

Enforcement of local authority parking and routeing restrictions for heavy commercial vehicles is primarily an operational matter for the chief officer of police in consultation with local authorities. It is a matter for them to assess the effectiveness of the enforcement effort. Traffic commissioners, as licensing authorities, can impose conditions on the number, type and size of authorised goods vehicles which at any time may be at a licence holder's operating centre for the purposes of maintenance and parking. The licensing authority may also impose conditions on a licence regulating the parking arrangements for authorised vehicles at or in the vicinity of a licence holder's operating centre.

(c) drivers' hours

EC regulations require the fitment of tachographs to most heavy goods vehicles over 3½ tonnes and also to certain passenger carrying vehicles. The tachograph records the drivers' activities—driving, rest and periods of other work—as well as vehicle speed and time. The resultant records allows retrospective checking by enforcement authorities. The Vehicle Inspectorate checked 1,656,353 tachograph charts for heavy goods vehicles and 208,278 tachograph charts for public service vehicles in the 12 months ending 31 March 1993.

(d) overloading

One of the declarations that an applicant for a goods vehicle operator's licence must make to the traffic commissioner before a licence is granted is that he or she will make proper arrangements to ensure that vehicles, including trailers, will not be overloaded.

Checks on vehicles weights are carried out by staff of the Vehicle Inspectorate, the police and local authority trading standards departments. For this purpose, the Department of Transport has provided some 69 enforcement weighbridge sites which are used regularly by the enforcement organisations. There are also a number of public and private weighbridges which are available for use by drivers and enforcement officers.

Statistics on heavy goods vehicles weighed by vehicle inspectorate traffic examiners are reported in the annual reports of the licensing authorities, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. In the year ending 31 March 1993, 124,004 heavy goods vehicles were weighed by Vehicle Inspectorate traffic examiners.

(e) general conditions placed by the licensing authority on operators

There are no mechanisms in place routinely to monitor the compliance or non-compliance by operators of conditions imposed by traffic commissioners. Failure to comply with conditions attached to a licence can be drawn to the attention of a traffic commissioner by local residents, local authorities, police and other enforcement agencies. This can result in a specific monitoring exercise being initiated, and, if necessary, follow-up action being taken including disciplinary action against the operator for non-compliance with the conditions of the licence.

(f) payment of vehicle excise duty

Estimates of the revenue loss through evasion of vehicle excise duty are derived from periodic roadside surveys of moving vehicles, updated by an ongoing exercise conducted by the Department's statisticians to monitor trends. Details of the most recent survey can be obtained from the transport statistics report "Vehicle Excise Duty evasion in Great Britain in 1989-90", which is available in the House of Commons Library. The next survey is planned for June 1994, with the results due to be published in September.

Shipping Industry (Training)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of the amount of money allocated by his Department for the Government assistance for training scheme in the United Kingdom shipping industry, in each year since 1988; and what was the outturn expenditure in each of those years.

Mr. Norris: The table shows the allocation of money to the GAFT scheme and the outturn in each year since 1988.

Table 1: GAFT scheme

£ million

	Provision	*Spend*	*YTS spend*
1988-89	2·5	0·84	—
1989-90	3·5	1·75	—
1990-91	3·5	2·25	—
1991-92	[1]3·4	[1]3·23	0·75
1992-93	[1]3·7	[1]3·20	0·55
1993-94	[1]3·9	[1,2]3·27	0·55

[1] Includes YT element—provided by Employment Department.

[2] Forecast.

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in respect of which non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by him *(a)* meetings are open to the public, *(b)* there is scrutiny of financial procedures by independently appointed audit and *(c)* there are rules governing the declaration of interests.

Mr. Norris: *(a)* board meetings and committee meetings of public bodies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible are not held in public.

Tribunal hearings which hear appeals against the Civil Aviation Authority's decisions on the granting or otherwise of licences or certificates are open to the public on application. The eight traffic commissioners all hold public inquiries in connection with bus and goods vehicle operator licensing. Other bodies may hold consultation meetings in public from time to time as circumstances require.

(b) My right hon. Friend appoints auditors annually to audit the accounts of the British Railways Board, the Civil Aviation Authority, London Transport and the Traffic Director for London. The general lighthouse fund accounts consolidate the accounts of the general lighthouse authorities and the fund's accounts are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The annual reports and accounts of port and harbour authorities are required by statute to be accompanied by an independent auditor's report.

(c) There are statutory requirements governing the declaration of interests of board members of the British Railways Board, the Civil Aviation Authority and London Transport. No requirements regarding declarations of interest have been imposed by my right hon. Friend on members of the lighthouse authorities—the majority of whom he does not appoint. The Traffic Director for London does not have a board but he is required by the terms of his appointment to be alert to the possibility of any conflicts of interest and to consult my right hon. Friend in any case of doubt. There are no rules covering the declaration of interests for advisory committee members, many of whom are appointed because of their particular interests, but members would be expected to declare an interest if a situation of conflict should arise.

The constitutions of some port and harbour authorities contain provisions requiring members to declare any pecuniary interests, direct or indirect, in any contractual or other matters with which the authority is concerned. More generally, my right hon. Friend seeks from all persons appointed by him to the boards of authorities a declaration of interests at the time of appointment or reappointment.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amounts of money as a percentage of overall amount received, have been earmarked in 1992-93 and 1993-94 in each highway authority for the strengthening and widening of roads in preparation for the introduction from 1999 of 44-tonne lorries for international routes.

Mr. Key: No such earmarking of resources has taken place. Local highway authorities may use allocations for capital maintenance and minor improvement works on any schemes they wish within the rules of the transport supplementary grant system. We have, however, made specific allocations for the assessment and strengthening of bridges in preparation for the introduction of 40-tonne lorries in 1999. The allocations to each authority for this purpose in 1992-93 and 1993-94 are shown in the following table. The introduction of 44-tonne lorries for certain combined transport journeys will not require any additional strengthening compared with that of 40-tonne lorries, since it does not involve any further increase in axle weights.

Authority	*1992-93*		*1993-94*	
	£000	*Per cent.*	*£000*	*Per cent.*
City of London	3,043	88·2	1,696	75·3
Barking	72	4·8	288	10·3
Barnet	461	41·8	130	8·8
Bex[illegible]	315	8·7	297	4·4
[illegible]	1,038	30·5	611	25·4

Authority	*1992-93*		*1993-94*	
	£000	*Per cent.*	*£000*	*Per cent.*
Bromley	180	3·1	207	3·6
Camden	2,195	44·9	1,634	37·4
Croydon	12	0·6	90	1·4
Ealing	20	0·4	392	9·8
Enfield	2,270	18·5	1,235	18·4
Greenwich	335	31·5	355	18·3
Hackney	75	2·4	147	5·1
Hammersmith	940	41·9	1,000	31·3
Haringey	532	13·7	688	19·7
Harrow	410	3·6	747	5·5
Havering	308	35·7	647	46·6
Hillingdon	300	1·6	450	3·4
Hounslow	60	5·2	270	4·7
Islington	315	12·6	274	10·6
Kensington	25	1·4	298	17·0
Kingston	461	17·2	425	15·3
Lambeth	100	12·1	190	14·7
Lewisham	287	2·3	200	2·3
Merton	93	4·3	95	3·4
Newham	460	6·4	3,237	31·3
Redbridge	249	22·5	223	9·9
Richmond	372	39·2	546	42·4
Southwark	33	0·8	125	2·4
Sutton	109	6·9	620	22·7
Tower Hamlets	86	2·9	491	5·4
Waltham Forest	30	1·4	100	3·5
Wandsworth	2,736	47·5	2,943	50·7
Westminster	3,700	58·0	2,665	49·6
Bolton	1,175	32·2	1,098	28·3
Bury	370	29·3	570	28·7
Manchester	2,210	11·5	3,048	11·3
Oldham	2,842	22·2	2,806	31·6
Rochdale	505	31·1	923	44·8
Salford	555	13·3	765	21·3
Stockport	2,087	55·1	2,289	49·3
Tameside	1,276	44·3	373	11·1
Trafford	200	3·8	158	3·0
Wigan	450	10·4	384	21·4
Knowsley	320	2·3	386	1·7
Liverpool	400	15·5	555	11·6
St. Helens	225	1·5	192	3·8
Sefton	538	36·0	598	28·8
Wirral	670	17·3	1,349	27·6
Barnsley	824	9·7	469	9·3
Doncaster	3,479	46·0	1,578	21·8
Rotherham	350	8·3	85	2·5
Sheffield	1,350	6·4	3,941	14·7
Gateshead	910	14·8	273	10·4
Newcastle	255	5·7	300	4·1
North Tyneside	20	2·1	340	20·2
South Tyneside	40	3·1	291	15·4
Sunderland	394	6·2	440	8·3
Birmingham	2,300	8·3	2,119	5·5
Coventry	320	3·0	734	5·2
Dudley	138	1·8	588	5·5
Sandwell	2,487	45·8	2,656	46·4
Solihull	100	3·9	194	5·2
Walsall	2,018	10·1	1,500	6·6
Wolverhampton	140	1·4	2,023	10·9
Bradford	1,000	18·4	945	14·1
Calderdale	374	33·6	904	31·3
Kirklees	1,650	32·9	1,294	14·5
Leeds	595	5·8	3,581	15·8
Wakefield	1,386	42·2	1,209	28·0
Avon	1,595	5·9	1,819	8·2
Bedfordshire	1,486	31·3	2,150	28·0
Berkshire	1,064	8·8	1,125	8·8
Buckinghamshire	549	10·6	611	8·8
Cambridgeshire	1,900	29·9	2,474	23·3
Cheshire	1,020	4·3	2,720	10·5
Cleveland	540	5·1	1,119	7·4
Cornwall	790	6·8	1,700	14·6
Cumbria	1,497	29·6	1,522	17·9
Derbyshire	828	13·9	1,276	15·2
Devon	1,771	18·4	1,500	11·4
Dorset	830	10·7	850	10·8
Durham	800	7·9	1,200	9·1
East Sussex	613	6·4	1,776	16·9
Essex	565	4·1	1,729	10·4
Gloucestershire	486	5·3	700	7·7
Hampshire	795	2·6	1,225	2·9
Hereford and Worcester	467	5·6	685	12·9
Hertfordshire	1,256	9·2	2,045	11·4
Humberside	1,650	9·5	1,961	9·3
Isle of Wight	0	0·0	187	5·7
Kent	2,250	3·1	1,701	2·3
Lancashire	7,910	26·6	5,873	26·6
Leicestershire	385	2·3	896	7·3
Lincolnshire	1,440	18·2	2,207	20·6
Norfolk	3,887	24·7	4,786	25·7
Northamptonshire	1,142	9·7	1,[illegible]94	13·2
Northumberland	100	1·5	4,480	38·9
North Yorkshire	1,760	10·7	2,875	12·4
Nottinghamshire	2,080	20·4	2,101	16·3
Oxfordshire	820	7·0	1,115	9·5
Shropshire	88	1·1	2,130	30·7
Somerset	926	10·7	1,120	7·9
Staffordshire	1,250	14·4	1,410	9·3
Suffolk	2,910	23·3	2,340	19·5
Surrey	5,900	24·5	4,765	14·0
Warwickshire	1,815	46·5	2,462	44·4
West Sussex	200	2·3	671	7·5
Wiltshire	25	0·4	185	4·3

Roads, Leicestershire

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which road development schemes in Leicestershire and Rutland his Department has approved for funding in the latest financial year for which his Department has made its decision; and when he expects the Oakham bypass to be approved by his Department within the Leicestershire county council's current list of road scheme priorities.

Mr. Key: Work started during the 1993-94 financial year on the A46 Leicester western bypass trunk road scheme at a cost of £36 million.

On local road schemes the total estimated expenditure accepted by the Department in this financial year for transport supplementary grant—TSG—during 1994-95 for Leicestershire, was £2,514,000[1] including adjustment for underspend in previous years. Major schemes receiving continued support will be:

(a) Leicester A46/47 link road

(b) A447 Hinckley northern perimeter road completion

(c) A512 Ashby/Loughborough-Coleorton improvement

(d) A563 Leicester motorway employment area stage 4 Soar Valley way

(e) A563 Braunstone way underpasses

The A606 Oakham-Langham bypass is included by Leicestershire in its five-year programme of major county highway schemes with a 1998-99 start year. The bid year for TSG would be 1997-98.

[1] Funding for structural maintenance on bridges and carriageways was also included.

A1

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which properties have already been bought and which properties it is the intention of his Department to purchase alongside the stretch of the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham which is due to be widened.

Mr. Key: Fifteen applications for purchase of properties between Stamford and Grantham have been received under the statutory blight regulations; of those, to date two acquisitions have been completed and a further 12 applications have been accepted, the remaining application is still under consideration.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are to widen the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham.

Mr. Key: The plan to widen the A1 northwards from Stamford was first announced on 3 July 1990. Subsequently a scheme for the Stamford to Newark section entered the roads programme on 17 December 1991. Detailed plans will emerge in the form of public consultation proposals.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make available for inspection by local councillors and other interested parties his Department's existing plans for any scheme to widen the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham.

Mr. Key: Plans will be made available when the public consultation stage is reached.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public consultations he expects there to be about the widening of the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham; and under what procedure and timetable.

Mr. Key: It is our usual practice to consult the public about scheme options before publishing statutory orders under the Highways Act 1980 to which objections can be lodged and, if necessary, a public inquiry held. Timing depends on the outcome of the roads programme review.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which junctions he expects to be closed and which he expects to remain open following the widening of the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham.

Mr. Key: It is too early to say.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultants have been appointed for the widening of the A1 in the county of Rutland between Stamford and Grantham.

Mr. Key: Kirkpatrick and Partners has been appointed for the widening of the A1 between Peterborough and Stamford including the A1 Stamford bypass. Consultants for the remainder of the A1 in Rutland cannot be appointed before the outcome of the roads programme review.

Left-hand Driving

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to bring the side of the road vehicles use in Britain into conformity with European practice.

Mr. Key: No. The case for making this change was studied in detail in 1969 and was reviewed in 1992 in response to a recommendation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its report on the motor industry. The review confirmed that the change to driving on the right would have minimal economic benefits, could adversely affect road safety and would cost at least £2 billion.

These are powerful reasons for continuing to drive on the left along with some 38 other countries, and one third of the world's population.

London Underground

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give urgent consideration to the proposals by ABB in Derby for refurbishment of the Northern line of London Underground on a lease finance basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Yes. At London Underground's request, the Government are considering very urgently whether a deal along the lines of that proposed by ABB might be consistent with our published guidelines for public sector leasing. We expect to be in a position to take a view of this point very soon.

Fishguard-Paddington Railway Line

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet representatives of British Rail to discuss the desirability of retaining all existing stations on the main Fishguard-Paddington line to maintain its viability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I regularly meet representatives of British Rail for discussions on a wide range of issues.

I understand that there are no plans to to propose closure of any stations on the Fishguard to Paddington line.

Oil Tankers

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure oil tanker traffic is monitored around the United Kingdom coast 24 hours a day.

Mr. Norris: At present, laden oil tankers report their movements to local coastguards in the areas of the Fair Isle channel, Pentland firth and the Isles of Scilly. In both the Dover strait and the Minch, all tankers report their movements to local coastguards. The provision of further monitoring will be subject to the recommendations made by the inquiry announced by the Secretary of State to the House on 11 January 1993, *Official Report,* columns 609-10, under the chairmanship of Lord Donaldson of Lymington.

Bus and Coach Safety

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to co-ordinate a strategy to improve safety in mini-buses and coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are reviewing the full technical and cost implications of seat belts in mini-buses and coaches. I expect to receive a report within the next few weeks. I cannot anticipate when decisions will be taken; but we shall be publishing our conclusions.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation has been carried out of the proposal to fit seat belts to omnibuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are reviewing the full technical and cost implications of seat belts in minibuses and coaches. I expect to receive a report within the next few weeks. I cannot anticipate when decisions will be taken; but we shall be publishing our conclusions.

Research Contracts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a list of current research contracts concerning any aspects of transport and the environment, giving costs and the names of consultants employed.

Mr. Norris: I am placing the information requested in the Library.

East Coast Ports

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent progress has been made on improvements to road communications between the midlands and the east coast ports.

Mr. Key: A great deal.

Since 1990 the main achievement has been the construction of the A14—M1-A1 Link road—the final sections of which will be completed later this year. This route provides a vital east-west link, connecting the east coast ports to the midlands and the north.

In addition, a number of bypasses and improvements to existing routes across East Anglia have been completed including on the A11, Thetford-Bridgham Heath, Thetford bypass, Four Wentways-Newmarket, Newmarket-Red Lodge, Red Lodge bypass, and on the A47, Norwich southern bypass, East Dereham-North Tuddenham, Narborough bypass, Castor-Ailsworth bypass, Guyhirn and Eye bypasses.

Construction work has started on A11, Besthorpe-Wymondham and Stump Cross-Four Wentways and on A47, Walpole Tilney-Tilney High End thus further improving these routes through East Anglia.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will supply copies of the detailed plans showing the safeguarded zones relating to the channel tunnel rail link to every hon. Member whose constituency is affected in Kent.

Mr. Freeman: A copy of the full-sized detailed plans for all of the safeguarded areas has been placed in the Library of the House.

I understand that Union Railways is making arrangements for A3 sized copies of the safeguarding plans to be sent to all hon. Members who constituencies are affected by the safeguarding directions.

Severn Tunnel (Train Crash)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the Seymour report on the train crash in the Severn tunnel on 7 December 1991.

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive has today published the Severn tunnel accident inquiry report. A copy of the report will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has drawn from the Seymour report on the train crash in the Severn tunnel on 7 December 1991; what action he will be taking in regard to safety standards and of the organisation of accident and emergency services.

Mr. Freeman: I have noted the conclusions and recommendations made in the Severn tunnel accident inquiry report. British Rail is considering the recommendations and has already implemented a range of measures to improve the detection of faults, the maintenance of equipment, communications and access to the tunnel. Interested parties are continuing to look at further ways of improving liaison and site arrangements for the emergency services.

Vehicle Excise Offences

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by office the number of excise reports which have been received by each vehicle registration office *(a)* that are discarded due to lack of staff resources, *(b)* that are closed because the alleged offender cannot be traced and *(c)* that will not be investigated.

Mr. Robert Key *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:*

Column A—Insufficient resource

During the past four years there has been an appreciable increase in the number of excise offence reports—EORs—received from the police. Since 1991-92 EORs have been rising at the rate of between 13 per cent. and 17 per cent. per annum.

	million
1990-91	1·3
1991-92	1·5
1992-93	1·7
[1]1993-94	2·0

[1] Forecast.

The introduction of new technology and improved working practices enabled the local office network to cope with the increase initially. However, by the end of 1992-93 the gain from those improvements had largely been exhausted. 1993-94 has seen further increases in the number of EORs, brought about chiefly by the introduction of the windscreen warning notices—WWN—scheme. This has put a number of local offices under severe pressure with the result that some EORs were being discarded because there were insufficient resources to deal with them. As an immediate solution, revised guidelines were issued to the network in July 1993. This resulted in cases being dealt with in order of priority with serious cases involving other traffic offence, the better quality named reports, persistent offenders and high value cases involving HGVs being processed first.

The agency has also, as a short-term measure, succeeded in getting an additional £120,000 running costs during the current financial year. This has been given to those local offices where the problem of receipts is most acute to pay for the recruitment of casual staff and/or overtime working. The agency will consider longer term measures when the local office strategic review is completed this spring.

Column B and C cases not pursued

Column B refers to the number of cases in which the alleged offender cannot be traced and which results in the abandonment of the case.

The figures listed in column C are cases where initial inquiries indicate that there is little or no likelihood of a successful conclusion. The decision is then taken not to proceed with detailed investigation. These include cases where discrepancies exist between the details on the vehicle record and the excise offence report or where information contained on a microfilmed copy of an application is illegible. While a case is already being dealt with VROs may choose not to action further EORs for the same vehicle. VRO managers take cost-effectiveness into account in deciding whether or not to pursue a case. An example is where the current keeper relicenses the vehicle immediately on being reported and where the outstanding back-duty is so small that the cost of pursuit would outweigh the amount of recoverable revenue. A further example is where a new keeper relicenses within five days of acquiring the vehicle.

April 1993 to January 1994

VRO	*Excise offence report receipts*	*(a) Insufficient staff resource*	*(b) A/O[1] not traced*	*(c) Cases not pursued*
Manchester	57,625	1,938	1,298	2,401
Sheffield	34,292	15	2,130	2,091
Liverpool	54,723	9	1,631	6,178
Bangor	8,423	0	423	73
Chester	13,157	0	525	0
Huddersfield	13,318	1	2,845	622
Leeds	39,543	772	3,131	2,847
Preston	30,428	7	544	3,883
Hull	12,577	0	1,660	464
Aberdeen	5,977	0	511	72
Inverness	2,822	0	280	0
Dundee	11,693	0	1,767	1,159
Middlesbrough	16,655	0	2,841	2,294
Newcastle	56,918	0	9,383	3,170
Carlisle	7,219	1	1,249	801
Edinburgh	24,339	0	1,158	558
Glasgow	37,175	0	2,531	1,030
Luton	50,805	1,120	556	6,349
Ipswich	18,670	1	1,027	1,413
Chelmsford	52,614	1,166	2,759	2,431
Norwich	35,121	666	1,382	3,058
Haverfordwest	5,808	0	304	45
Cardiff	41,292	14	994	1,055
Swansea	13,274	2	1,143	214
Taunton	9,997	817	647	1,305
Truro	11,479	0	425	1,036
Gloucester	17,477	118	1,416	76
Exeter	29,204	38	2,586	4,440
Bristol	32,845	0	3,910	1,662
Worcester	15,081	0	1,341	152
Swindon	13,116	15	1,662	479
Reading	19,271	0	3,610	3,259
Portsmouth	37,788	70	1,830	5,472
Oxford	17,131	0	2,720	1,581
Brighton	42,861	162	1,574	1,251
Maidstone	56,687	0	2,552	2,123
Guildford	22,735	0	1,001	1,849
Bournemouth	17,013	0	1,478	1,533
Stoke	16,275	0	1,525	2,245
Leicester	25,429	1	446	4,580
Lincoln	13,650	274	1,112	157
Nottingham	33,590	0	5,251	1,722
Peterborough	13,427	0	1,440	610
Northants	21,681	2	711	419
Birmingham	55,787	2	10,251	2,527
Coventry	22,402	11	2,319	2,738
Dudley	9,883	30	951	108
Shrewsbury	5,471	0	758	96
LEO[2]	379,443	8	20,069	13,642

[1] Alleged Offender.

[2] London Enforcement Office.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to evict residents in Cambridge Park road, Wanstead along the route of the M11 link road; when he expects such action to take place; what will be the likely cost of the operation; what steps he is taking to ensure that no violence or excessive force is used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* On 16 February squatters were removed from numbers 2-12 Cambridge Park road. Initial estimates of the cost of the operation are in the region of £200,000. Eight arrests were made, two by county court bailiffs, and six by the police of whom five were in connection with the anti-BNP Welling riots. No excessive force was employed by the authorities. The protestors were defying court orders to quit the properties. I regret that by their action they are prolonging the inevitable disruption suffered by the local community, deferring the very real benefits including reduction in local traffic, improvement in air quality, lower accident rates and better facilities for residents which the scheme will bring.

Expenditure on enforcement action denies expenditure on real benefits to the community, and I very much regret that given that the link road has been the subject of no less than three public inquiries, a small minority should so misguidedly inflict such damage on the local area.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many people are employed within each operational region of the Vehicle Inspectorate on *(a)* vehicle testing and *(b)* road transport enforcement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement listing the testing fee scales currently operated by the Vehicle Inspectorate.

Mr. Key: I have asked the Vehicle Inspectorate chief executive to write to the hon. Member with this detailed information.

Letter from Ron Oliver to Mr. Brian Donohoe, dated 23 February 1994:

Vehicle Inspectorate staffing and costs

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent questions about the Vehicle Inspectorate. In all you asked five questions. One of these related to the future status of VI's testing stations and will be answered by Mr. Key.

The information relating to the remaining four questions is attached as follows:

Annex 1: VI testing stations by region following the Inspectorate's reorganisation on 1 November 1993.
Annex 2: Staffing and costs by district prior to 1 November 1993 (staffing expressed in whole time equivalents).
Annex 3: Current test fees.
Annex 4: Staffing by Vehicle Testing (VT) and Road Traffic Enforcement (RTE) regions.

I hope you find this information useful. If you have any additional questions please write to me at the above address.

Vehicle inspectorate testing stations by region

West Scotland

Bishopbriggs
Lochgilphead
Fort William
Inverness
Newton Stewart

  - **Kirkwall**
  - **Lairg**
  - **Lerwick**
  - **Portree**
  - **Stornoway**
  - **Wick**
  - **Kilmarnock**
  - **Dumfries**
- ***East Scotland***
  - **Aberdeen**
  - **Livingston**
  - **Berwick-upon-Tweed**
  - **East Fortune**
  - **Charlesfield**
  - **Keith**
  - **Perth**
  - **Kirkcaldy**
  - **Montrose**
- ***North West***
  - **Carlisle**
  - **Heywood**
  - **Steeton**
  - **Workington**
  - **Kirkham**
  - **Barrow**
  - **Milnthorpe**
- ***North East***
  - **Darlington**
  - **Newcastle**
  - **Scarborough**
  - **Leeds**
  - **Walton**
- ***Merseyside and North Wales***
  - **Wrexham**
  - **Caernarvon**
  - **Bromborough**
  - **Liverpool**
  - **Bredbury**
- ***North Midlands***
  - **Sheffield**
  - **Doncaster**
  - **Derby**
  - **Nottingham**
  - **Beverley**
- ***West Midlands***
  - **Stoke**
  - **Shrewsbury**
  - **Wolverhampton**
  - **Birmingham**
- ***East Midlands***
  - **Leicester**
  - **Peterborough**
  - **Grimsby**
  - **Grantham**
  - **Weedon**
- ***East***
  - **Chelmsford**
  - **Ipswich**
  - **Norwich**
  - **Crimplesham**
  - **Royston**
- ***South Wales***
  - **Kidderminster**
  - **Ammanford**
  - **Haverfordwest**
  - **Hereford**
  - **Llantrisant**
  - **Llanrystyd**
  - **Llandrindod Wells**
  - **Pontypool**
- ***South West***
  - **Bristol**
  - **Calne**
  - **Exeter**
  - **Taunton**
  - **South Molton**
  - **Gloucester**
  - **Plymouth**
  - **St. Austell**
  - **Redruth**
- ***South Central***
  - **Leighton Buzzard**
  - **Poole**
  - **Salisbury**
  - **Bicester**
  - **Newbury**
  - **Southampton**
  - **Cowes**
- ***London***
  - **Edmonton**
  - **Purfleet**
  - **Yeading**
  - **Mitcham**
- ***South East***
  - **Canterbury**
  - **Guildford**
  - **Hastings**
  - **Lancing**
  - **Gillingham**

Analysis of staffing and operational costs pre-November 1993
Vehicle testing and enforcement

	Spend £	*Staffing*
Carlisle	191,316	16·15
Bishopbriggs	368,322	31·52
Livingston	324,764	26·53
Inverness	174,611	11·21
Kilmarnock	155,263	14·10
Aberdeen	143,794	12·94
Perth	176,841	15·59
Scottish GMO	51,880	3·00
Scottish total	1,586,591	131·04
Derby	183,936	16·84
Bredbury	355,218	34·08
Heywood	380,824	34·67
Kirkham	351,395	33·17
Liverpool	303,418	32·79
Wrexham	348,493	31·16
North West GMO	42,797	3·00
North West total	1,966,081	185·71
Nottingham	268,355	23·09
Beverley	165,193	14·19
Walton	236,361	18·97
Doncaster	162,080	12·52
Grimsby	133,695	19·62
Sheffield	206,076	14·42
Leeds	385,201	34·22
Darlington	265,789	23·32
Newcastle	253,708	22·08
North East GMO	49,482	2·75
North East total	2,127,940	185·18
Kidderminster	253,372	22·89
Birmingham	343,941	31·08
Wolverhampton	301,692	27·57
Stoke	441,958	37·29
Llantrisant	258,628	21·48
Pontypool	143,024	12·40
Ammanford	172,672	15·04
Wales Mid GMO	47,602	3·00
West Midlands and South Wales total	1,962,889	170·75
Southampton	256,210	21·66
Newbury	152,105	13·08
Poole	205,310	17·62
Bristol	380,822	34·72
Exeter	313,527	26·08
Plymouth	207,013	16·00
Gloucester	124,762	12·87
Bicester	141,899	13·18
South West GMO	45,298	2·80

	Spend £	*Staffing*
South West total	1,826,946	158·01
Purfleet	359,021	32·33
Edmonton	359,750	29·49
Leicester	205,678	19·35
Weedon	184,781	18·81
Grantham	168,092	15·93
Chelmsford	198,745	18·62
Royston	193,161	15·81
Leighton Buzzard	146,178	15·60
Norwich	190,383	17·62
Peterborough	277,252	27·78
Ipswich	185,965	17·82
East GMO	54,626	2·00
East total	2,523,632	231·16
Yeading	422,591	33·00
Mitcham	314,421	25·00
Canterbury	155,972	13·54
Gillingham	185,931	16·29
Hastings	111,341	9·84
Lancing	160,131	14·05
Guildford	188,422	16·62
South East GMO	51,686	2·00
South East total	1,590,495	130·34
Vehicle testing and enforcement total	13,584,574	1,192·19

Traffic enforcement

	Spend £	*Staffing*
Edinburgh	117,173	9·00
Glasgow	85,342	6·00
Perth	61,868	4·00
Scottish EMO	71,201	8·00
Scottish Total	335,584	27·00
Manchester	96,299	8·00
Preston	96,837	9·00
Carlisle	53,372	4·00
Warrington	82,371	7·00
North West EMO	131,645	8·50
North West Total	460,524	36·50
Leeds	81,820	7·00
Brigg	95,563	8·00
Gateshead	102,454	8·00
Sutton in Ashfield	101,594	7·00
North East EMO	119,104	13·08
North East Total	500,535	43·08
Cobridge	70,595	6·00
Cardiff	105,049	9·00
Worcester	73,361	6·00
Birmingham	112,253	8·00
West Midland and South West EMO	162,872	13·08
West Midland and South West Total	524,130	42·08
Bristol	73,397	6·00
Poole	100,439	7·00
Plymouth	80,917	6·00
Reading	76,559	6·00
Western EMO	100,103	10·00
South Western Total	431,415	35·00
Grantham	77,584	5·00
Weedon	63,981	5·00
Aylesbury	75,279	8·00
Norwich	93,392	7·00
Harwich	98,865	8·16
Eastern EMO	120,749	12·81
East Total	529,850	43·97
Uckfield	73,170	5·00
Dover	77,520	5·00
Maidstone	65,421	5·00
Chessington	135,461	10·00
Belvedere	124,837	9·00
Stanmore	12,413	0·00
South East and Metropolitan EMO	133,521	10·68
South East Total	622,343	44·68
Traffic Enforcement Total	404,381	272·31

Total vehicle and testing enforcement

Spend £	*Staffing*
308,489	25·15
453,664	37·52
386,632	30·53
174,611	11·21
155,263	14·10
143,794	12·94
178,641	15·59
123,081	11·00
1,922,175	158·04
280,235	24·84
452,055	43·08
434,196	36·67
433,766	40·17
303,418	32·79
348,493	31·16
174,442	11·50
2,426,605	222·21
350,175	30·09
280,756	22·19
338,835	26·97
263,854	19·52
133,895	19·62
208,076	14·42
385,201	34·22
285,789	23·32
253,708	22·08
168,586	15·83
2,628,475	228·26
323,967	28·89
448,990	40·08
375,053	33·57
554,211	45·29
258,628	21·48
143,024	12·40
172,672	15·04
210,474	16·08
2,487,019	212·83
329,607	27·66
252,544	20·08
286,227	23·62
457,381	40·72
313,527	26·08
207,013	16·00

Spend £	Staffing
124,782	12·87
141,899	13·18
145,401	12·80
2,258,361	190·01
436,605	37·33
423,731	34·49
280·957	25·35
278,173	25·81
266,957	24·09
198,745	18·62
193,161	15·81
146,178	15·60
190,383	17·62
277,252	27·78
185,965	17·82
175,375	14·81
3,053,482	275·13
495,761	38·00
391,941	30·00
221,393	18·54
321,392	26·29
236,178	18·84
172,544	14·05
188,422	16·62
185,207	12·88
2,212,838	175·02
16,988,955	1,464·50

Notes:

1. Allocations of VI staffing between testing and enforcement divisions can be carried out on the basis of the management accounts produced for same period ie testing 55 per cent. enforcement 45 per cent.
2. Operational costs are those quoted on the October district/sector unit cost analysis.
3. On 1 November 1993 VI split its operational work between two new divisions: vehicle testing (VT) and road transport enforcement (RTE). VT created a regional structure based on 14 regions. RTE reorganised into 23 areas in integrating traffic and roadworthiness enforcement work.
4. GMO = Group Managers Office.
   EMO = Enforcement Managers Office.

Current Test Fees

	Test fee[1] £	Re-test fee £
Heavy goods vehicles (HGV)		
Motor vehicles		
2 axle	32·70	16·60
3 axle	33·70	
4 or more axles	34·70	
Trailers		
1 axle	16·70	8·30
2 axle	17·10	
3 or more axles	17·90	
Clearance of prohibition by partial inspection		
Motor vehicle	16·60	
Trailers	8·30	
Public Service Vehicle		
9-12 passenger seats	28·20	14·10
13+ passenger seats	40·30	19·80
Clearance of prohibition by partial inspection		
9-12 passenger seats	14·10	
13+ passenger seats	19·80	
C.O.I.F.		
Examination (inclusive of tilt test)	129·00	
Tilt re-test	129·00	
Examination re-test	15·40	
A. D.R.		
Motor vehicle (excluding annual test fee)		98·80
Trailer (excluding annual test fee)		98·00
T. I. R.		
Initial inspection	62·60	
Re-inspection	43·70	

[1] Re-test after failure (within 14 days of initial inspection).

January 1994 staffing analysis

	Staffing
VT division	
Region	
West Scotland	39
East Scotland	40
North East	60
North West	53
Merseyside and North Wales	62
North Midlands	55
South Wales	47
West Midlands	60
East Midlands	53
South West	58
South Central	48
London	70
East	54
South East	44
VT total	743
RTE division	
Group	
Scotland and North West	170
West Midlands and South Wales	99
South East and West	187
North East and East	214
RTE total	670
VI summary	
Division	
VT	743
RTE	670
VI total	1,413

Note: VI also employs 316 staff at its headquarters in Bristol and Swansea working in VT, RTE and central services.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the drainage council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland are:

Councillor A. Bresland
Councillor S. Doyle
Councillor W. Haggan
Councillor E. Hetherington
Councillor J. Junkin
Councillor W. King
Councillor P. J. McBride
Councillor J. McNickle

Councillor C. E. Rollston
Councillor W. Sheldon
Mr. K. Brady
Mrs. D. Brown
Dr. S. Cochrane
Mrs. C. Kennedy
Mr. M. McCaldin
Mrs. K. McHenry
Mr. C. E. Ronaldson
Miss J. Townsley

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Youth Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The membership of the Youth Council for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Mr. J. F. Campbell *(Chairman)*
Mrs. S. C. Hogg *(Vice-Chairman)*
Miss P. McKeever
Mr. W. G. Watson
Mr. G. Skillen
Mr. S. Farren
Mr. E. Rainey
Mr. G. Bell
Mr. O. Magill
Miss L. Blair
Mr. G. P. Butler
Mr. J. Quinliven
Mrs. A. Wright
Mr. T. Long
Mrs. E. M. McGrath
Ms M. McGarrigle
Ms M. Shields

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the Northern Ireland industrial tribunals.

Mr. Tim Smith: Industrial tribunals comprise three members—one from each of the following panels:

Chairmen

Mr. J. E. Maguire—President of Industrial Tribunals
Mrs. M. E. Perceval-Price—Vice President of Industrial Tribunals
Mrs. M. Davey
Mrs. M. R. Cooper
Mr. S. M. P. Cross
Mr. J. A. Gallagher
Mrs. L. A. Gilbert
Mr. B. J. Greene
Ms M. K. McAlister
Ms E. R. McBride
Mr. A. McGettigan
Mr. P. R. Maguire
Mr. I. Montgomery

Employees' representatives

Mr. S. Adair
Ms M. Adams
Mr. R. Blaney
Ms M. Blood
Ms A. Brennan
Mrs. G. Burke
Mr. E. Cairns
Ms M. Cassidy
Mr. G. Clarke
Mr. D. Copeland
Ms G. Coulter
Mr. A. Crawford
Ms E. Dickey
Mr. P. Dyer
Ms T. Gallagher
Ms M. Graham
Mr. S. R. Gunning
Ms D. Hanna
Mr. R. S. Headley
Mr. B. Heuston
Ms P. Holloway
Mr. J. E. Hughes
Mr. G. Hunter
Ms A. P. Johnston
Mr. A. Keery
Ms T. Kelly
Mr. W. J. Kirkwood
Mr. J. Law
Mr. R. Lowden
Mr. F. Mallon
Mr. J. Mallon
Ms B. Martin
Mr. J. E. Martin
Mr. W. D. Mercer
Mr. P. Millar
Mr. E. Miller
Mr. A. Molloy
Mr. J. Murphy
Mr. D. Murray
Mr. E. McBride
Mr. K. McCabe
Ms J. McCaffrey
Mr. B. McCarthy
Mr. F. McCrossan
Mr. E. McDaid
Mr. J. M. McDonnell
Ms A. McGonigle
Mr. J. McKeown
Mr. G. McKnight
Mr. J. McParland
Ms S. McQuade
Ms S. E. Nevin
Mr. J. Nicholl
Mr. E. Oakes
Mr. O. J. O'Callaghan
Ms C. O'Malley
Mr. J. Patterson
Ms M. Quaile
Ms C. Rawlings
Mr. W. Robinson
Mr. M. Rooney
Ms A. Scallon
Ms M. Scott
Mr. E. Sheridan
Mr. T. Smyth
Mr. B. Webster
Mr. A. White
Mr. P. Williamson
Mr. T. Wright
Mr. R. Gourley
Ms D. Hanna

Employers' representatives

Mr. C. H. Adams
Mr. R. Allen
Mr. J. Atcheson
Mr. W. G. Black
Mrs. D. Boyd
Mr. R. T. Boyd, MBE
Ms L. Breen
Mr. R. Brewster
Mr. A. Broomhead
Mr. S. A. Buchanan
Mr. G. Burnison, OBE
Mr. A. Burnside
Mr. T. Carney
Ms M. Carson
Lady Carswell, OBE
Mr. A. Cormack, OBE
Mr. S. Craig
Mrs. S. Cunningham
Mr. J. W. Currie
Mr. J. N. Dickinson
Mr. W. S. Donaghey
Ms M. Donnelly
Mr. W. A. Doran
Mrs. K. Elliott
Mr. R. Ferris
Mr. P. Fitzsimons
Mrs. H. D. Gault
Mr. W. F. Gillespie, OBE, TD, BA, JP
Mr. P. de Haan

Miss A. Hamilton
Mr. J. D. Hampton
Mr. A. Haslett
Mr. E. Hesketh
Mr. W. H. Heubeck, CBE
Mr. R. D. Hind
Mr. J. Hughes
Mr. W. C. Hurst, OBE
Mr. E. Ingham
Mr. N. Irwin, OBE
Mr. N. Jones
Miss E. Kennedy, MBE
Mr. W. Kennedy, MBE
Mr. P. Killen, OBE
Mr. F. G. Lawrence
Mr. J. B. Leetch
Professor P. V. Mageean, OBE
Mr. C. A. Maginess
Mr. A. Martin, DFC
Mr. S. Moore, JP
Mrs. A. E. Morrison
Mr. A. H. MacLaughlin
Mr. G. McCartan
Dr. W. J. McCourt
Mrs. L. A. McEleavy
Mr. G. McGrath
Ms T. McGuckin
Mr. J. McIlwaine
Miss S. McKee
Mr. H. O. McMurray, MBE
Mrs. A. McNally
Mr. G. C. O'Neill, MBE
Miss M. O'Neill
Mr. D. Paulin, CBE
Mrs. J. Rainey
Dr. R. L. Schierbeck, OBE
Mr. W. M. Scott
Mrs. A. Scullion
Mr. A. J. Sherrard
Mr. H. V. Shimmons
Mrs. U. Short, BSc.
Mrs. D. Stewart
Mr. J. D. Thompson
Mr. R. H. Thompson
Mr. D. C. Tinkler
Mr. R. G. Toland
Mrs. E. Torrans
Mr. D. Turkington
Mr. N. C. Wilkinson
Mr. J. R. Wilson
Mr. W. Slinger

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland are:

Mr. J. Millar *(Chairman)*
Mr. J. G. Kelly
Mr. B. Fawcett
Ms M. Percy
Mr. P. J. Kelly
Mr. G. Lowe
Mr. R. Moore

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Training Schools management board for Rathgael and Whiteabbey.

Mr. Ancram: In the interests of personal security it would not be appropriate to name individual members of the Rathgael and Whiteabbey schools management board.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Agricultural Research Institute for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members of the board of trustees of the Agricultural Research Institute for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mr. H. R. Kirkpatrick
Dr. C. H. McMurray
Mr. W. G. Smyth OBE
Professor F. J. Gordon
Mr. J. B. Mulvenna
Mr. J. A. Patton CBE
Mr. N. W. Shaw CBE
Mr. I. C. Murray
Mr. J. Mallon

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the fair employment tribunals.

Mr. Tim Smith: Fair employment tribunals comprise three members—one from each of the following panels:

Chairmen
Mr. J. E. Maguire—President of the Fair Employment Tribunal
Mrs. M. Perceval-Price—Vice President of the Fair Employment Tribunal
Mrs. M. Davey

Employers' Representatives
Mr. R. C. Bacon
Miss. M. E. Bailey
Mr. C. Bamford
Mrs. M. T. Breslin
Mr. J. Campbell
Mrs. R. Chambers
Mr. C. J. Duffy
Mr. J. J. Eccles OBE
Mr. R. M. Gibson
Mr. R. T. Jordan OBE
Mr. H. D. Montgomery
Mr. M. Moroney
Mr. F. P. Murtagh
Mr. B. McGuire
Mr. W. F. I. McKay
Mr. N. McKenna
Mr. J. R. McKinstry
Dr. E. A. McPherson
Mrs. M. Noble
Mrs. J. Roberts
Mr. D. B. Smith
Mr. T. Stothers
Mr. N. L. Valentine OBE
Mr. S. White
Mr. E. Bridle
Mrs. H. D. Gault

Employee representative
Ms M. Abraham
Mr. S. Adair
Mr. K. Bannon
Ms P. Browne
Ms A. Campbell
Mr. R. B. Carson
Mr. R. Clarke
Mr. T. D. Douglas MBE
Mr. R. Gourley
Mr. A. Hewitt
Mr. R. Jay
Mr. G. Johnston
Mr. C. C. Lowry
Mr. J. MacPollock
Mr. B. McCarthy
Mr. W. McCreight
Mr. S. McDowell
Mr. R. McFAdden
Ms P. McKeown
Ms A. Nicholl
Mr. J. Nixon

Mr. P. O'Donnell
Ms C. O'Malley
Ms A. M. Powell
Mr. J. Rafferty
Ms R. Taillon
Mr. M. Toal
Mr. N. Young
Mr. W. F. Jackson
Mr. P. A. McCartan
Mr. E. Sheridan

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Pig Production Development Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Pig Production Development Committee are as follows:

Mr. R. Overend *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. J. Collins
Mr. S. Hall
Mr. M. Hartley
Mr. R. Kerr
Mr. J. McBride
Mr. R. Irwin
Mr. B. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members of the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Right hon. Betty Boothroyd MP *(Chairman)*
Hon. Mr. Justice Pringle
Mr. D. J. Clement
Mr. P. G. Duffy

In addition, the commission includes as assessors the Registrar General of Births and Deaths in Northern Ireland and the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Current members of the Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland are as follows:

Mr. K. Murnaghan *(Chairman)*
Mrs. G. Savage
Mr. I. Bill

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Industrial court.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Northern Ireland Industrial court comprises the president of the industrial court, Mr. J. E. Maguire, and two members—one from each of the following panels:

Employers representatives
Lady Carswell
Mr. W. S. Donaghey
Mr. R. Edgar
Mr. W. F. I. McKay
Mrs. D. Stewart

Employees' representatives
Mr. A. Gibb
Ms D. Hanna
Mr. J. E. Martin
Mr. J. McCusker

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Foyle Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Foyle Fisheries Commission are Mr. W. J. Anderson and Mr. J. S. Allister.

In addition to these two appointments by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, the Government of the Republic of Ireland have two appointees on the commission.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Independent Commission for Police Complaints for Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The current membership of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints is as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. James Grew CBE

Deputy Chairman:
Lady Carswell OBE

Deputy Chairman:
Mr. Kevin Murnaghan

Members:
Mrs. Isobel M. Brownlie
Mr. Thomas J. Garrett
Miss M. Fionnuala McGrady
Mr. Brian E. Reid
Mr. G. Bernard Turkington

However, a new commission has been appointed by the Secretary of State and will take up office on 1 March 1994. The new commission is as follows:

Chairman:
Mr. James Grew CBE

Deputy Chairman:
Mr. Kevin Murnaghan

Deputy Chairman:
Mr. Brian Reid

Members:
Miss Suzanne Bryson
Dr. Robin Davidson
Mr. Thomas J. Garrett
Miss M. Fionnuala McGrady
Mr. G. Bernard Turkington

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Sports Council for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The full membership of the Sports Council for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Mr. Don Allen *(Chairman)*
Alderman Peter Robinson, MP
Mr. Tony Carlin
Mrs. Roseanne McCaughan
Mrs. June Davis
Mrs. Georgie Hart
Mrs. Jackie McWilliams
Mr. David Bowen
Mr. Clarence Hiles
Dr. Ian Corry
Miss Fionnuala McGrady
Mr. Jim McKeever
Mr. Stephen Hilditch
Mr. Dawson Stelfox
Mr. Ronnie Trouton

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the registered homes tribunals.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to registered homes tribunals are:

Chairmen
Mr. J. A. K. Irvine

Mr. S. F. M. Magee

Expert Members
Dr. F. Brown
Dr. S. Boyd
Dr. S. Compton
Dr. P. Flanagan
Dr. K. J. Fullerton
Dr. R. M. Galloway
Dr. J. S. Garvin
Dr. C. M. Marriott
Dr. O. E. P. Shanks
Mrs. S. R. Brownlee
Miss G. Hamilton
Mrs. G. Kelly
Ms J. McCrum
Mrs. E. Mehaffey
Mrs. M. Ralphs
Mr. W. J. Totten
Mrs. K. Cochrane
Mrs. B. Dickson
Mr. R. Kennedy
Mrs. H. M. Leo
Ms A. Lunny
Ms J. Marley
Mrs. M. O'Boyle
Mr. W. R. Sharpe
Mrs. E. Thomson
Mrs. N. Walsh
Mr. B. Wilson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the tribunal under schedule 11 of the health and personal social services (NI) Order 1972.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the health and personal social services tribunal are:
Mr. E. A. Comerton QC
Mr. J. D. McMullan
Dr. D. Boyd
Mr. D. S. Stewart
Mr. P. B. Linehan
Dr. U. Donnelly
Mr. P. J. Brogan

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) who are the members currently appointed to each of the social security appeal tribunals;

(2) who are the members currently appointed to each of the medical appeal tribunals;

(3) who are the members currently appointed to each of the disability appeal tribunals.

Mr. Ancram: The appointment of members to all the appeal tribunals is the responsibilty of the president of the independent tribunal service, Mr. C. G. MacLynn. The hon. Member may wish to write to him direct.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the mental health review tribunal for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to the mental health review tribunal for Northern Ireland are:
Mr. F. C. Elliott, QC *(Chairman)*

Legal Members
Mr. P. Coghlin, QC
Mr. P. Mooney, QC
Mr. W. B. Stevenson
Mr. M. A. Morrow, QC

Medical Members
Dr. W. A. G. MacCallum
Dr. D. Eyre
Dr. B. McConnell
Dr. P. Porter
Dr. M. McGinty
Dr. G. MacFlynn

Lay Members
Mrs. M. E. Hornsey
Dr. E. Downey
Mrs. A. M. Gault
Ms D. Cunningham
Mrs. S. Hillan

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Nursing Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Nursing Advisory Committee are as follows:
Chairman:
Mr. J. E. Mone

Members:
Mrs. M. C. Waddell
Miss E. M. McNair
Mr. F. A. Rice
Mr. A. A. Boardman
Dr. O. D'A Slevin
Mrs. A. R. Conn
Miss M. G. E. Foster
Miss A. I. Duddy
Mrs. M. J. Graham
Mrs. M. Keenan
Mr. J. J. O'Boyle
Miss M. A. Pidgeon
Mrs. K. Savage
Mrs. E. Roche
Miss P. Ginnety
Mrs. M. J. Smyth

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Dental Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Dental Advisory Committee are as follows:
Chairman:
Dr. J. G. Kennedy

Members:
Mr. I. McCappin
Mr. J. J. Murray
Mr. G. S. Hobson
Mr. T. Smyth
Professor I. C. Benington
Mr. B. McGonigle
Mrs. F. P. W. Simpson
Mr. M. W. Curran
Mr. I. D. F. Saunders
Mr. R. W. Kendrick
(1 vacancy)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education.

Mr. Ancram: Current members of the Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education are as follows:
Mr. D. S. Gordon
Professor A. H. G. Love
Professor R. W. Stout
Professor B. J. Rowlands
Professor P. M. Reilly
Dr. S. Rainer
Dr. S. Moore
Mr. W. D. Maxwell
Mr. I. D. F. Saunders
Dr. J. Watson

Dr. R. M. Galloway
Dr. J. R. Hayes
Dr. A. L. T. Blair
Dr. J. Robinson
Mr. A. A. B. Barros D'Sa
Professor E. R. Trimble
Dr. D. Patterson
Dr. P. Thomas
Dr. H. Lamki
Dr. I. W. Carson
Dr. D. Stewart
Mr. T. Irwin
Dr. P. S. Kellet
Dr. D. O. Todd
Dr. J. M. Dunlop
Dr. J. R. Darling
Mr. J. H. Gilleece
Professor I. C. Benington
Dr. J. F. McKenna
Mr. W. J. N. Collins
Dr. O. Quigley
Miss M. E. A. Hanna
Professor P. G. Toner
Dr. J. Howe
(One vacancy)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to the Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland are:

Chairman
Mr. H. E. Pierce

Legal Member
Mrs. M. T. O'Neill

Medical Members
Dr. W. A. Norris
Dr. G. J. Calvert
Dr. P. S. Curran

Nursing Members
Mr. K. Toal
Mrs. M. Kennan

Social Work Members
Miss W. Gregg
Mr. R. D. Poole

Psychology Member
Dr. R. Davidson

Lay Members
Dr. D. Paulin
Mrs. M. Hall
Dr. A. Williamson
Mrs. M. B. Porter

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Vaughan's charity.

Mr. Ancram: The members currently appointed to the Vaughan's charity are:

Mr. K. Murnaghan
Mr. S. B. Morrow
Mr. V. Cassidy
Mr. E. Rogers
Mr. S. Gormley

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Public Service Training Council.

Sir John Wheeler: At present no members are appointed to the Public Service Training Council. The work of the council is currently under review and the terms of office of all former members have expired. No new appointments will be made until decisions have been taken on the future of the council.

Salmon

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of spawning salmon and grilse which are needed to *(a)* maintain and *(b)* enhance the number of fish running each river in the Foyle system; what has been the average (i) counted and (ii) estimated in each such river in each of the last five years; what is his estimate of the optimum number of (1) parr and (2) smelts needed to bring each of these rivers up to maximum numbers; and what numbers of salmon he would take as the maximum run for each river.

Mr. Ancram: The basis for management of salmon stocks in the Foyle system, including estimates of the number of spawning fish required in each of the principal tributaries, is set out in the report by P. F. Elson and A. L. W. Tuomi entitled, "The Foyle Fisheries: New Basis for Rational Management". Information on the status of stocks in recent years is contained in the Foyle Fisheries Commission annual report for 1992. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

There are no facilities for counting parr or smelts but fish counting facilities for ascending stocks are available for a major part of the system and these indicate that runs for the past six seasons have significantly exceeded the estimated spawning requirement. The estimated spawning requirement was still significantly exceeded after deduction of reported angling catches.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* one sea winter, *(b)* two sea winter, *(c)* three sea winter and *(d)* four sea winter fish were salmon and grilse fish running the River Bush in each available year; how many fish were caught by rod in each class in each year since 1964; and what was the average weight of fish in each class in each year.

Mr. Ancram: The available information is given in the table:

Year	*1SW*	*2SW*	*Hatchery*	*Total reported rod catch*
1973	2,334	213	0	192
1974	3,246	214	10	374
1975	2,969	289	80	688
1976	2,842	205	40	245
1977	1,631	152	528	254
1978	1,366	189	81	160
1979	1,662	158	6	256
1980	2,593	271	65	321
1981	1,142	396	43	307
1982	1,373	119	42	271
1983	833	133	11	169
1984	504	88	20	108
1985	1,922	454	140	642
1986	2,402	434	868	641
1987	1,799	587	710	606
1988	2,647	358	1,078	796
1989	896	97	270	300
1990	1,649	194	329	374
1991	2,021	254	1,021	472
1992	2,186	301	484	677

No three or four sea winter fish have been identified. Although the number of hatchery origin salmon returning as adults are also given in the table, these are not segregated into age groups as they are almost entirely one sea winter fish. Rod catch statistics are available only from 1973 and are not separated to show wild-hatchery segregation, sea age class or average weight. Average weights for wild-salmon are not routinely summarised and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Quotas

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the value of *(a)* milk quota and *(b)* suckler cow quota and sheep quota for the old and new less-favoured areas in Northern Ireland; and what provision is made for recognising those sums in the income and value of Northern Ireland farm production or capital formation in his Department's assessment of Northern Ireland farm income.

Mr. Ancram: The information sought in the first part of this question is not available. There is no need to take explicit account of quotas in estimating income, output or capital formation.

SCOTLAND

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the total cost in 1992-93 of management agreements between Scottish Natural Heritage and owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest to (i) compensate for profit forgone and (ii) facilitate positive conservation management.

Sir Hector Monro: In 1992-93 Scottish Natural Heritage made payments in respect of 442 management agreements of £3,617,616. Agreements which provide compensation payments can also contain an element of positive conservation management. Payments on the 307 such cases amounted to £3,258,534. In 135 cases providing for positive conservation management payments totalled £359,082.

School Leavers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school leavers there were in each of the past 10 years from the maintained and independent sectors; and what percentage in each category were intending to enter degree or teacher training courses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information for the years 1982-1992, based on the Scottish school leavers survey is set out in the table.

School leavers

School session	*Education authority and grant-aided schools*	*Independent schools*
[1]1982-83	89,343	1,645
1983-84	88,164	1,573
1984-85	84,146	1,673
[2]1985-86	79,607	3,469
1986-87	76,654	3,702
1987-88	72,366	3,693
1988-89	68,942	3,753
1989-90	63,978	3,919
1990-91	58,534	3,536
1991-92	56,848	3,748

[1] Numbers of leavers from the independent sector are estimated for 1982-83 to 1984-85.

[2] In 1985, most of the then grant-aided schools in Scotland became independent.

No statistics are collected of the intended destinations of school leavers in either category.

In November 1993, the audit unit of the schools inspectorate published the first of a new series of data on actual school leaver destinations in Scotland showing figures for 1992-93. A copy of the publication "Leaver Destinations for Scottish Secondary Schools 1992-93" is available in the Library.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional financial resources he will make available in Scotland to implement the European Union directive —92/43/EEC—on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I made to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *778*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what actions he will take or policy changes he will make to implement the requirements of European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government's proposals for action to implement this directive were set out in the consultation paper "Implementation in Great Britain of the Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora", published on 4 October 1993. Copies are in the Library of the House. The Government are currently considering the responses to this consultation paper.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment the Scottish Office has made of the extent to which differential treatment is being offered to national health service patients dependent on whether they are the patients of general practitioner fundholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Under the rules governing contracts in the NHS under the procedural manual on contracting, together with the procedural manual on general practice fund-holding, copies of which are being placed in the Libraries of the House, GP fundholders may enter into contracts to develop new services or improve standards of care for their own patients provided only that as a consequence they do not directly disadvantage national health service patients being referred to the provider from other GP practices.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance the Scottish Office has issued to NHS trusts on the financial incentives which they can offer to general practitioner fundholders in order to secure contracts for treating their patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Section 6.7 of the procedural manual on contracting sets out the rules on costing and pricing of contracts by NHS trusts for all purchasers including GP fundholders. Contract prices should always reflect full costs calculated in accordance with the general principles set out in the manual.

Planning Permission

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the increase in the fee scale for applications for planning permission approved by Parliament in December 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The latest increases in the levels of fees to be paid by applicants for planning permission have not produced any representations to my right hon. Friend.

Royal Northern Yacht Club

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland under what powers Dunbartonshire Enterprise made a grant to the Royal Northern yacht club, Rhu, for stone cleaning and minor stone repairs; what was the amount of the grant; and how many permanent jobs were created as a result.

Mr. Stewart: The payment was made under the local enterprise company's delegated authority and questions about the project would be best addressed to its chairman. However, I understand Dunbartonshire Enterprise agreed in December 1991 to provide grant assistance of £49,786, representing less than 15 per cent. of the total cost of the project, towards the refurbishment of the Royal Northern yacht club. The statutory authority for the payment was section 6 of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990.

Job creation is not necessarily the criterion by which environmental expenditure is justified; but Dunbartonshire Enterprise suggests that the refurbishment project safeguarded the jobs of five full-time and 11 part-time staff.

Howie Report

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Howie report was published; and when he expects to make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Howie committee's report was published on 5 March 1992 and the consultation period closed on 31 December 1992.

Following consideration of the report, I was pleased to announce, on 19 January, that standard grade will remain in S4. My right hon. Friend expects to make a further announcement in due course.

NHS Trusts (Ayrshire)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, columns *53-54*, for what reason the information available for the NHS trusts in Ayrshire on public relations costs is not collected centrally in respect of other health boards and NHS trusts; if he will make it his policy to collect and publish the information requested; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Public relations expenditure is such a small, though necessary, item in the budgets of health boards and NHS trusts that it would not be apropriate for my right hon. Friend to monitor it in detail. Information on the costs involved is therefore not normally collected centrally but was specially obtained for the answers given to the hon. Member on 24 January 1994, at column *71* and on 7 February 1994 at column *53* in respect of bodies in his constituency.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all access agreements for privatised Forestry Commission land are binding on all subsequent owners of that land.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 27 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *347*.

Audit Commission

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many councils are currently subject to investigation by the Audit Commission; what is the nature of these investigations; and if he will list the councils concerned.

Mr. Stewart: I assume the hon. Member has in mind the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland —the Accounts Commission. The commission is responsible for the audit of all local authorities in Scotland. Information about the commission's detailed activities is not held by the Scottish Office.

Homosexuality

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the policy of the Lord Advocate on the prosecution of men who engage in consensual sexual acts and who are aged between 16 and 18 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As was made clear in my answer of 8 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *180*, to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), since December 1991 procurators fiscal have been directed by the Lord Advocate to report to Crown office for Crown counsel's consideration cases of consensual homosexual acts where both of the participants are over 16 years but one or both are under 18 years. That remains the position. As with any case, Crown counsel will consider all the circumstances in deciding on the question of proceedings.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Edinburgh new town conservation committee.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The present membership of the Edinburgh new town conservation committee is as follows:

Chairman:

Lord Cameron of Lochbroom PC QC FRSE
(appointed by the Secretary of State, after consultation with the City of Edinburgh District Council)

Members:

Mr. Patrick W. Simpson, Deputy Chairman
(appointed by the Cockburn Association)

Miss C. H. Cruft OBE HonFRIAS
(appointed by Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland)

Mr. J. G. Malcolm-Smith
(appointed by Great King Street Association)

Mr. David Price
(appointed by Drummond Civic Association)

Mrs. Marjorie Appleton
(appointed by Central New Town Association of Edinburgh)

Councillor David Guest
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)
Councillor Mrs. Margaret McGregor
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)
Councillor John Wilson
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)
Councillor Veronica Crerar
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)
Councillor Douglas Mackenzie
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)
Councillor Mrs. Sheila Gilmore
(appointed by City of Edinburgh District Council)

Professor Alistair Rowan
(appointed by Historic Buildings Council for Scotland)

Mr. J. Angus Mitchell CB CVO MC
(appointed by Historic Buildings Council for Scotland)

Professor James Dunbar-Nasmith CBE
(appointed by The Scottish Civic Trust)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the children's panel.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* There are currently 2,009 members of children's panels in Scotland. I am sending the hon. Member a list of their names and am arranging for a copy of that list to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the boards of the children's panels advisory committees.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* Membership of the children's panel advisory committee for each of the 12 regional and islands authorities as at 18 February is as follows. Chairmen—CH—and members —ME—are appointed by the Secretary of State. Other members are appointed by regional authorities.

	Appointment
Borders region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mrs. N. Burnett	LA
Mr. A. Hewat	LA
Mr. A. Napier	CH
Dr. J. Paterson-Brown	ME
Mrs. J. M. Schofield	ME
Central Region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
The Rev. J. Billows	ME
Mr. W. T. Dickson	LA
Mrs. M. J. Fitzpatrick	LA
Mrs. H. McKechnie	ME
Mr. I. Miller	LA
Mr. R. Pickles	ME
Mr. R. Ramage	CH
Mr. P. Ward	ME
Dumfries and Galloway region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mr. T. Brown	ME
Mr. T. Davis	ME
Mrs. D. M. Hill	ME
Mr. T. A. McAughtrie	LA
Mrs. M. McKay	CH
Mr. K. W. Morton	LA
Mr. J. Pirrie	LA
Mr. R. Smith	ME
Mrs. K. A. Vivers	ME
Mr. J. B. Wallace	LA
Fife Region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mr. A. Cameron	LA
Mrs. M. Cook	ME
Mrs. J. Flannigan	CH
Mrs. V. Gemmell	LA
Mrs. C. Mitchell	ME
Mrs. A. Smith	LA
Mr. J. Taylor	ME
Mrs. E. Thomas	ME
Grampian Region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mr. S. Burnett	LA
Mr. J. K. Fowlie	ME
Mr. J. R. Gibson	ME
Mr. S. A. Kinnaird	ME
Mrs. A. Logan	ME
Mrs. V. J. Maltin	LA
Mr. R. McKail	ME
Mrs. O. Rutherford	CH
Mr. J. Towers	LA
Highland Region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mrs. M. Harley	ME
Mr. J. T. MacDonald	LA
Mr. J. D. MacDonald	ME
Mr. D. Mackenzie	ME
Rev. A. Murray	LA
Dr. P. D. Robertson	Ch
Mr. W. Smith	LA
Mrs. V. A. J. Wotherspoon	ME
Lothian Region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mr. I. Buchanan	LA
Mrs. I. C. Dickison	ME
Mr. D. Flaherty	ME
Mr. M. Gibb	ME
Dr. M. MacMillan	CH
Mr. P. Nolan	LA
Miss E. A. Shaw	ME
Orkney Islands CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Dr. M. E. Cant	ME
Mr. H. Ferris	ME
Mr. I. F. MacLeod	ME
Mrs. F. Mathieson	LA
Mrs. C. Muir	CH
Mrs. M. I. T. Trickett	LA
Shetland Islands CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mrs. T. J. Jamieson	ME
Mr. G. M. McElvogue	LA
Mr. D. Sinclair	CH
Rev. L. S. Smith	LA
Mrs. R. Young	ME
Strathclyde region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mrs. C. M. S. Barron	ME
Mr. J. Douglas	LA
Miss R. Gillan	LA
The Rev. D. Laing	LA
Mrs. H. M. Lang	ME

	Appointment
Miss M. McDonald	CH
Mrs. M. McGaughrin	ME
Mr. T. McGillivary	LA
Miss M. Morris	ME
Mrs. M. L. Robertson	ME
Mr. B. M. Scott	LA
Mr. J. L. Smyrl	ME
Mrs. J. L. Speculand	ME
Mr. N. Toppin	LA
Mrs. E. H. Waine	ME
Tayside region CPAC at 18 February 1994	
The Rev. G. Brownlie	ME
Mr. J. B. Coburn	ME
Mr. H. Connolly	LA
Mrs. L. Graham	LA
Mr. F. E. Mcculloch	ME
Mr. G. McNicol	ME
Mr. J. Mudie	LA
Mrs. P. Stevenson	CH
Western Isles CPAC at 18 February 1994	
Mrs. M. Bremner	LA
Mr. W. Forsyth	ME
Mrs. M. MacIver	CH
Mr. D. J. Maclennan	LA
Dr. J. Smith	NF

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish agricultural consultative panel.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* The current members of the Scottish agricultural consultative panel who are all appointed by the Secretary of State are as follows:

Mr. G. C. D. Budge
Mr. T. A. Cameron *(Chairman)*
Mr. A. S. Chalmers
Mr. H. Crawford
Mr. D. J. D. Dixon
Mr. J. S. Fowlie
Mr. T. C. Graham
Mr. G. Harvey
Mr. J. K. Henry
Mr. J. L. Howie
Mr. J. F. Lascelles
Mr. I. K. MacKenzie OBE JP
Mr. G. S. McClymont
Mr. D. D. McDiarmid
Mr. J. A. McIntyre
Mr. J. A. McNicol
Mr. C. Manson.
Mr. G. R. Marwick JP
Mr. J. A. Morris
Mr. G. B. Pate
Mr. S. M. Ritchie
Mr. M. Stevenson
Mr. F. B. Young

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Vocational Education Council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 February 1994]:* The current members of the Scottish Vocational Education Council are:

Members nominated by the Secretary of State for Scotland

Mr. James David Frederick Miller, D.Univ(Stirling) MA(cantab) CIM FIPM FRSA *(Chairman)*
Mr. Brian James Lundie Minto, CA ATII MIM *(Vice Chairman)*
Mr. John Anderson, MA(Hons)
Mrs. G. Susan Bell, ACIS
Mr. Thomas Johnstone Burness, OBE MA MLitt DipEd FRSA MIM
Ms Fiona M. W. Hynd, MIM
Mr. Derek Stevens Mason, OBE, JP FRICS FFB
Mr. John Bruce Park, MRSH MIP EngTech
Mr. Frank Pignatelli, MA MEd FIM FRSA
Mr. Iain Richard Roberts, MSc LLB(Hons) FIPM
Mr. Grahame Thomas Smith, BA(Hons)
Mr. Peter Thomson Syme, BSc CEng MIMechE
Professor David J. Tedford, BSc PhD ScD ARCST CEng FIEE SMIEEE FInstP FRSE FRSA

Member nominated by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Councillor Joyce Smith

Members co-opted by the Council

Mr. Andrew P. Armstrong, OBE BSc
Mr. John N. Hornibrook, OBE FEng
Mr. John Meiklejohn, BSc(Hons) C.Chem MRSC FEIS
Mr. William Nicol, CBE BSc HonDEd FCIOB FInstR FScotvec
Mrs. Heather B. Sheerin, OBE SRN

Fishing Industry

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he proposes to have with representations of the Scottish fishing industry about the European Union proposal for a Council regulation fixing management objectives and strategies for certain fisheries or groups of fisheries for the period 1994 to 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* This complex proposal has recently been published by the Commission. It requires careful study, including by scientists. When Fisheries Departments have analysed its implications, discussion will be arranged with representatives of the fishing industry.

Pupil Costs, Strathclyde

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the unit cost per pupil at each secondary school administered by Strathclyde regional council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* This information is published in "Scottish Schools: Costs 1993-94" published in December 1993, a copy of which is in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Nuclear Waste (Dumping at Sea)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) of 17 February, *Official Report,* column 986, if the ban on low-level radioactive waste disposal into the sea includes liquid radioactive waste discharged from land-based sources.

Mr. Jack: The ban on radioactive wastes at sea does not include controlled low-level emissions from land-based sources. Land-based emissions do not come within the scope of the London convention.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what cost recovery target she has set for ADAS in 1994-95; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have decided that for 1994-95, ADAS will be asked to recover 63 per cent. of its costs for advisory services charged to the commercial customer from the ultimate beneficiary of those services. The remaining costs will be met by my Department.

In order to achieve these new targets, and reduce its cost base to make it competitive in all its markets, ADAS is today announcing plans for restructuring its operations. The principal changes are the consolidation of the 15 consultancy centres into seven larger units, and the 11 research locations will be managed through five of those locations. These changes will give improved efficiency and save management and local administration costs.

With the aim of providing a cost-effective service to smaller farms, ADAS has also introduced an information service called FarmLine on a pilot basis this week which will make full use of modern technology. Although there is expected to be a reduction in the total number of consultants, all farming sectors and geographical areas will continue to have access to ADAS consultancy service.

The combined effect of these changes will ensure ADAS can provide better value for its customers, helping them to respond more profitably to the changing demands of the industry. They will also enable the agency to continue its successful track record of meeting or exceeding all its annual targets since charging was introduced for its services in 1987.

Forestry

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares of forest have been created in England in each year since 1967.

Mr. Jack: The areas of new woodland planted or grant aided by the Forestry Commission in England were as follows:

Year ended 31 March	*Area (hectares)*
1968	[1]5,800
1969	[1]5,100
1970	[1]5,900
1971	6,314
1972	6,017
1973	5,231
1974	3,722
1975	3,272
1976	2,438
1977	2,077
1978	1,979
1979	1,388
1980	1,712
1981	1,375
1982	1,353
1983	1,943
1984	1,877
1985	1,143
1986	1,230
1987	1,357
1988	1,857
1989	1,882
1990	3,564
1991	4,397
1992	4,036
1993	5,095

[1] Estimate.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override her Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Jack *[holding reply 24 February 1994]:* From records currently available formal directions have been issued on the following occasion: February 1992.

DEFENCE

House Purchases

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report,* column *101,* what are the criteria and rules applying to the house purchase advances, including the circumstances under which advances can be written off.

Mr. Aitken: Advances of salary are only available to staff who are moving home at public expense following a compulsory transfer.

Advances for house purchase of up to six months gross pay may be made available to staff who require financial assistance to complete the purchase of a property at the new place of duty. Applicants must first reinvest any net equity from the sale of their former home and obtain the maximum mortgage from commercial sources. Advances will not be granted to assist staff to improve their standard of housing.

Advances of up to 12 months pay may also be made exceptionally to transferring staff who are unable to redeem their outstanding mortgage from the sale proceeds of their former home. Applicants must first satisfy the Department that they have no other means of meeting the debt, for example through use of savings or assistance offered by some building societies and banks.

Additionally, advances of up to 12 months pay have been made in the past to assist staff who, having taken our commercial bridging loans to help them transfer, saw the value of their properties fall below the level of the bridging loans, as a result of the downturn in the property market in the late 1980s.

Recovery of the advance is normally made from salary. When employment ceases full repayment of any outstanding advance would be sought. Write-off of any outstanding advance where employment has ceased would be considered only where the individual cannot be traced or the expenditure required to pursue recovery by legal means is likely to exceed the value of the sum recovered.

Contracting Out (Pension Rights)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance he has issued about the effect of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the transfer of pension rights in services in his Department which are subject to contracting out.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 18 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *1010.*

Missile Defence

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review the need for missile defence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We are embarking on a two-year national programme of pre-feasibility studies into ballistic missile defence options for the United Kingdom. Once this is completed we hope to be in a position to make a definitive decision on whether we have a requirement for such a capability.

Mr. D. Cross

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Mr. D. Cross of Brookvale, Bradiford, Barnstaple, North Devon, will be given a decision on his application, ref: APG/H17830R/JSCO, submitted on 7 November 1993 to the joint services commutation office at Glasgow to commute part of his pension.

Mr. Hanley: Mr. Cross was asked on 12 November 1993 to supply the joint services commutation office with further details of how he intends to fund his venture. Should he be able to provide the necessary funds, he will then be required to take a medical examination following which a decision will be made on his application.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Vineyards Regulatory Regime

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people, full-time or whole-time equivalents, are employed by Customs and Excise on the regulatory regime for English vineyards.

Sir John Cope: Customs estimates that it deploys the equivalent of between one and two staff years on the regulatory regime for English vineyards.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost per bottle to Customs and Excise and to vineyard owners of English vineyards wine of the Customs and Excise regulatory regime.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated that it costs customs less than one penny per bottle of English wine. I regret that figures are not available for the costs incurred by the vineyard owners.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost to the Exchequer of the regulatory regime operated by Customs and Excise in respect of wine made in English vineyards.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated that the annual cost to the Exchequer of the regulatory regime operated by Customs and Excise is less than £40,000.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the result of the cost compliance assessment carried out by Customs and Excise of their regulatory regime on English vineyards in respect of *(a)* Customs and Excise and *(b)* the vineyards either per vineyard or in total.

Sir John Cope: The regulatory regime operated by customs had already been introduced before cost compliance assessments were carried out. No cost compliance assessment has been undertaken on the regulatory regime for English vineyards since its introduction.

Cannabis

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how cannabis seized by Customs and Excise is disposed of.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise disposes of the cannabis it has seized by incineration under its supervision.

Commemorative Coins

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new commemorative coins Her Majesty's Government plan to issue.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve my recommendation that two special commemorative £2 coins be issued in 1995. The first of these will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war and the second the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. It is not intended that the coins should be put into general circulation, although they will be available at face value from most banks and post offices. In addition, special collector versions will be produced in base and precious metals.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide further details of the capital allowances measure announced on 13 January.

Mr. Dorrell: As announced on 13 January, at column *249*, the Government propose to bring forward legislation at Committee stage of the Finance Bill to rectify a defect in the capital allowances legislation as it affects the disposal of long leases in enterprise zone buildings.

A number of taxpayers have asked for more detail of what the legislation will contain. In the interests of reducing uncertainty which may be affecting perfectly legitimate commercial decisions, I am announcing further details now in advance of the draft legislation being published.

The aim of the measure is to prevent abuse of the enterprise zone allowances for tax avoidance, without damaging the incentive for bona fide investments in enterprise zone property. The legislation will therefore provide that a balancing charge will be imposed when a long lease is disposed of within seven years. This seven-year limit on balancing charges will not apply to artificial tax avoidance schemes which include guaranteed exit arrangements. For those schemes a balancing charge will apply if the building is sold within the first 25 years of its life.

Representations have been made that the weakness in the capital allowances legislation is not significant in the case of buildings eligible only for normal industrial buildings allowances. The Government accept this and the draft legislation will cover buildings in enterprise zones qualifying for 100 per cent. capital allowances, but not other buildings.

Bank Charges

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate high street banks' use of bank charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: Bank charges for small business customers were looked at in a Bank of England survey announced to the House by the former Chancellor on 26 January 1993 *Official Report*, columns *621-23*. They were also mentioned in a more recent report by the bank of the financing of small firms. Neither report highlighted the level of bank charges as a significant problem.

The Consumers' Association published a report on retail banking last December which showed that overdraft and other fees varied considerably between current accounts. The report also found that it could be worth while for customers to move their accounts to the institution which offers the most appropriate services for their needs.

Independent Financial Advisers

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from independent financial advisers about the cost of complying with present regulations.

Mr. Nelson: Treasury Ministers have received a number of such representations.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking to improve the present regulations concerning independent financial advisers.

Mr. Nelson: The regulations governing the conduct of independent financial advisers are primarily a matter for Securities and Investments Board and the self-regulatory organisations recognised under the Financial Services Act 1986. In July last year my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor issued directions to SIB requiring it to develop a new approach to regulation of the marketing of investment-based life insurance products. On 7 January SIB published new rules relating to independent financial advisers and other life insurance distribution channels.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are in place for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to demand or request from the Scott inquiry papers in the inquiry's possession which customs officers consider material to a customs investigation.

Sir John Cope: No particular arrangements are in place. Customs and Excise have no powers to demand papers from Lord Justice Scott. Their powers to demand papers apply in relation to persons concerned in certain activities or suspected of having committed offences.

The response to any request to Lord Justice Scott for papers he holds is a matter for him. It is, of course, open to those who have provided information to the inquiry to provide Customs and Excise direct with any information they have relating to suspected breaches of export control.

Inflation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual inflation rate in each of the years since 1967; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is available in table 8 of the publication "Retail Prices Index December 1993", CSO Business Monitor MM23, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Oil Revenues

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the values to the United Kingdom of oil revenues for each year from 1978.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Figures on the value to the United Kingdom of oil and gas revenues since 1978 have been published by the Department of Trade and Industry annually in "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom. Table 14 gives details of income from the United Kingdom continental shelf and table 15 gives the revenue accruing to the Exchequer. Copies of this publication are available in the Library of the House.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malaysia

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date, where and how the British Government announced that they had agreed to the request of the Malaysian Government that the soft loan for Pergau was to be paid direct to Tenaga Nasional; and how and where it was announced.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding reply 21 February 1994]:* Her Majesty's Government informed the Malaysian Government that they could accept their request for the soft loan to be made direct with Tenaga Nasional in a letter from the British high commissioner in Kuala Lumpar to the Ministry of Finance on 14 May 1991. The details of financial and contractual arrangements are not usually the subject of announcements.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kurdish People (Turkey)

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the British Government have taken to condemn human rights violations against Kurdish people in Turkey.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom and our European Union partners condemned human rights abuses in Turkey in the European Union statement to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly of 23 November. There will be a similar statement at the Commission on Human Rights currently being held in Geneva.

DUCHY OF LANCSTER

Consultancies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the value of consultancy contracts awarded by his Department each year since 1992, both in current prices and at constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Waldegrave: The costs of consultancy contracts awarded by the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date are as follows:

	£
OPSS and its agencies	
1992-93	4,054,273
1992-93 at constant 1993-94 prices	4,186,036
1993-94 to date	5,016,285

The costs of consultancy contracts awarded by COI and HMSO in 1992-93 and 1993-94 to date are as follows:

	£
COI	
1992-93	136,460
1992-93 at constant 1993-94 prices	140,894
1993-94 to date	55,189
HMSO	
1992-93	410,075
1992-93 at constant 1993-94 prices	423,402
1993-94 to date	1,061,025

WALES

School Leavers

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school leavers there were in each of the past 10 years from the maintained and independent sectors; and what percentage in each category were intending to enter degree or teacher training courses.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information required is given in the following table.

Academic year	*Maintained schools*[1] *Number of school leavers*	*Percentage entering degree or teacher training courses*	*Independent schools*[1] *Number of school leavers*	*Percentage entering degree or teacher training courses*
1991-92	31,520	—	1,065	—
1990-91	32,220	14	1,055	45
1989-90	34,525	12	1,170	38
1988-89	37,825	10	1,280	32
1987-88	39,380	9	1,225	24
1986-87	42,770	8	1,080	30
1985-86	42,125	9	1,060	34
1984-85	43,190	8	1,240	33
1983-84	42,855	8	1,185	29
1982-83	44,085	8	1,240	39

Source: 1982-83—1990-91 School Examinations Survey; 1991-92 Welsh Office RD1.

[1] Data are not available for 1991-92 as intended destinations were collected in different categories.

ReChem Incinerator

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the possibility of compensation for farmers who have been affected by the ReChem incinerator plant in Gwent, South Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I understand one farmer in Gwent is taking legal proceedings against the company. In the circumstances, it would not be appropriate for me to comment. My Department has, however, funded an independent survey of PCB-dioxin contamination in the Pontypool area and the results were published in April 1993. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Average Wage

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the average United Kingdom wage is the average Welsh wage.

Mr. Redwood: At April 1993 the average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in Wales was 89 per cent. of the average for the United Kingdom.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received regarding opposition to opencast mining at Selar Farm grassland site of special scientific interest near Neath; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A total of 31 representations have been received to date. Consideration is currently being given to requests that an application for opencast mining which will affect the Selar Farm grasslands site of special scientific interest should be called in for my own determination.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement regarding the effect on the Marsh Fritillary butterfly colonies at Selar Farm grasslands site of special scientific interest and Parc Slip West, Mid Glamorgan, of the decisions to allow British Coal to develop opencast mines on those sites.

Mr. Redwood: The effect on the Selar Farm grasslands site of special scientific interest which includes a colony of Marsh Fritillary butterflies is a consideration which is being taken into account in determining whether an application for an opencast mining development should be called in for my own determination. In the case of Parc Slip West, I determined to grant consent in September 1993.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what special measures he has taken to ensure that more heart bypass operations are performed.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The development of the specialist adult cardiac unit at the University Hospital of Wales has been completed at a cost of £5 million and a new unit is planned for Morriston hospital. Pending its completion, additional funding approaching £4 million per annum has been provided to enable health authorities to secure further operations from other specialist centres.

The development of the paediatric cardiac unit at the University Hospital of Wales is nearing completion following an expansion project earlier this year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many heart bypass operations were performed on Welsh patients, and in what locations, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not immediately available and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EDUCATION

Further Education Colleges

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning the introduction of the new model contract by the College Employers Forum.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of letters from further education lecturers, both directly and through hon. Members.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will estimate the numbers of employers and part-time students whose need for further education services is not limited to the working day or the traditional three college terms for each year from 1992-93 to 1994-95; and what influence the kind of staff contract has had or is expected to have on the ability of colleges to meet the demand.

Mr. Boswell: Few, if any, employers close their own businesses for up to 16 weeks in each year, so their employees are available for training at times when a college running a traditional 36-week teaching year is closed. Most adult part-time students are also ready to learn during the holidays, or in the evenings. A more flexible contract will assist colleges to open for longer and to meet demand when it arises.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made on local employee relations in colleges arising out of the 2 per cent. reduction of college funding.

Mr. Boswell: The 2 per cent. holdback relates to the introduction of more flexible contracts for staff appointed on or after 1 April 1994. I see no reason why the introduction of more flexible contracts should damage employee relations. Staff should see the advantages for themselves of a system where the weight of the whole job is considered rather than the counting of hours on tasks.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what proportion of contracts he will require to be adequately flexible for the £50 million held back from the grant to colleges of further education to be payable; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what time scale he envisages for rapid progress in moving further education staff over to new contracts;

(3) what sanctions are being imposed on colleges to move existing staff on to new contracts;

(4) what he considers to be the significant majority of existing lecturers signing new contracts in colleges of further education which would satisfy his desire to move staff over to them.

Mr. Boswell: The £50 million grant will be released to the Further Education Funding Council in proportion to the number of colleges which certify that staff appointed on or after 1 April 1994 have contracts that provide adequate flexibility for the colleges' needs. No sanctions will be imposed on colleges who do not move existing staff on to new contracts; it is for colleges to decide how rapidly they wish to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the ratio of staff to students of further education colleges for each of the last five years; and what increase in the ratio will be allowed by greater flexibility of contract.

Mr. Boswell: The table gives student-staff ratios for further education colleges for the last five years. Future plans for the employment of lecturers are a matter for individual colleges. It is not possible to say what effect the introduction of new contracts will have on the ratio of staff to students.

Academic year	*Student staff ratio*
1988-89	10·1
1989-90	10·6
1990-91	10·9
1991-92	11·8
1992-93	12·3

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list for each further education college the proportion of existing staff who have been moved on to new contracts;

(2) if he will list those further education colleges which have had strikes, stoppages or working to rule over new contracts.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what limits he is imposing on cash sums and salary increases offered to existing staff or further education colleges to accept new contracts;

(2) whether colleges of further education can make payments of fees for private medical insurance for staff as part of an incentive package to persuade staff to accept new contracts.

Mr. Boswell: Within the framework of the Government's policy on public sector pay, it is for individual colleges to decide what they will pay their staff, and what form increases or incentives will take, within the resources available to each college.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what procedures he has introduced to vet staff contracts in colleges of further education to ensure that they satisfy his requirements;

(2) by what criteria he will assess whether new contracts for further education staff *(a)* offer adequate flexibility and *(b)* are sufficiently different; whether the contracts currently being issued to new staff fulfil these criteria; and in what respects existing contracts do not meet them;

(3) what kind of certification from governing bodies of further education colleges, that their new contracts provide adequately increased flexibility, is acceptable to him; how that flexibility will be audited; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Boswell: It will be for colleges themselves to certify that their new contacts both provide adequate flexibility for their needs, and, so far as lecturers are concerned, also differ significantly from the former local authority contracts. The Further Education Funding Council will ask them to sign a declaration to that effect. Such a declaration would be subject to scrutiny by the college's auditors.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has for ending the system of three traditional terms in *(a)* further education colleges, *(b)* former polytechnics and *(c)* universities.

Mr. Boswell: The Government have no such plans. The organisation of the academic year is a matter for institutions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what limits are indicated for hours worked per week in new staff contracts in further education colleges; and how the part-time contract is differentiated from the full-time contract;

(2) what liability is imposed on further education staff for damage to college property or equipment *(a)* by them and *(b)* by students in the new contracts;

(3) if his Department will review or offer advice on new contracts to governing bodies of further education colleges.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of the changes in conditions of employment proposed in the new contract for further education lecturers; to what extent these are linked to increased salary awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: It is for each college to decide what form of new contract it wishes to introduce.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will set out his objections to the existing contracts of staff of further education colleges; and what changes to these conditions would be acceptable to him;

(2) whether existing contracts for staff of further education colleges include an hour-by-hour account of what they are to do;

(3) to which restrictive practices in the Silver Book of further education colleges he objects; and what difficulties each of those practices poses in respect of a more flexible and responsible service.

Mr. Boswell: The Silver Book includes the following restrictions: no more than 10 sessions per week; no more than 30 hours duty per week; no more than 21 hours of class contact per week; no more than two evening sessions per week; and reduced class contact time for other professional duties according to agreed procedures. Such restrictions prevent colleges from making the best use of their human and material resources. It will be for individual colleges to decide the precise content of new, more flexible contracts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will detail the negotiations with the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education about the new contract for staff; and what representations he has received from them on it.

Mr. Boswell: The Colleges Employers Forum has held negotiations with NATFHE on the introduction of more flexible contracts between September 1993 and February 1994. A delegation from NATFHE met officials at the Department on 25 November 1993. NATFHE has asked to see officials again and a meeting is being arranged. I am not aware of any other representations from NATFHE on this matter.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the detailed conditions for the release of holdback of the £50 million kept back from further education colleges in November 1993; and if he will list the colleges which have satisfied them to date.

Mr. Boswell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) on 16 February, *Official Report*, column *842*. The condition relates to the financial year 1994-95, and colleges will be asked in due course by the FEFC whether they have satisfied the conditions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the effect of his statement to colleges of further education that the higher pay costs shall be covered by efficiency improvements will differ from the increases in pay costs available in the rest of the public sector.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's policy that increases in pay costs should be covered by efficiency improvements applies throughout the public sector.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish in the *Official Report* his speech to principals of further education colleges in the week ended 11 February and a copy of his letter to the chairs of the College Employers Forum of 8 February.

Mr. Boswell: Since these are lengthy texts, I have placed copies of them in the Library of the House.

Further Education Funding Council

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1019*, what legislation sets out his responsibilities with regard to approval of staff employed by the Further Education Funding Council.

Mr. Boswell: Provisions concerning the appointment of staff of the Further Education Funding Council are contained in schedule 1 to the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Paragraph 7 of that schedule provides that the council may appoint such employees as it thinks fit. The only requirement for approval by the Secretary of State is in the case of the appointment of future chief officers—paragraph 2(3) of that schedule—the first chief officer having been appointed by the Secretary of State under the terms of paragraph 2(2) of that schedule.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what will be the payment to members of the Funding Agency for Schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The chairman of the Funding Agency for Schools, Sir Christopher Benson, will receive an annual fee of £33,430 for an equivalent of two days per week from 1 April 1994. Other members of the agency will be eligible to receive £155 and reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenses for each day spent on agency business, such as attending board and sub-committee meetings.

Sixth Forms

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the new sixth forms to which he has given approval in *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* local authority schools since April 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since April 1992 my right hon. Friend has approved proposals for new sixth forms in 17 grant-maintained schools and two LEA-maintained schools. The schools concerned are:

(a) Grant maintained
- Baverstock GM School, Birmingham
- Small Heath School, Birmingham
- Sawtry Village College, Cambridgeshire
- The Merrill Community School, Derbyshire
- Chellaston School, Derbyshire
- Beauchamps GM School, Essex
- Bromfords School, Essex
- The King John School, Essex
- West Hatch School, Essex
- The Arnewood School, Hampshire
- The Burgate School, Hampshire
- Ringwood School, Hampshire
- The Maplesden Noakes School, Kent
- Sheringham High School, Norfolk
- Highams Park School, Waltham Forest
- Queen Elizabeth School, Warwickshire
- Moseley Park GM School, Wolverhampton.

(b) LEA maintained
- St. Peter's RC Comprehensive School, Solihull.

My right hon. Friend has also recently approved proposals for the establishment of a new school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years in Halifax, Calderdale, to replace two 11 to 16 schools.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many public interest immunity certificates he, or his predecessors, have been asked to sign in each year since 1979; how many he or his predecessors decided not to sign; and if he will make a statement of his policy on signing of public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Howard: No central record is kept of public interest immunity certificates signed or not signed since 1979. My policy is to sign public interest immunity certificates, in accordance with my legal duty, where I am satisfied that there is a public interest in protecting documents or information from disclosure in legal proceedings. It is for the court, in any particular case, to weigh the public interest asserted in the certificate against the competing public interest in the due administration of justice.

Women's Royal Voluntary Service

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department expects to pay in grant to the Women's Royal Voluntary Service during the financial years 1993-94 and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement on the purposes for which that grant is paid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Women's Royal Voluntary Service provides through some 145,000 volunteers a wide range of services to the community. Home Office grant in aid, which helps to fund the core administrative expenses of the service, amounts to £6.247 million in 1993-94. The level of grant in aid for 1994-95 has yet to be decided.

Prison Suicides

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to deposit in the Library copies of reports of the internal investigations into suicides in prisons at the request of hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. The internal investigation is a review which the Prison Service carries out for its own management purposes. In the case of deaths in custody, a full public inquest is conducted separately by the coroner.

Yugoslav Refugees

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 December to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Blunkett), *Official Report*, column 674, *(a)* how many refugees have been admitted to Britain from former Yugoslavia to the current date, *(b)* how many applications for asylum have been granted and *(c)* how many applications for asylum are under consideration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on asylum applications by nationals of the former Yugoslavia, and on decisions made, in the period 1 January 1992 to 31 January 1994 is given in the table. The large majority of these cases —an estimated 6,640 at 31 January 1994—are under consideration and the applicants are being allowed to stay in the meantime.

In addition to consideration of asylum applications, the Government have, under arrangements announced in November 1992 and June 1993, offered to receive 1,000 particularly vulnerable individuals from the former Yugoslavia, and their close dependants, an estimated total of 4,000 people. As at 21 February 1994, 568 particularly vulnerable individuals and 781 dependants had arrived under these arrangements. Prior to this, 68 sick and wounded ex-detainees from Bosnia arrived in September 1992.

Decisions[1] on applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom from nationals of the former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, 1 January 1992 to 31 January 1994

	1 January 1992-31 January 1994
Asylum applications[1]	7,590
Decisions[1,3,4]	370
Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum	5
Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave to remain[5]	110
Refused asylum and ELR—after full consideration	15
Refused under para 180F[6]	145
Refused on safe third country grounds[7]	95
Applications pending[4]	6,640

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.

[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the period.

[4] Information on withdrawals is not readily available and not shown in the table.

[5] Usually granted for a year in the fist instance, subject then to further review.

[6] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to invitation to interview to establish identity (para. 101 prior to 26 July 1993).

[7] Refused on the grounds; that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: Under authority delegated from the Treasury the Department may assist staff facing serious financial hardship following a transfer in the public interest. The assistance available depends on the circumstances of each case. It may include concessionary payment of an advance of salary, and concessionary payment of a housing cost supplement to assist with an increased mortgage. It may also include a special payment of part or all of any unavoidable shortfall between the equity released by the sale of a property and an outstanding approved bridging loan. The Department must be satisfied that:

(a) There is serious financial hardship: the individual must provide details of his or her income—including his or her spouse's and his or her outgoings.

(b) There is a genuine loss: i.e. the equity released by the prospective sale will be insufficient to clear the bridging loan approved by the Department. The proposed sale price must be supported by an independent valuation arranged by Home Office accounts branch through the chief valuer's office of the Inland Revenue.

(c) The individual is making his or her maximum affordable contribution to meeting the shortfall: i.e. has taken out the maximum available and affordable mortgage and advance of salary.

(d) The individual has acted reasonably in all transactions relating to the bridging loan.

Special payments in excess of £20,000 must be approved by the Treasury. The only loans made are advances of salary. No such advances have been written off.

The other information requested is as follows:

1992-93

	Main Home Office	*Prison Service*
Advances of salary	£98,105	£575,377
Numbers of staff	11[1]	93[2]
Special payments	£507,403	£975,882
Numbers of staff	15[1]	90[2]

Notes:

[1] 9 staff received an advance of salary and a special payment.

[2] 70 staff received an advance of salary and a special payment.

1993-94 (to 18 February 1994)

	Main Home Office	*Prison Service*
Advances of salary	£92,062	£606,884
Numbers of staff	6[1]	64[2]
Special payments	£98,753	£1,089,329
Numbers of staff	5[1]	66[2]

Notes:

[1] 4 staff received an advance of salary and a special payment.

[2] 47 staff received an advance of salary and a special payment.

No payments have been made by the United Kingdom Passport Agency, the Forensic Science Service or the Fire Service College.

Accident and Emergency Services

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is proposing in regard to accident and emergency services following the Seymour report on the train crash in the Severn tunnel on Saturday 7 December 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Seymour report does not make recommendations in respect of the emergency services. Lessons learnt in the course of the response to all major incidents are incorporated into the plans and procedures of the emergency services at the local level.

European Parliament Elections

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are being made to inform citizens of other member states of the European Union resident in the United Kingdom of their right to vote in elections to the European Parliament.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the coming into force of the treaty on European Union, and of the European Parliamentary Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualifications of Representatives) Regulations 1994, citizens of member states of the European Union resident in the United Kingdom have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament on the same basis as existing electors and candidates.

Information sheets will be distributed to electoral registration officers; the main political parties; the embassies and consulates of other member states of the European Union; British embassies and consulates in other member states; the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux; and specialist bodies including the Alliance Francaise, the Goethe Institute, the Italian Cultural Institute and the Spanish Institute. There will also be notices in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast *Gazettes.*

Application forms for Community citizens to apply for inclusion in the electoral register will be available from electoral registration officers from 1 March, and must be returned by 29 March. Local political parties will be able to obtain copies of the form and the leaflet from electoral registration officers for use locally.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 24 February 1994]*: There are no known instances since 1979 of Ministers in the Home Office issuing written instructions in pursuance of paragraphs 13 or 14 of section 6.1.5 of "Government Accounting".

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *404*, what are his powers of direction in respect of the boards of non-departmental public bodies funded by his Department.

Mr. Sproat: This information was recently supplied to the National Heritage Committee during its inquiry into English Heritage. It is available in annex II to the published minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on 13 January 1994—HC 139-i—a copy of which is available in the Library.

Consultants

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the fee to be paid to Capita Management Consultancy Ltd. in respect of its review of archaelogical services in London on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Brooke: The fees paid for consultancy contracts let by my Department such as are not required to be advertised in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities are treated as commercial in confidence and are not, therefore, disclosed.

Cultural Exports

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are the criteria which will inform his Department's review of the guidance and United Kingdom application forms for the export licensing of cultural goods described on page 52 of the Government's White Paper "Deregulation: Cutting Red Tape".

Mr. Sproat: The revision of the existing "Notice to Exporters" will set out the export licensing requirements under both United Kingdom legislation and the EC regulation 3911/92. It will, as now, explain the procedures by which an object might be considered of Waverley standard, as a result of which the Secretary of State would defer his decision on either a United Kingdom or an EC licence. The United Kingdom licence application will be revised to a similar—or possibly the same—layout to that of the EC licence application, once the latter has been revised in minor ways by the European Commission.

Transfer of Functions Order

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *995*, if he will specify the costs relating to the preparation and promulgation of the Transfer of Functions (National Heritage) Order 1992.

Mr. Sproat: My Department paid £8,000 to the Treasury Solicitors' Department for the preparation of the Transfer of Functions (National Heritage) Order 1992. No separate charge was made by parliamentary counsel for the drafting work. In addition, there were other minor administrative and staffing costs associated with the preparation and promulgation which cannot be quantified separately.

Windsor Castle

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 19 January column *653*, concerning the damage to medieval wall paintings at Windsor castle, how wide was the chase; at what stage it became apparent that a medieval painting was involved; what other changes were made to the internal medieval fabric of King John's tower during the re wiring of the castle; what is the nature of the remedial conservation work; what agency has been responsible for carrying out this work; what plans there are to evaluate, expose and conserve the wall paintings; why clearance was given for cutting a long chase in undisturbed medieval masonry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The chase was around 30 mm wide. It became apparent that a medieval wall painting was involved after the chase had been made; the traces of paint patterns were very faint and barely discernible.

Generally existing chases were used during the rewiring, but one other new chase was made in the second floor room where the paintings were found, one new chase in the ground floor room and some limited chases in the staircase landing areas on each floor. No other changes were made to the internal medieval fabric.

The remedial conservation work consisted of Ronafix bonding and special lime mixes applied in the areas of the chases. The work was carried out by contractors employed by the royal household's property section. Longer-term conservation is being considered by English Heritage which has prepared an interim report and is planning a more detailed investigation. It will make recommendations regarding such things as long-term conservation.

The rewiring project was planned by the former Property Services Agency—PSA—in 1987 and 1988. At that time the PSA and the Department of the Environment, which then had responsibility for the occupied royal palaces, regarded the project as maintenance and replacement and did not consider clearance to be required. Clearance procedures and liaison with English Heritage have improved substantially since the household took over the maintenance of the occupied royal palaces. Further information will be available when English Heritage's investigation has been completed.

Cable Television

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals there are to license cable television for Skipton.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the Independent Television Commission that it has not received any proposals for providing a cable system in Skipton.

Wrecks

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action his Department is taking to improve the management of protected wreck sites in English waters; and what assessment he has made of whether adequate records of such sites are being kept.

Mr. Brooke: My Department is continuing to work closely with the joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee and English Heritage on what measures may be taken to improve the management of protected wrecks in English waters. Licensed divers are required to submit reports, countersigned by an archaeological adviser, which detail their activities and assess the status of site records; the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites reviews the adequacy of such reports.

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to transfer responsibility for protected wreck sites in English waters to English Heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Discussions are currently taking place on what future role English Heritage might take in relation to protected wrecks in English waters; certain practical issues remain to be resolved.

Broadcasting

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to encourage programme making in Wales and Scotland so as to increase the proportion of programmes made there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Programme-making is primarily the responsibility of the broadcasters. However, provisions in the Broadcasting Act 1990 help to promote programme-making in both Wales and Scotland through the arrangements for S4C and the Gaelic television fund. Additionally, the Welsh and Scottish ITV companies, in common with all Channel 3 licensees, are required to produce 80 per cent. of their regional programming in the area of their licences.

The Government plan to publish a White Paper in the spring with proposals for the future of the BBC, including its role in programme production.

PRIME MINISTER

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he or his officials have received a copy of the Touche Ross report prepared for BNFL on the economic prospects for THORP.

The Prime Minister: No.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Buses

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to encouragge the development of markets for United Kingdom companies manufacturing low floor buses.

Mr. Sainsbury: A number of United Kingdom bus manufacturers have been involved, in London and Tyneside, in demonstration projects, which are supported by the Department of Transport, to evaluate the benefits of low floor buses.

The result of these studies will be widely disseminated and United Kingdom bus producers are well placed to take advantage of any subsequent increase in demand for such vehicles.

Household Insurance

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the current average household insurance premiums for *(a)* self-contained flats, *(b)* two-bedroom houses and *(c)* four-bedroom houses in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

The figures in the tables are from the 1992 family expenditure survey and are of direct payments by households. The figures are for United Kingdom standard regions as data by parliamentary constituency are not available. The survey has a small number of households in some of the categories, so the figures are subject to large sampling variations. The figures are average weekly expenditure, rounded to the nearest 10p. The survey does not distinguish between self-contained flats and non-self-contained flats.

Per week

United Kingdom standard region	*Structural insurance* £	*Contents insurance* £	*Households with contents and/or structural insurance* £
(a) Average household insurance premiums for flats			
North	2·20	1·00	2·00
Yorkshire and Humberside	[1]—	0·90	1·00
North West	1·80	1·80	2·30
East Midlands	2·00	1·10	1·70
West Midlands	2·20	1·10	1·80
East Anglia	[1]—	1·30	1·70
Greater London	3·50	2·70	4·00
Rest of the South East	3·10	1·40	2·40
South West	2·90	1·60	2·50
Wales	[1]—	1·50	1·50
Scotland	2·30	1·50	2·50

United Kingdom standard region	*Structural insurance* £	*Contents insurance* £	*Households with contents and/or structural insurance* £
Northern Ireland	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
(b) Average household insurance premiums for 2 bedroom houses			
North	2·40	1·30	2·70
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·30	1·30	3·20
North West	2·20	1·70	3·50
East Midlands	2·10	1·40	3·10
West Midlands	2·20	1·50	3·10
East Anglia	2·40	1·40	3·00
Greater London	3·90	2·60	5·80
Rest of the South East	3·20	1·70	4·40
South West	2·70	1·70	3·90
Wales	2·20	1·20	3·00
Scotland	2·80	1·50	3·20
Northern Ireland	2·20	1·00	2·20
(c) Average household insurance premiums for 4 bedroom houses			
North	3·50	2·50	5·90
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·90	2·00	5·20
North West	4·50	3·00	7·10
East Midlands	4·40	2·70	6·60
West Midlands	4·70	2·90	6·90
East Anglia	3·80	2·20	5·70
Greater London	5·90	4·40	9·80
Rest of the South East	4·80	2·70	7·20
South West	3·80	2·00	5·60
Wales	4·30	2·60	6·60
Scotland	4·80	2·70	6·40
Northern Ireland	3·70	1·90	5·40

[1] Data not available as there are five or fewer reporting households.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of homes in the United Kingdom are not currently covered by a household insurance policy by parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Estimates of the proportion of households in the United Kingdom not currently covered by a household contents insurance policy are given for United Kingdom standard regions, based on the 1992 family expenditure survey. Similar information on structural insurance is not available from the family expenditure survey.

Households with no contents insurance

United Kingdom standard region	*Per cent.*
North	28
Yorkshire and Humberside	27
North West	26
East Midlands	20
West Midlands	27
East Anglia	13
Greater London	38
Rest of the South East	20
South West	20
Wales	30
Scotland	24
Northern Ireland	44

HEALTH

Nurse-Patient Ratio

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average qualified nurse-patient ratio in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

The number of in-patients is not collected centrally. The table shows the number of ordinary admissions, which is the term used for in-patient consultant episodes.

	Ordinary admissions	*Qualified nursing and midwifery staff (excluding community)*
1988-89	7,335,448	206,110
1989-90	7,476,626	209,300
1990-91	7,524,192	206,150
1991-92	7,759,202	207,500
1992-93	7,829,403	210,230

Notes:

1. Ordinary admissions are taken for the year 1 April to 31 March.
2. Qualified nursing and midwifery staff are as at 30 September—ie for the 1988-89 year the figure is as at 30 September 1988.
3. Figures for qualified staff show all qualified nursing and midwifery staff, including senior nurses and midwives but excluding those nurses who have transferred to senior management terms and who cannot be identified separately from other senior managers. It also excludes pre and post registration learners and Project 2000 nursing students.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will update her answer of 26 January 1993, *Official Report*, columns *689-94*, on general practitioner fundholders' management allowance payments in each year from 1990-91 to 1993-94 for each family health services authority and regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information provided on 26 January was obtained through a one-off exercise to review the management allowance carried out in November 1992.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of general practitioner fundholders' budgets were spent in the private sector for each of the years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 7 February at column 52.

Alcohol and Drug-related Deaths

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the number of *(a)* accidents and *(b)* deaths that were alcohol or drug related since 1990.

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the tables.

The figures for alcohol show those cases where cause of death has a clear association with alcohol in England and Wales from 1990 onwards. Other cases have not been included where the evidence of association is less clear.

Alcohol is implicated directly or indirectly in a number of causes of death including accidents, suicide and diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver, stroke, cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and oesophagus. Studies undertaken since 1985 suggest that a reasonable estimate of all alcohol-associated deaths would be around 25,000 per year in England and Wales.

The figures for drugs show those cases where cause of death has a clear association with drugs in England and Wales from 1990 onwards.

Information on accidents which do not lead to death is not available.

Alcohol-related deaths in England and Wales[1], regional health authority 1990-1992

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
England and Wales	1,939	1,971	2,016
Northern	111	137	131
Yorkshire	96	105	110
Trent	117	124	132
East Anglian	68	57	60
North-West Thames	194	202	177
North-East Thames	170	142	145
South-East Thames	131	150	152
South-West Thames	130	123	114
Wessex	83	104	96
Oxford	98	95	111
South-Western	131	102	97
West Midlands	193	209	241
Mersey	117	120	144
North-Western	174	176	186
Wales	120	114	104

[1] Includes deaths to persons whose usual residence is outside England and Wales. These details are excluded from any subdivision of England and Wales.

The following International Classification of Diseases codes (ICD) were used where the underlying cause of death is linked to alcohol consumption.

ICD 291	Alcoholic psychoses.
ICD 303	Alcoholic dependence syndrome.
ICD 305.0	Non-dependent abuse of alcohol.
ICD 425.5	Alcoholic cardiomyopathy.
ICD 571.0	Alcoholic fatty liver.
ICD 571.1	Acute alcoholic hepatitis.
ICD 571.2	Alcoholic cirrhosis of liver.
ICD 571.3	Alcoholic liver damage, unspecified.
ICD 980	Toxic effect of alcohol.

Drug-related deaths in England and Wales[1] regional health authority 1990-1992

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
England and Wales	2,060	2,097	2,393
Northern	122	110	134
Yorkshire	[illegible]	150	177
Trent	[illegible]	143	167
East Anglian	72	71	92
North-West Thames	168	186	174
North-East Thames	178	186	208
South-East Thames	206	205	225
South-West Thames	128	117	128
Wessex	104	110	113
Oxford	75	75	88
South-Western	118	91	150
West Midlands	165	161	179
Mersey	98	92	108
North-Western	202	258	286
Wales	87	101	117

[1] Includes deaths to persons whose usual residence is outside England and Wales. These details are excluded from any subdivision of England and Wales.

The following International Classification of Diseases codes (ICD) were used where the underlying cause of death is linked to drug misuse.

ICD 070	Viral hepatitis.
ICD 292	Drug psychoses.
ICD 304	Drug dependence. ICD 304.0-304.9, by type of drug, excluding 304.6 (Absinthe addiction and glue sniffing).
ICD 305	Non-dependent abuse of drugs. ICD 305.2-305.9 by type of drug.
ICD 960-979	Poisoning by drugs, medicaments and biological substances (includes overdose).

Paediatric Nurses

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by district health authority the number of community paediatric nurses employed.

Mr. Sackville: This information is contained in the "Directory of Paediatric Community Nursing Services" issued by the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom, copies of which are available in the Library.

Private Patients

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private patients in national health service hospitals within the Trent regional health authority received treatment in each medical discipline in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table. The figures are provisional estimates for 1991-92:

Private patients treated in NHS hospitals in Trent region All causes: 1991-92

Specialty	*Finished consultant episodes*
General Surgery	672
Urology	41
Trauma and Orthopaedics	393

Specialty	Finished consultant episodes
ENT	167
Ophthalmology	502
Oral Surgery	74
Neurosurgery	58
Cardiothoracic Surgery	57
Paediatric Surgery	37
Anaesthetics	30
General Medicine	274
Clinical Haematology	29
Cardiology	112
Dermatology	4
Genitourinary Medicine	4
Neurology	9
Rheumatology	12
Paediatrics	16
Geriatric Medicine	12
Obs and Gyn (Obstetrics)	139
Obs and Gyn (Gynaecology)	277
Radiotherapy	12
Radiology	15
Clincal Pathology	3
TOTAL	2,949

Source: Hospital Episode System 1991-92—provisional estimate.
Episodes may not total, due to rounding.

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in respect of which non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by her *(a)* meetings are open to the public, *(b)* there is scrutiny of financial procedures by independently appointed audit and *(c)* there are rules governing the declaration of interests.

Dr. Mawhinney: The public bodies for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible are listed in the publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are available in the Library.

Regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and national health service trusts are required to have at least one public meeting per year.

The Health Education Authority, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting and the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting hold public meetings.

NHS tribunals are held in public if the respondent or applicant requests it.

NHS authorities and trusts and executive non-departmental public bodies—NDPBs—are subject to audit by either the Audit Commission or the National Audit Office. The Public Accounts Committee scrutinises the activities of all such bodies and may summon the chief executive of a NHS authority, NHS trust or NDPB to give evidence if any issue of probity arises or if there is any suggestion that it is not conducting its operations as economically, efficiently and effectively as it should.

NHS authorities, trusts and NDPBs have rules governing the declaration of interests, and these rules will be further strengthened from 1 April 1994.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the organisations and agencies over which her Department has, in whole or in part, rights of nomination; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The non-departmental public bodies—both executive and advisory—tribunals and national health service bodies over which my right hon. Friend has rights of nomination are listed in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

My right hon. Friend also makes appointments to the advisory boards of the three next steps agencies for which the Department of Health is responsible:

The NHS Estates Agency
The Medicines Control Agency
The NHS Pensions Agency.

Health Warnings (Eggs)

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what source of detailed evidence the chief medical officer of health bases his health warnings against eggs; and if he will reconsider the justification for continuing that warning.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 4 November 1993 at column *456*. The Chief Medical Officer's advice stands.

Local Authority Homes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 *(a)* the number of elderly residents supported by local authorities, by type of home, *(b)* the number of mentally ill residents supported by local authorities, by type of home and *(c)* the number of people with learning disabilities, by type of home.

Mr. Bowis: The available information for residential care homes for the period 1990 to 1992 is given in the following publications: "Residential Accommodation for Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People: Local Authority Supported Residents Year Ending 31 March 1992 England" and "Residential Accommodation for People with Mental Illness and People with Learning Disabilities: Local Authority Supported Residents at 31 March 1992 England". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Diseases

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the number of notifications of *(a)* cholera, *(b)* dysentery, *(c)* tuberculosis, *(d)* diphtheria, *(e)* whooping cough, *(f)* scarlet fever and *(g)* measles.

Mr. Sackville: The number of cases notified for selected diseases in 1990 and 1991 are listed in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication, "Communicable Disease Statistics" series MB2, Nos. 17 and 18 respectively, copies of which are available in the Library.

The information is shown in the table for 1992. The data have been checked as correct and will be the figures that are given in the published volume in April.

Number of cases notified for selected diseases in England and Wales 1992

	Number
Cholera	25
Dysentery	16,960
Tuberculosis	[1]5,798
Diphtheria	8
Whooping Cough	2,309
Scarlet Fever	4,645
Measles	10,268

[1] Excluding chemoprophylaxis.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1990 the rate per 100,000 population of diagnosed episodes of *(a)* whooping cough, *(b)* scarlet fever, *(c)* measles, *(d)* scabies, *(e)* pneumonia and pneumonitis and *(f)* pleurisy.

Mr. Sackville: The notification rates of selected diseases in 1990 and 1991 are listed in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication, "Communicable Disease Statistics" series MB2, Nos. 17 and 18 respectively, copies of which are available in the Library.

The information for 1992 is shown in the table. The figures have been checked as correct and will be the figures that are given in the published volume in April.

Notification rates (per 100,000 population) of selected diseases in England and Wales, 1992

ICD[1]	1992
033	
Whooping cough	10·3
034	
Scarlet fever	101·7
055	
Measles	34·5
133·0	
Scabies	310·9
480-486	
Pneumonia and pneumonitis	173·9
511	
Pleurisy	152·8

[1] ICD (International Classification of Diseases) 9th revision.

Private Health Insurance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of persons with private health insurance for each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table:

United Kingdom

Year	Number
1991	7,432,703
1992	6,976,870

Source: Figures compiled by the Association of British Insurers to which figures for the Post Office and Civil Service Sanitorium Society have been added.

Toxoplasmosis

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action her Department is taking to promote awareness of the dangers of toxoplasmosis in pregnancy and the preventative measures available.

Mr. Sackville: Advice on the risks from toxoplasmosis is included in the Health Education Authority's "Pregnancy Book"—which is provided for women who attend antenatal clinics—and, together with other conditions, in the Department of Health's leaflet "While you are pregnant: Safe eating and how to avoid infection from food and animals", copies of which are available in the Library. Women should be given copies of the leaflet as soon as their pregnancy is confirmed and it is available from antenatal clinics, maternity units and general practitioners practices. Doctors and midwives may also give the leaflet to women who are planning to become mothers.

The Department also gives a grant of £10,000 per year to the Toxoplasmosis Trust under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968.

"Help us to Help You" Initiative

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on the "Help Us to Help You" initiative; and what savings have so far been made as a result of this campaign.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to her on 18 June 1993, at column *744*. There have been no further costs since that date.

Freedom of Speech

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visitors regarding freedom of speech in the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: We received a comprehensive and generally supportive submission from the United Kingdom Central Council during the consultation period on the management executive's "Guidance for staff on relations with the public and the media". Two further representations were received after the publication of the guidance addressing particular points of detail.

Private Practices

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures her Department collects related to private practice in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The Department collects the following data on private patients in the national health service:

(i) for in-patients, details of hospital episodes for all specialties.
(ii) for out-patients, numbers of attendances at clinics for all specialties.
(iii) income from private in-patients.
(iv) income from private out-patients.

NHS Finance

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1979, at 1993 prices *(a)* total NHS expenditure and *(b)* proceeds from prescription charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table.

	NHS gross expenditure adjusted by the GDP 1993-94 prices £ million	*Proceeds from prescription charges adjusted by the GDP 1993-94 prices £ million*
1978-79	18,717	69
1979-80	19,061	95
1980-81	20,987	147
1981-82	21,458	164
1982-83	21,841	182
1983-84	22,159	186
1984-85	22,689	194
1985-86	22,748	195
1986-87	23,761	219
1987-88	24,821	222
1988-89	25,862	233
1989-90	26,049	233
1990-91	26,982	235
1991-92	28,743	231
1992-93	30,342	250
1993-94	[2]30,732	[2]267

[1] Information on income from the very limited number of items which attract a hospital prescription charge is not available centrally.

[2] Figures for the current financial year are estimates.

Private Patient Income

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1037*, if she will itemise, by district, the amount of private patient income received by NHS trusts in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested. For private patient income received by national health service trusts I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 7 February at column *43*.

Merit Awards

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretry of State for Health what criteria are used in in the award of merit awards.

Dr. Mawhinney: The criteria for awards are set out in the leaflet "Consultants' Distinction Awards", copies of which are available in the Library.

Stanley Royd Hospital

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *932-33*, how many official meetings have taken place between Wakefield metropolitan district council social services department and *(a)* the Wakefield health authority and *(b)* the Pontefract and Wakefield community trust to discuss the closure of Stanley Royd hospital between the original announcement of the closure and 22 February.

Mr. Bowis: This is a matter for Wakefield health authority and the Wakefield and Pontefract community trust.

Functions Analysis Groups

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when the functions analysis groups will report; and whether their findings will be made public;

(2) if she will list the role and the membership of each of the functions analysis groups established as part of the national health service functions and manpower review.

Dr. Mawhinney: Twelve functions groups have been set up to look in detail at the future functions of national health service central management, as part of the implementation of the "Managing the New NHS" changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 October 1993. Information about the membership and terms of reference of the groups has been placed in the Library.

The functions groups have been asked to produce final reports by 1 April 1994 and a summary of their findings will be made available.

Overseas Visitor Charges

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Rooney) of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *539*, what was the total private income of the national health service from overseas visitors under section 121 of the National Health Service Act 1977 in 1991-92 and 1992-93 in each region, special health authority and individual trust.

Mr. Sackville: Overseas visitors charged under section 121 of the National Health Service Act 1977 are charged as national health service patients and not private patients. The available information is shown in the tables. Figures for trusts are not available centrally.

£ thousands

Region	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern	168	100
Yorkshire	106	67
Trent	143	45
East Anglian	130	180
North West Thames	722	963
North East Thames	178	141
South East Thames	312	416
South West Thames	180	248
Wessex	113	145
Oxford	319	334
South Western	148	42
West Midlands	189	153
Mersey	74	8
North Western	74	121

Source: Receipts and Payments returns of health authorities (England).
Notes: Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

£000s

Special health authority	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Hospitals for Sick Children	0	0
National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery	0	0
Moorfields Eye Hospital	0	0
The Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospital	0	24
The Royal Brompton National Heart and Lung Hospitals	0	0
The Royal Marsden Hospital	1	0·7
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's Hospitals	25	26
The Eastman Dental Hospital	0	0

Source: Receipts and Payments returns of health authorities (England).
Note: Figures for 1992-93 are provisional.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to provide a co-ordinated strategic lead from her Department on building community partnerships to tackle drug misuse;

(2) what is her response to the recommendation concerning investment in infrastructure to co-ordinate drug misuse policy made in the report commissioned by her Department from Roger Howard Associates;

(3) when she plans to publish the report "Across the Divide: Building Community Partnerships to Tackle Drug Misuse";

(4) whether the report "Across the Divide: Building Community Partnerships to Tackle Drug Misuse", was amended between January and April 1993; and whether she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The United Kingdom Government are committed to tackling every aspect of the drugs problem. On 16 December, *Official Report*, column *780*, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced the setting up of a central drugs co-ordination unit which will review our strategy across Government to help to ensure policies are well co-ordinated both at national and local level.

The report by Roger Howard Associates—"Across The Divide—Building Community Partnerships to Tackle Drug Misuse"—was published on 23 February. It is being distributed to health and local authorities and other interested agencies. It contains advice and recommendations for improving collaboration among local agencies to tackle the serious problem of drugs misuse. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The report touches on questions of national co-ordination which, together with its recommendations on local action, will be considered by the central drugs co-ordination unit. The remit of the study was, however, local and regional collaboration and the early draft of the report was revised to reflect this.

Amenity Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *976*, what percentage of hospitals for each region, special health authority and trust charge for amenity beds; and what price variations exist regionally.

Mr. Sackville: The availability and charges made for amenity beds are matters for local decision. Charges should represent the notional cost of the additional privacy of a single room or small ward.

Merit Awards

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value and number of the merit awards given to men and to women in each of the regional health authority areas in England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the numbers of distinction awards for male and female national health service consultants by region and by level of award is shown in the tables. The value of each level of award payable to a whole time consultant, as at 1 April 1993, is A+, £47,200; A, £34,775; B, £19,875; C, £9,935.

Analysis by numbers and level of awards within regions

	A+	*A*	*B*	*C*	*Total*
Female at 31 December 1993					
Northern	—	1	2	29	32
Yorkshire	—	3	3	18	24
Trent	1	2	8	24	35
East Anglia	—	—	5	13	18
North West Thames	1	10	13	44	68
North East Thames	2	6	19	76	103
South East Thames	1	6	10	41	58
South West Thames	—	2	8	46	56
SHAs	3	6	13	26	48
Wessex	—	—	4	17	21
Oxford	—	5	5	17	27
South Western	—	2	4	12	18
West Midlands	—	4	9	30	43
Mersey	—	1	6	12	19
North Western	—	1	9	24	34
Totals	8	44	118	421	591
Male at 31 December 1993					
Northern	8	31	100	201	340
Yorkshire	10	36	103	224	373
Trent	15	46	118	285	464
East Anglia	12	27	65	129	233
North West Thames	17	62	103	225	407
North East Thames	23	85	147	313	568
South East Thames	21	53	117	285	476
South West Thames	9	30	96	166	301
SHAs	33	84	106	130	353
Wessex	3	30	70	171	274
Oxford	14	43	62	154	273
South Western	6	26	98	177	307
West Midlands	6	63	111	305	485
Mersey	9	32	62	143	246
North Western	12	38	109	266	425
Totals	190	645	1,395	3,074	5,304

Note: Where a consultant holds a contract in more than one region he or she may be counted under each but only once in the total.

Staff Guidance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the guidance for staff on relations with the public and media will cover private sector health providers operating under contracts from GP fundholders or health authorities; and whether staff employed by national health service contractors are covered by the guidance.

Dr. Mawhinney: The guidance is directed at national health service staff but anyone working in the national health service is expected to comply with national health service standards of conduct particularly the obligation to safeguard patient confidentiality at all times.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Gilt Stripping

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, to what extent in money terms gilt stripping activity is currently being undertaken by the commissioners; and if the commissioners will make it their policy that money from these sales is used to replenish the capital account to prevent further capital erosion of the commissioners' assets.

Mr. Alison: The income from coupon trading—or "gilt stripping"—in 1993 was £13·6 million. The amount to be generated in 1994 and ensuing years is still to be determined in the light of income requirements. Until these are brought in line with expenditure, the capital cannot be replenished. The commissioners have accepted the recommendations of the Lambeth Group concerning the need to preserve their capital in real terms, and coupon trading will be phased out as soon as possible.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what agreement the commissioners have reached with their auditors on how they should treat for book-keeping purposes their gilt stripping activities, following the evidence given to the Social Security Committee.

Mr. Alison: The commissoners have recently obtained counsel's opinion on their methods of accounting for capital and income. They have been advised that coupon trading—or "gilt stripping"—does not constitute a breach of trust if it is carried out with a view to balancing the investment strategy as a whole and compensating for a low yield on other investments with a greater potential for capital growth. In those circumstances, the whole of the income thus generated may correctly rank as income in their accounts.

The coupon trading activities are part of the policy recently given publicity in the press, namely that the cuts in the commissioners' allocations shall not be at so fast a rate that they will risk short-term, but irreversible, damage to the Church, while at the same time maintaining, so far as is possible, the integrity of the commissioners' portfolio.

The commissioners are discussing this matter with their auditors, whose opinion will be given in the context of the annual report and accounts taken as a whole. The commissioners cannot anticipate that opinion before the accounts and audit have been completed.

The amount of income generated by coupon trading will continue to be disclosed in the commissioners' annual report and accounts.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 28 February 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what is the minimum period before which fees are settled for legal aid in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

(2) what is the average length of time for settlement of fees in legally aided cases in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

(3) what is the maximum period his Department allows itself for settlement of legal aid fees in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There is no minimum or maximum period for settling legal aid claims in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland. For England and Wales, both the Legal Aid Board and the Lord Chancellor's Department have set performance targets for processing claims. Present targets and performance against those targets is as follows:

Type of proceedings	*Time taken*	*Target (per cent.)*	*Performance (per cent.)*
Magistrates' Courts' Bills[1]	6 weeks	90	[2]95
Civil Bills (taxed and assessed)[1]	6 weeks	75	[3]84
Other Bills[1]	6 weeks	92	[2]95
Criminal Higher Bills (standard fees)[1]			
(i) claim lodged day case concluded	5 days	100	87
(ii) claim received thereafter	10 days	100	87
Criminal Higher Bills[1] (courts' non standard fees)	4 weeks	70	73
Criminal Higher Bills[4]	3 months	75	74
(taxing teams' non standard fees)	6 months	100	100

[1] From receipt of claim. The process involves the assessment of claims, and in civil proceedings investigation of the statutory charge, as well as the actual payment process.

[2] 99 per cent. within 13 weeks.

[3] 98 per cent. within 13 weeks.

[4] This target relates to final payments and to the period from the bills being ready to tax. "Ready to tax" means all claims in the case have been submitted. In certain circumstances interim payments may be made in respect of these cases.

For the first time the Law Society of Northern Ireland set targets for processing claims during 1993-94. These were based on actual performance during 1992-93, which was as follows:

Type of proceedings	*Time taken*[4]	*Performance Per cent.*
Criminal legal aid		
Magistrates' Courts Bills	7 weeks	50
	12 weeks	93
Appeals from Magistrates' Courts	7 weeks	50
	12 weeks	90
Crown Court bills	12 weeks	35
	26 weeks	95
Bails	7 weeks	54
	12 weeks	94
Civil legal aid		
County Court	7 weeks	73
	12 weeks	88
High Court	7 weeks	79
	12 weeks	91
Appeals	7 weeks	73
	12 weeks	89
Bails	7 weeks	72
	12 weeks	90
ABWOR	1 week	100
Legal Advice and Assistance	7 weeks	92

[4] From receipt of claim to assessment. A further period of up to 4 weeks may elapse before actual payment.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The figure for public appointments made by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Northern Ireland court service in 1993 is 42 per cent. This answer does not include judicial appointments.

Mr. Bryan G. Davies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will invoke the services of the Official Solicitor in the case of Mr. Bryan G. Davies, currently in Brixton prison.

Mr. John M. Taylor: As a Minister I have no power to assign the Official Solicitor to a particular case.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proposals he has to implement the Law Commission's proposals to allow for a time limit over the period after mortgage repossession during which interest may be charged by the lender.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Law Commission's report on "Transfer of Land—Land Mortgages", Law Com. No. 204, which contains these proposals remains under consideration by the Government.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if his Department will collect and publish statistics on possession proceedings taken by secured lenders.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At present, information is published on possession actions taken in the county courts, broken down between local authority and private lenders, including banks, building societies and other lenders. My Department has no plans to amend the categories used in the collection of these statistics.

Courts Charter

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans his Department has to amend the courts charter to ensure that courts provide access and facilities for disabled people and minority language provision.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The courts charter applies equally to all court users. It will be reissued in April 1995 and revised to ensure that it meets the needs of court users. Facilities for disabled people are provided in all new court buildings and when old buildings are refurbished. However, there are constraints with some of the very old buildings. A register of facilities for disabled people in the Crown and county courts is produced by the Department.

County Courts

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what recent discussions he has had with the citizens advice bureaux service and other consumer and advice agencies on providing advice and representations schemes in the county courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The citizens advice bureaux are consulted on all proposed county court rule amendments. The majority of county courts hold regular user committee meetings usually at quarterly intervals. The citizens advice bureaux and other advice agencies are represented on approximately 50 per cent. of the committees.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he last met the Home Secretary to discuss the method for petitioning the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I regularly discuss matters of common interest with the Home Secretary.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he last met the President of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have never met the President of the European Court of Human Rights. The Lord Chancellor last met him on 8 October 1993 at the Council of Europe summit meeting in Vienna.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received on the ability of United Kingdom citizens to petition the European Court of Human Rights; and from whom.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I have received representations on this subject from five persons or bodies. I will not say who they are since I have not obtained their consent to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The latest statistics, for the year ending 1 September 1993, show that women were appointed to 31 per cent. of the public appointments made by the Treasury.

Value Added Tax (Domestic Fuel)

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what average net weekly increase to revenue his Department estimates will be generated by the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel once all bills become subject to the 8½ per cent. rate of VAT.

Sir John Cope: There are no plans to charge 8½ per cent. VAT on domestic fuel and power. Estimates of the yield of forthcoming changes are given in the Financial Statement and Budget Report.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the current Crown Estate Commissioners; how were they appointed; when were they appointed; and how long their appointment will last.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is set out in the table:

Name		*When appointed*	*Term (years)*
1st Commissioner:	Lord Mansfield	September 1993	2
2nd Commissioner:	C. K. Howes	September 1991	5
Commissioners:	R. B. Caws	January 1994	3
	J. N. James	January 1993	3
	P. Sober	January 1992	3
	A. Macdonald	January 1993	3
	J. H. Norris	April 1991	3
	Lord De Ramsey	January 1994	3

All appointments were made by Her Majesty the Queen.

Building Societies

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving *(a)* the average mortgage interest rate for the leading building societies averaged throughout each year since 1979, including the average to date for 1994, *(b)* the average interest rate paid to investors by the leading building societies averaged for each of these years and *(c)* the differential between them.

Mr. Nelson: The table gives annual average mortgage and share rates for all building societies during the period 1979-83; from 1984 onwards, it gives the rates for the largest 20 societies. The interest rate paid to investors has been enhanced to take account of withheld tax paid by societies direct to the Inland Revenue, on investors' behalf. The latest available figures are for 1 January 1994. These rates are taken from "Financial Statistics" published by the CSO.

Date	*Average Mortgage Rate*	*Gross Average Share Rate*	*Differential*
1979	11·94	12·07	–0·13
1980	14·92	14·77	0·15
1981	14·01	13·13	0·88

Date	*Average Mortgage Rate*	*Gross Average Share Rate*	*Differential*
1982	13·30	12·57	0·73
1983	11·03	10·39	0·64
1984	11·76	11·29	0·47
1985	13·51	12·78	0·73
1986	11·92	11·10	0·82
1987	11·56	10·42	1·14
1988	10·97	9·38	1·59
1989	13·61	12·30	1·31
1990	14·99	14·04	0·95
1991	12·72	11·01	1·71
1992	10·64	8·45	2·19
1993	8·09	5·78	2·31
[1]1994	7·94	5·32	2·62

[1] 1 January.

I should point out that the January 1994 mortgage rate quoted in reply to previous questions, 14 February, column *579*, and 24 February, columns *273-75*, should also have read 7·94 per cent. and not 8·00 per cent.

Building Societies

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the pre-tax profits in total for each of the members of the Building Societies Association for each financial year from 1978-79 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms in 1994 figures.

Mr. Nelson: These figures are not collated by the Treasury and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Recession and Recovery

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 2, what are the widely used conventions for defining recession and recovery.

Mr. Nelson: A common convention is to define a recession as two or more consecutive quarters of falling output, with the recovery dated from when output clearly starts to rise again.

EC Budget

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of member states' net contributions to the EC budget, after the United Kingdom rebate, in 1993; and what estimate he has made, in respect of the calendar year 1994, of member states' net contributions to the European Union budget for that year *(a)* on the basis of the latest draft proposal European Union budget, and *(b)* after taking account of the latest estimate of the United Kingdom's rebate for 1994.

Sir John Cope: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury gave on 13 January at column *246*.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* I know of no such cases.

EMPLOYMENT

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When staff in the Employment Department Group are transferred to other sites in order to maintain operational efficiency, allowances are payable to cover the costs of house moves. In addition, if any staff are experiencing severe financial hardship, the Department has discretion to help with the repayment of bridging finance. Staff are required to borrow the maximum available from commercial sources. Help may then be available in one or more of the following ways:

An interest-free loan of up to 12 months' salary; and/or

An interest bearing loan; and/or

In very exceptional cases, write-off of part of the capital. If the total to be written off is in excess of £5,000, in accordance with required procedures, prior Treasury approval is sought.

Each case is dealt with according to the particular circumstances and its merits.

Staff transferring who find that the value of their old home is no longer sufficient to repay the mortgage may be allowed an interest-free loan of the difference between the sale price and outstanding mortgage to allow a relocation to go ahead.

In 1992-93 40 staff received help in this way. The cost was £457,000, of which just under £130,000 will be recovered over the next 10 years. In 1993-94 so far, four staff have received help, at a cost of £41,000, of which just under £10,000 will be recovered.

Labour Statistics

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he currently defines unemployment; how he currently compiles the unemployment figures; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department compiles and publishes two alternative and complementary measures of unemployment.

The monthly claimant unemployment count is based on people claiming unemployment related benefits, that is, unemployment benefit, income support or national insurance credits at Employment Service local offices, who on the day of the count were signed on as unemployed, available for and actively seeking work. Students claiming benefit during a vacation and who intend to return to full-time education and temporarily stopped workers are excluded. The claimant count is a by-product of the administrative system for paying unemployment-related benefits. It is compiled from records of unemployment claimants provided by the Employment Service local offices. Almost all the data used to compile the count are derived from the Department of Social Security's national unemployment benefit system computers.

In addition to the "unadjusted" claimant count the Department publishes a consistent seasonally adjusted series. This series which is maintained to be consistent with the current coverage of the count, takes into account all relevant changes which, unless adjusted for, would distort comparisons over time. It thus allows meaningful comparisons with the past. The consistent seasonally adjusted series is available from 1971 onwards nationally, and from 1974 onwards for each standard region. It is this series which is the prime focus of economic analysis.

A measure of unemployment according to the internationally standard International Labour Organisation definition is obtained from the Department's quarterly Labour Force Survey. The ILO measure includes as unemployed those people who at the time of interview were without work—that is, working less than one hour per week—were available to start work within the next two weeks and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained. The figures are consistently extremely close to those provided by the unemployment benefit claimant count.

The Labour Force Survey has been conducted since 1973 and had provided a measure of unemployment consistent with the ILO measure since 1984. Quarterly results have been available from the survey since 1992. About 150,000 people in 60,000 households are interviewed each quarter. The survey covers a wide range of labour market topics on the basis of internationally standard concepts and definitions.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the ratio between the number of unemployed persons and the number of vacant jobs in *(a)* south-east England, *(b)* the whole of England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Miss Widdecombe: When making comparisons between claimant unemployment figures for an area and the corresponding jobcentre vacancy figures it should be borne in mind that, nationally, jobcentre vacancies represent only approximately a third of all vacancies, and this proportion is likely to vary between regions and between different skills and occupations. It is therefore not meaningful to express such figures as ratios. The extent of the available information is given in the table:

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment and Vacancies January 1994
(£000's)

	Claimant Unemployment	*Unfilled Jobcentre vacancies*
South East Region	884·7	36·6
England	2,320·9	106·2
Wales	127·5	10·4
United Kingdom	2,787·6	141·8

National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which occupations are not covered by national vocational qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government have set the National Council for Vocational Qualifications the following target:

> "To secure the accreditation of NVQs of high quality and widespread acceptability, covering 90 per cent. of the employed population, by the end of 1995."

Currently 83 per cent. of the employed population, including all major occupational areas, are covered by national vocational qualifications at levels 1 to 4.

The Employment Department and NCVQ are working closely together to develop NVQs in particular for higher levels and for occupations where the costs of developing NVQs can be justified by the numbers of people likely to demand them.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of young people who took national vocational qualifications level 2 passed in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available in the form requested. However, according to the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, just under 200,000 national vocational qualifications in total were awarded from October 1992 to September 1993. The total has not been broken down by age and level. Information on awards by age and level should be available shortly.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures are collected each year for the year ending 31 August. In 1992-93 901 appointments were made. Of these, 182 or 20 per cent. were women.

Figures for the calendar year 1993 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Access to Work

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what decisions he has reached on the detailed arrangements for access to work as a replacement for the existing special schemes for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: On 22 June 1993, *Official Report*, col. *102*, I announced in outline the introduction of access to work, a major new programme for people with disabilities, in the next financial year. I am now able to announce further details.

In reaching decisions about details, I have taken full account of the many comments and representations made to myself and to my noble Friend Lord Henley by hon. Members, noble Lords, disability and employer organisations and others, and advice by the National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Access to Work will assist people to overcome barriers to work resulting from their disabilities. It replaces the special aids to employment, adaptations to premises and equipment, fares to work, and personal reader service schemes, which will be wound up. Help available under access to work will not be confined to specified forms of assistance; the scheme will be able to respond flexibly to need—for example, the needs of deaf people for communication support.

It will be open to unemployed, employed or self-employed people registerable as disabled, with priority for unemployed people.

As already announced, there will be an upper limit to the amount of financial help an individual can receive over a five-year period, with entitlement beginning again after five years. I have decided to set this limit at £21,000. I have also decided to empower senior officials of the Employment Service, exceptionally, to authorise payments in excess of this limit where it is necessary and reasonable to do so and is compatible with helping the planned numbers of people from the resources made available to the Employment Service region concerned.

I am very grateful to all those who participated in consultation and the various meetings I and my colleagues have held. In view of the evidence that many business people feel that a mandatory contribution could act as a deterrent to employers, contrary to the original survey data produced, I have decided to introduce access to work without seeking an employer contribution. I am particularly persuaded by the arguments of members of the all-party disablement group that we should try the new scheme for a year without an employer contribution and then review the position. However, we will continue to expect an employer to contribute when the help will be of general benefit to the firm and not solely for the disabled employee.

I have therefore decided to introduce access to work without seeking an employer contribution and without assuming that employers will meet one-off costs of £100 or less for established employees. This will allow us to consider further the case for an employer contribution in the light of experience of operating the scheme. To fund wider access in 1994-95 I am increasing by £3·5 million the expenditure in 1993-94 on the schemes that Access to Work replaces. This includes £2 million that had not been in any previous plans. The total budget for further activities in 1994-95 will be £14·6 million.

I will review access to work, including the issue of employer contributions, after the first full year of operation.

The changes to the operation of access to work outlined earlier mean that it will no longer be possible to launch the new arrangements from 1 April 1994. Access to Work will now be introduced on 6 June 1994 and accordingly fares to work, adaptations to premises and equipment, special aids to employment, personal reader services for the blind, and separate help towards the cost of communication at interview for deaf people will continue until 5 June 1994.

People receiving help under the current four schemes will be supported on their existing terms until 31 March 1995, from which time they will join access to work. They may join access to work earlier if they wish—for example, if they would benefit from the new forms of help.

As previously announced, the business on own account scheme will be wound up from 31 March 1994. The job introduction scheme will continue unchanged.

I believe that the introduction of access to work will be widely supported by disabled people and employers and will be a major step forward in releasing the skills and potential of disabled people at work.

Child Labour

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions of employers illegally employing child labour there have been *(a)* since 1973 and *(b)* in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: Information for the years 1979 to 1992 on the number of prosecutions in England and Wales for offences in connection with the employment of children and young persons is given in the table. Data prior to 1979 are not available centrally.

Number of defendants prosecuted for offences in connection with employment of children and young persons under the Children and Young Persons Act 1993, sections 18 to 21—section 18 as amended by the Children Act 1972—1979-1992.
England and Wales

Year	*Prosecutions*
1979	23
1980	26
1981	24
1982	17
1983	12
1984	12
1985	11
1986	2
1987	8
1988	28
1989	23
1990	25
1991	15
1992	12

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Listed Buildings

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many grade 1 and 2 listed buildings have been *(a)* demolished, *(b)* lost by fire or *(c)* otherwise lost since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The number of demolitions for which listed building consent was given between 1 January 1979 and 31 March 1993 are as follows:

	Number
Grade I	0
Grade II*	37
Grade II	2,227
Total	2,264

The annual rate has decreased substantialy in recent years.

Records are not kept centrally on the extent to which losses took place without the need to apply for consent, the causes which led to applications being made, or the extent to which consents given were implemented.

Sports Facilities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in what circumstances sports facilities are revenue funded.

Mr. Brooke: The great majority of public sports facilities are funded by local authorities. It is for them to decide what suitable revenue funding arrangements to make. My Department does not directly provide assistance for the revenue funding of any sports facilities.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what representations he has received from people in Coventry about the future and finances of building-based sports facilities;

(2) what representations he has received about the difficulties faced by sports clubs and local authorities in new capital schemes and enhancement schemes, particularly in the early years of sports facilities.

Mr. Brooke: My Department has received representations from a number of local authority associations and individual local authorities, including Coventry city council, about these matters.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the funds available to Coventry sports organisations from the West Midlands sports council in 1994-95.

Mr. Brooke: The West Midlands region sports council is negotiating its proposed grant-aid to Coventry city council for two capital and two revenue sports projects within Coventry in 1994-95.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to allow all sports facilities to be revenue funded.

Mr. Brooke: This is largely a matter for local authorities rather than central government.

The hon. Member may have in mind national lottery assistance for revenue funding. The draft directions I issued on 18 February set out the circumstances under which maintenance costs of capital projects might be assisted by revenue grants paid for out of lottery proceeds.

National Lottery

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to allocate funds to regional sports councils from the national lottery.

Mr. Brooke: Under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, the Sports Council is responsible for distributing that share of the net proceeds from the national lottery that will go to expenditure on or connected with sport. The Sports Council may not delegate this function to its regional offices, but may, of course, seek their advice on applications relating to their parts of the country.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Oman

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the Export Credits Guarantee Department credit for Oman has been allocated to defence contracts in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: Of the guarantees issued by the Export Credit Guarantees Department in support of United Kingdom capital goods and projects exports to Oman over the last five years, the proportion in respect of exports of defence equipment was as follows:

	Per cent.
1988-89	0·0
1989-90	100·0
1990-91	100·0
1991-92	0·0
1992-93	98·4

ECGD's recently published 1992-93 annual report details the breakdown by sector, including defence, of the capital goods and project exports it has exported during each of the four years to 1992-93.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many export credit guarantees have been provided to Oman in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham: The Export Credits Guarantee Department has issued eight guarantees in the past five years in support of United Kingdom exports of capital goods and projects to Oman as follows:

	Number
1988-89	1
1989-90	1
1990-91	1
1991-92	2
1992-93	3

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total Export Credits Guarantee Department exposure outstanding with Oman.

Mr. Needham: At the close of its last financial year on 31 March 1993, the Export Credits Guarantee Department's exposure on Oman stood at £427·6 million.

Foreign Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *320*, if he will provide the information concerning foreign investment in some other form.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information on stocks of foreign direct investment within the United Kingdom is regularly published in "Business Monitor MA4 Overseas Transactions", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Information on direct investment within OECD countries is published in "International Direct Investment Statistics Yearbook 1993", OECD, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Libya (Trade Figures)

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the trade figures between the United Kingdom and Libya over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: The trade figures between the United Kingdom and Libya for the past five years are shown in the table.

United Kingdom trade with Libya—1989 to 1993

£ thousands

	Imports	*Exports*
1989	104,545	239,191
1990	151,605	244,849
1991	121,219	255,718
1992	162,899	228,273
1993	156,542	274,051

Source: UK Overseas Trade (Business Monitor MA20).

Textiles

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made on securing increased market access for the United Kingdom textile industry under the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Heseltine: Valuable gains in market access have been achieved with the United States, the Philippines, Thailand and the Latin American countries. The improved access for wool cloth to the United States is particularly significant. The European Commission is continuing to negotiate with those countries which have made disappointing offers. I can confirm that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade met the Indonesian ambassador to the United Kingdom on 14 February to express concern about Indonesia's offer. In addition, he wrote to the high commissioners for India and Pakistan on 18 February.

Biological Warfare

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what dates his Department withdrew commercial export licences from United Kingdom companies wishing to sell *(a)* bacillus anthracis, *(b)* clostridium botulinum, *(c)* brucella melitensis and *(d)* clostridium perfringens to Iraq.

Mr. Heseltine: Export licences for Iraq were revoked by DTI on 9 August 1990 when SI 1990 No. 1651 came into force. This implemented United Nations Security Council Resolution 661 of 6 August 1990. There is no record of any licence being issued for these agents in the period 1986-1994.

Sizewell B

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the first fuel core was delivered to the Sizewell B reactor.

Mr. Eggar: I understand from Nuclear Electric plc that the first fuel elements were delivered to Sizewell B on 14 February 1994.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contracts have been taken out with Lloyd's Register for the independent safety assessment of the commissioning of the Sizewell B nuclear plant.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with his German counterpart as to the compatibility of the policy on the international co-operation on export controls, announced in December, with the European Union policy on co-operation and harmonisation of trade regulations.

Mr. Needham: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has had discussions with Herr Rexrodt, the German Federal Economics Minister, on the subject of the proposed EC dual-use regulation. There have also been regular bilateral contacts between British and German officials on the same subject.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Women (Violent Offences)

37. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Attorney-General what guidelines the Crown Prosecution Service operates in considering public interest in the prosecution of women for violent offences.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service considers the personal circumstances of all potential defendants when deciding whether or not prosecutions are in the public interest.

Serious Fraud Office

38. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received about the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General: Recent representations from Members of Parliament and members of the public have emphasised the importance of continuing to tackle serious fraud both firmly and effectively.

Bromley Council (Social Services Department)

39. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report,* column 726, when the inquiry by the Metropolitan police concerning the alleged fraud within the social services department of Bromley council began; and on what date the last police report was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Solicitor-General: The investigation began in January 1991. The Crown Prosecution Service received the most recent police report on 25 January 1994. It decided that the evidence was not sufficient to justify the institution of proceedings for corruption. The Metropolitan police are continuing inquiries into a separate allegation of dishonesty.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General how many representations have been made to him about the opening statement made by the Cabinet Secretary to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

The Attorney-General: None.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I make no appointments to public bodies.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Attorney-General what instructions he has given to the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning the prosecution of persons alleged to have assaulted police officers; if he will instruct the Director to prosecute illegal immigrants charged with assault rather than relying on deportation; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Where there is sufficient evidence the public interest normaly demands prosecution when the victim of an assault is a police officer.

The Crown Prosecution Service last week issued guidance to all Crown prosecutors emphasising that illegal immigrants should not be dealt with by means of deportation when the gravity of the offence demands prosecution.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases were considered by the Crown Prosecution Service for prosecution in the last 12-month period for which figures are available; what number and percentage of cases were actually prosecuted; what number and percentage of convictions were obtained for England and Wales; and what are the corresponding figures for the Devon and Cornwall area.

The Attorney-General: Figures for prosecutions in Devon and Cornwall are included in the total for CPS South West, and cannot be given separately. The latest period for which figures are available is the year ending December 1993.

Table A shows at column 1 the number of defendants whose case was completed by the CPS in magistrates' courts during 1993; at column 2 the number and proportion of prosecutions dropped; at column 3 the number and proportion of bind overs; at column 4 the number and proportion of prosecutions which could not proceed; at column 5 the number and proportion of committal hearings; at column 6 the number and proportion proceeding to a hearing; at column 7 the number and proportion of hearings resulting in conviction; and at column 8 the number and proportion of hearings resulting in dismissal:

Table A: Magistrates' court

	Column 1 Completed Cases	*Column 2 Prosecutions Dropped*	*Column 3 Bind Overs*	*Column 4 Prosecutions could not proceed*	*Column 5 Committal Hearings*	*Column 6 Hearings*	*Column 7 Convictions*	*Column 8 Dismissals*
CPS	1,362,277	175,025	23,920	175,025	103,299	950,676	935,044	21,953
Total (per cent.)	—	(12·8)	(1·7)	(12·8)	(7·7)	(69·8)	(97·7)	(2·3)
CPS	69,968	8,535	610	4,034	5,099	51,690	51,087	839
South West (per cent.)	—	(12·2)	(0·9)	(5·8)	7·3)	(73·9)	(98·4)	(1·6)

The number of completed cases at column 1 does not include cases referred to the CPS by the police for pre-charge advice, or non-criminal proceedings.

Convictions at column 7 are inclusive of guilty pleas as well as convictions after trial. Both convictions and dismissals are inclusive of cases proceeding to a hearing after the defendant offered mixed pleas of guilty to some counts and not guilty to others: these defendants are counted twice.

Table B shows at column 1 defendants whose case was completed by the CPS in the Crown court during 1993; at column 2 those proceeding to a hearing; at column 3 those resulting in conviction, and at column 4 those resulting in acquittal:

Table B: Crown Court

	Column 1 Completed cases	*Column 2 Hearings*		*Column 3 *Convictions*		*Column 4 Acquittals*	
			Per cent.		*Per cent.*		*Per cent.*
CPS total	95,600	84,608	(88·5)	78,156	(90·1)	8,620	(9·9)
CPS South West	5,647	5,028	(89·0)	4,762	(92·1)	409	(7·9)

Completed cases at column 1 do not include appeals or committals for sentence.

Hearings at column 2 do not include proceedings in which the defendant was bound over to keep the peace; prosecutions dropped by the CPS before the jury was sworn; or cases in which the prosecution could not proceed because the defendant had died, could not be traced, or was found unfit to plead.

Convictions are inclusive of guilty pleas. The figures for convictions and acquittals include cases proceeding to a hearing after the defendant offered a mix of guilty pleas to some counts on the indictment, and not guilty to others: these defendants are counted twice.

The national totals given comprise the 13 CPS areas, but do not include the specialised casework undertaken by the headquarters of the service.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance is given to the Crown Prosecution Service as to whether it should proceed with a prosecution; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The criteria set out in the code for Crown prosecutors are that there is sufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, and a prosecution is required in the public interest.

The charges should reflect the gravity of the defendant's conduct and will normally be the most serious revealed by the evidence.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Pitcairn

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what ecological considerations have been adduced by the Pitcairn islanders in expressing their preference for transferring from Britain's dependent territories to those of France.

Mr. Goodlad: The Pitcairn islanders have not expressed to us any wish to become a dependent territory of France or to change the nature of their existing relationship with the United Kingdom.

EC Committee of the Regions

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the likely annual cost of the new EC Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Goodlad: The Committee of the Regions has been allocated 12 mecu—£8·94 million—in the EC budget for this year.

EC Bodies

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the likely annual cost of each of the new Community bodies that were formally established at the European Council meeting on 29 October.

Mr. Goodlad: We have the following information on estimated annual costs for those European Community bodies whose locations were determined at the European Council in Brussels on 29 October 1993:

European Environment Agency

The 1994 budget for the European Environment Agency has been fixed at at 8 million ecu.

European Training Foundation

The European Communities budget provides for expenditure of 5 million ecu for the European Training Foundation in 1994.

Office for Veterinary and Plant Health Inspection and Control

No detailed work has yet been done on the projected budget for ths agency.

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

The reserve chapter of the European Communities budget for 1994 includes provision of 4·8 million ecu for commitments and 4·64 million ecu for payments.

European Medicines Evaluation Agency

The budget for 1994 has been set at 7·5 million ecu (of which 0·7 million ecu is in the reserve chapter of the European Communities budget). The intention is that running costs will in due course be offset by fees so that within a relatively short period the Agency will be self-financing.

Agency for Health and Safety at Work

The appropriation requested by the European Commission in 1991, when the original proposal was made, was 6 million ecu for a full financial year. Discussions are still continuing on the remit for the agency, and a final assessment of costs cannot be made until agreement has been reached. No budgetary provision has been made for 1994, but the European Parliament voted 500,000 ecu to the existing European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions "to take over the tasks of the planned Health and Safety Agency" pending the setting up of the agency.

European Monetary Institute

The size of the European Monetary Institute's resources is a matter for the Council of the European Monetary Institute (ie the central bank governors of all the member states and their President) which has not yet reached a view on the question.

The Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (trade marks, designs and models)

The European Communities budget for 1994 includes provision for start-up costs of ½ million ecu in its reserve chapter for this office. This may increase in subsequent years—in 1990 the European Commission, based on a study by consultants, estimated annual operating costs at 17 million ecu. The intention is that running costs will in due course be offset by fees so that within a relatively short period the office will be self-financing.

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

CEDEFOP's budget for 1994 has been set at 11 million ecu.

Translation Centre

No detailed work has yet been done on the projected budget for this centre although it is planned that it should be self-financing on the basis of charges for its services.

The European Council in Brussels on 29 October 1993 also determined the location of Europol, an intergovernmental organisation created under the third pillar of the Treaty on European Union. The total budget estimated for the European Drugs Unit (the first phase of Europol) for 1994 is 2·065 million ecu.

Libya

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of British nationals employed in Libya in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no figures available of British nationals employed in Libya. However, between the years 1990-92 we estimate that there were 5,000 British nationals there.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British nationals were employed in Libya at the most recent date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no figures available for the number of British nationals employed in Libya. We estimate that there are 4,000 British nationals there.

Jamaica

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Jamaican nationals have applied for visas since 1 January; what was the comparable figure for the same period of 1993; what is the current waiting time between application and interview; if he will appoint additional staff to process applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of 327 Jamaican nationals have applied in Kingston for entry clearance since 1 January. The corresponding figure for last year was 322. Applications to visit Britain are normally processed the same day. The one entry clearance officer in the British high commission in Kingston is assisted by a second such officer between 1 April and 30 September each year. The option to appoint additional staff, if required, to process applications is always under review.

Mr. Stephan Kock

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions and in what capacities Mr. Stephan Kock acted on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in relation to contracts arising out of overseas development since 1988.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Mr. Stephan Kock was appointed to act on behalf of the Joint Intelligence Committee in relation to the Pergau dam contract in Malaysia.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been asked to reply.

Mr. Kock is not, and never has been, an adviser to the Joint Intelligence Committee.

Mr. Israr Ahmed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *43*, concerning an application made by Israr Ahmed (Ref: IMM/CO 442) to the British High Commission in Islamabad to enter the United Kingdom, when the hon. Member for Bradford, West will receive the substantive reply.

Mr. Goodlad: I regret that the hon. Member has not yet received a substantive answer. I will ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to let the hon. Member have one as soon as possible.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to ensure his Department instructs British overseas embassies and high commissions promptly to issue visas to those wishing to enter the United Kingdom in cases where appellate bodies uphold appeals or refuse to grant his Department leave to appeal to the immigration appeals tribunal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Entry clearance officers at posts overseas are under standing instructions to issue entry clearances as soon as possible when determinations favourable to the applicant are received via the Home Office.

Mr. Ahmed Zahir

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will instruct the British high commission in Islamabad to issue a visa to enter the United Kingdom to Mr. Ahmed Zahir (TH/1322/93) following the refusal of the immigration appeals tribunal to grant his Department leave to appeal on 3 December last; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to let the hon. Member have a substantive reply in due course.

Somaliland

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking, at international level, to ensure that resources are available to provide programmes of work and support for disarming militias in Somaliland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As a permanent member of the Security Council the United Kingdom has ensured that all relevant UNSC resolutions have underlined the importance of disarming militias throughout Somalia. We have also ensured that UNSC resolutions urge member states to provide resources in support of UNOSOM's efforts throughout Somalia.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what way the United Nations supports the Egal Government in Somaliland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are four senior UNOSOM staff in Hargeisa, comprising officer-in-charge, senior humanitarian officer, political officer and security co-ordinator. There are also local and international support staff.

UNOSOM is working to promote stability and rehabilitation within existing civic structures throughout Somalia including the north-west.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the 1993 budget of the United Nations operation in Somalia—UNOSOM—was spent in Somaliland; and what proportion this was of UNOSOM's total expenditure in Somalia as a whole.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Total UNOSOM expenditure in 1993 was approximately $650 million, of which some 84 per cent. relates directly or indirectly to troop costs. The remainder covers the administrative support costs of the operation. Details regarding the proportion of this figure spent in north-west Somalia are not available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Admiral Jonathan Howe, head of UNOSOM, has visited Somaliland; what promises of assistance were given; and what has actually been delivered by UNOSOM.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Admiral Howe visited Berbera in north-west Somalia on 6 November 1993, and committed UNOSOM to provide more than $3 million for strengthening the police, prison and judicial services, and for the provision of administrative kits to help local administrative structures improve their operations in north-west Somalia.

This money has been allocated, but UNOSOM is not yet able to provide a summary of how much has been disbursed.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press the United Nations to increase the resources of the Office for Project Services division of the United Nations Development Plan in Somaliland to assist the reintegration of former militia into a peaceful society.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations attaches importance to the early reintegration of former militia into a peaceful society. OPS is, however, an implementing agency which performs services for the United Nations system and governments on a cost-reimburseable basis. Any expansion of projects under way would depend on the availability of additional donor finance.

"Partnership for Peace"

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made since the NATO summits of the diligence and application being shown by those responsible for setting up the combined joint task force and the infrastructure for "Partnership for Peace"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Work was set in hand to develop the combined joint task force concept and the "Partnership for Peace" initiative immediately after the NATO summit in January. Considerable progress has already been made. I have no reason to doubt the diligence and application of those responsible for this work.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British Medical Association and Department of Health will be consulted on the health effects of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I said in my answer on 1 February, c. *605*, our submission to the International Court of Justice will set out the position of the Government on this question. We shall therefore be consulting relevant Government Departments.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *605*, when he will be making his submission to the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall make our submission before 10 June.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *605*, whether Her Majesty's Government's submission to the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons will be published in advance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Under rule 106 of the rules of the International Court of Justice it is for the court to decide, following the opening of an oral hearing, whether to publish submissions.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *605*, what consultations he will hold before submission of Her Majesty's Government's report on the legality of nuclear weapons to the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will be consulting relevant Government Departments. We have discussed this question with allies in the past and may do so again if necessary.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *605*, if his submission to the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons will support the legality of *(a)* the use and *(b)* the possession of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It will.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *605*, whether Her Majesty's Government's submission to the International Court of Justice on the legality of nuclear weapons will be laid before the House of Commons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A copy of our submission to the International Court of Justice will be placed in the Library of the House if and when the court has ordered publication of submissions to it.

Eastern Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the objectives and current status of CSCE missions in *(a)* Madedonia, *(b)* Georgia, *(c)* Estonia, *(d)* Latvia, *(e)* Moldova, *(f)* Tajikistan, *(g)* Nagorno-Karabakh and *(h)* Kosovo, Sandjak and Vojvodina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: CSCE missions can make an effective contribution to promoting stability and containing the spread of conflict. They complement the work of the CSCE's high commissioner on national minorities and office for democratic institutions and human rights. I welcome the appointment of Richard Samuel, a recently retired member of the diplomatic service, as head of mission to Moldova.

A note prepared by the CSCE unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, giving details of the objectives and current status of CSCE missions, has been placed in the Library of the House.

Poland

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the current United Kingdom relations with Poland; when a senior Minister of the Crown last visited that country; and what significant visits by Ministers are planned during the next 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach importance to our relations with Poland which are warm and friendly. We are optimistic that the one problem, that of air services, will be resolved soon.

The last visit to Poland by a senior Minister was that of my right honourable and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor in October 1992. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited in May 1992. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales paid a visit in May 1993 and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh in September 1993.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit Poland this spring. Other high-level visits are under consideration.

Inhumane Weapons Convention

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards the ratification of the 1981 inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The subject is under active consideration. We hope to make a decision soon.

Anguilla

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Anguilla Parliament has no Parliament building; and what plans there are to build one.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agreement for the construction of separate accommodation for Anguilla's House of Assembly features in the country policy plan—CPP—signed between the Government of Anguilla and ourselves in August 1993. The relevant section of the CPP calls for the drawing up of detailed plans for the building in the financial year 1994-95, with construction scheduled to commence the following year.

Iraq

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received from the United Nations special inquiry commission on

Iraq to provide a list of British companies thought to have provided Iraq with military equipment or dual-use technology; and what examination he has made of the German submission to UNSCOM on the German companies' contribution for arming Iraq since its publication by UNSCOM.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* We have received no such requests from the special commission. However, we co-operate closely with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Authority on questions of supplier information and investigate where the evidence warrants it.

I am not aware of any publication by UNSCOM/IAEA on the German contribution to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme.

ENVIRONMENT

Commission for Local Administration

Sir Jerry Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of the commission for Local Administration in England in each of the last three financial years and in the first six months of the present financial year.

Mr. Curry: The cost of the commission since 1 April 1990 has been as follows:

	£
1990-91	3,969,804
1991-92	4,905,021
1992-93	6,105,854
[1]1993-94	3,219,800

[1] 1 April to 30 September.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long it has taken, on average, for the Commission for Local Administration to deal with individual cases in each of the last three years and in the most recent six months.

Mr. Curry: The average time taken to deal with individual complaints has been as follows (number of weeks):

	Stage 1[2]	*Stage 2*[3]
1990-91	18·0	69·5
1991-92	17·0	74·5
1992-93	15·4	70·5
[1]1993-94	14·4	65·0

[1] 1 August 1993 to 31 January 1994.

[2] A stage 1 investigation is one where the complaint is examined but investigation is not pursued beyond the stage of considering the council's detailed comments on it.

[3] A stage 2 investigation is one which proceeds with a view to the issue of a formal investigation report.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless households were temporarily accommodated in bed-and-breakfast hotels by each of the London boroughs, in rank order, at the latest available date.

Sir George Young: The numbers of households reported by the London boroughs in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of September 1993, the latest date for which data are available, ranked by size are as follows:

London borough	*Households in bed-and-breakfast accommodation*
Wandsworth	435
Tower Hamlets	322
Hammersmith and Fulham	240
Kensington and Chelsea	215
Westminster	210
Haringey	202
Barnet	188
Hackney	159
Lambeth	100
Enfield	82
Brent	78
Harrow	74
Hillingdon	67
Newham	45
Croydon	44
Hounslow	36
Bromley	34
Redbridge	21
Kingston upon Thames	20
Southwark	18
Sutton	16
Ealing	9
Merton	9
Bexley	6
City of London	4
Havering	0
Lewisham	0
Greenwich	0
Richmond upon Thames	0
Waltham Forest	0
Camden	0
Barking and Dagenham	0

Source: Quarterly P1E returns.

No return was received from Islington for this period.

The differences in the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation reflect variations in authorities' practices and in the level of homeless acceptances.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what agreement he reached with the Association of District Authorities on using nature of tenure as an indicator in the personal social services and the all-other services standard spending assessment;

(2) what agreement he has reached with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on using nature of housing tenure as an indicator in the personal social services and the all-other services standard spending assessment;

(3) what discussions he has had with the Association of County Councils on using nature of tenure as an indicator in the personal social services and the all-other services standard spending assessment; and what measure of agreement was reached.

Mr. Baldry: As part of the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95 we discussed the inclusion of indicators of housing tenure in SSAs with representatives of each of the local authority associations. The main forum for these discussions was the SSA sub-group.

The decision to include indicators of the nature of housing tenure in SSAs was based on a statistical analysis which was discussed with representatives of each of the local authority associations in the SSA sub-group.

The report of the SSA sub-group for 1994-95 was considered by the Consultative Council for Local Government Finance on 12 October. This report contained a number of options for changes to SSA methodology requested by these local authority associations which included indicators of the nature of housing tenure. During consultation on the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95 none of the local authority associations listed made representations on the proposal to use nature of housing tenure as an SSA indicator.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authority associations prior to his announcing the provisional revenue support grant settlement as to the use of nature of tenure as a proxy for disadvantage for the purpose of standard spending assessment distribution.

Mr. Baldry: Prior to the announcement of the provisional revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, as part of the review of standard spending assessments, we discussed a wide range of possible changes in SSA methodology with representatives of each of the local authority associations. The use of indicators of the nature of housing tenure was considered as part of these discussions, which took place in the official level SSA sub-group.

The report of the SSA sub-group for 1994-95 summarises the papers presented to the sub-group and the points made by representatives of the local authority associations in the discussion which took place. I have placed a copy of this report in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reporting mechanisms for homelessness as used to calculate standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: The information on homelessness used in the calculation of standard spending assessments is taken from the annual housing investment programme returns completed by local authorities.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the bed-and-breakfast hostels for the homeless that have (i) been opened and (ii) been closed in each yeare since 1990.

Sir George Young: The information requested by the hon. Member is not held centrally.

Earth Tremors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the last four years, and for the current year to date *(a)* the location and *(b)* the Richter scale measurement of earth tremors that have occurred in England; and what structural damage was reported.

Mr. Baldry: The British Geological Survey has located 1,478 earthquakes in the United Kingdom and its offshore area in the period January 1990 to mid-February 1994. Reports have been received of minor damage caused to properties from seven of these earthquakes; most widely from the so-called Bishop's Castle earthquake in western Shropshire on 2 April 1990 which had a magnitude of 5·1 on the Richter scale. Details are contained in annual bulletins and annual reports of the national seismic monitoring and information service operated by the BGS. Published copies for the first three years and draft material for 1993-94 have been lodged in the Library of the House of Commons.

Canada Geese

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of Canada geese on the environment and on other forms of wildlife.

Mr. Atkins: There is growing concern about the impact of Canada geese on the environment and last year my Department set up a working group to assess the need for and develop a strategy to manage the population. To assist the group's work the Government have commissioned research into whether the geese pose health problems and whether they interact adversely with the nesting and breeding success of native wildfowl. It is also proposed to commission research into population distribution dynamics and movement of the species, and to quantify damage caused by geese to amenity land in London.

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the current mood of funding passenger transport authorities through the levy system.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to change the current arrangements.

Recyclable Waste

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the percentage of waste sent to landfills which is recyclable.

Mr. Atkins: We have made no such estimate. However, research by the Government's Warren Spring Laboratory suggests that over 50 per cent. of household waste by weight sent to landfill is recyclable.

Council House Sales

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total income received by each district council from the sales of council houses in each of the past five years; what percentage of these have been reclaimed by his Department; what is the projected figure, from each council, for the building of new council housing in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Information on the total income received by each district council from the sales of council houses in the past five years will be placed in the Library of the House. None of these receipts is reclaimed by my Department. Under the capital receipts rules, local authorities are normally required to set aside 75 per cent. of their housing receipts to meet their debts. Figures for the building of new council housing in the next financial year are not held centrally. Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing, with local authorities concentrating on their enabling role and on managing their large stocks of existing council housing.

British Scrap Federation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of his Department's officials have attended the half-yearly dinners of the British Scrap Federation in each year since 1993; and what positions they held at the time.

Mr. Atkins: Although the British Scrap Federation hold half-yearly annual dinners in the spring and the autumn, it is only the autumn dinner that is normally attended by outside guests. Mrs. L. A. C. Simcock, head of waste management division in the Department, attended the dinner last November.

English Nature

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes have been made to the allocation of money for management agreements for English Nature; what limits there are on the levels of payments for new agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has recently provided English Nature with an additional £800,000 to spend on management agreements in the current financial year. Financial guidelines in accordance with section 50 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provide the basis for calculating payments under individual agreements. These are currently under review and a consultation paper will be issued as soon as possible. In addition, English Nature is required to consult my Department where annual payments would be £40,000 or more or a lump sum payment of £250,000 is proposed.

Air Quality

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment the quality of urban air review group has made of the relative disbenefits to the environment and human health of motor vehicles using *(a)* leaded petrol, *(b)* unleaded petrol, *(c)* diesel and *(d)* natural gas.

Mr. Atkins: The most recent report of the quality of urban air review group, "Diesel Vehicle Emissions and Urban Air Quality" was published on 28 January 1994 and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Council Tax

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the average waiting time for appeals going to the council tax valuation tribunals and *(b)* the cost of valuation appeals for each English valuation tribunal area.

Mr. Baldry: It is not yet possible to say what is the average length of time taken to hear appeals, since a great many cases are being settled by agreement between the taxpayer and the Valuation Office Agency, and only a small proportion have been heard and determined by valuation tribunals.

The estimated average cost of processing a council tax appeal in the current financial year in England is £115. This estimate includes Valuation Office Agency and valuation tribunal costs.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many households in Rochdale have appealed against their council tax banding; and how many of these appeals have been accepted;

(2) how many households in Rochdale are still waiting to hear the results of their appeals against wrong council tax banding.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), on 17 February, column 967. Details of the outcome of appeals are not collected centrally.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the review of powers and duties of public authorities relating to the identification, assessment and appropriate treatment of contaminated land and liabilities to be completed.

Mr. Atkins: The review of the machinery for dealing with contaminated land and of liabilities is making good progress and is expected to be completed later this year.

Offshore Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which blocks his Department recommended should be excluded from the 14th round of offshore oil licensing; and on what grounds.

Mr. Atkins: My Department expressed concern about certain blocks which were of considerable importance to the marine aggregates industry. Our concerns were met and appropriate conditions were attached to those blocks which were included in the 14th licensing round.

Forests (Access)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial assistance the Government are giving to English local authorities to help them sign access agreements on privatised Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Atkins: No specific grants are available for this purpose, but considerable general financial support is provided to local government through revenue support grant. Local authorities determine for themselves how these resources are to be used.

Housing Associations

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what controls exist at present on the rents charged by housing associations; and what plans his Department has to increase these controls in the future.

Sir George Young: The rents of secure housing association tenants—those whose tenancy began before 15 January 1989—are controlled by the rent officer. The rents of assured tenants—those whose tenancy began after 15 January 1989—are set at the discretion of the housing association. For housing provided with public subsidy, all registered housing associations are required by the terms of the tenants guarantee to set and maintain assured rents which are within the reach of people in low-paid employment. The corporation monitors rent levels and the financial efficiency of housing associations, and can take action where excessive costs might lead to high rent levels. My Department has no plans at present to increase these controls.

Wind Farms

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy as regards the contruction of wind farms; and what circulars he has issued to local planning authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's policy on renewable energy, including wind energy, is set out in Planning Policy Guidancee note 22. Copies of this note were sent to all local authorities in England and Wales in February 1993.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* wind farms and *(b)* propellors (i) have been constructed, (ii) have been approved and (iii) are pending.

Mr. Baldry: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Bio-fuels

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has commissioned to determine the effect of bio-fuels on the global environment.

Mr. Atkins: Bio-fuels can affect the global environment by influencing emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels, other gaseous emissions, and reservoirs of carbon in soils and vegetation. My Department has commissioned research on greenhouse gas emissions from waste disposal including waste as fuel, on landfill gas production, and on gaseous emissions from engines driven by landfill gas. We are also undertaking research relevant to quantifying the effect of bio-fuels on United Kingdom carbon reservoirs.

Storm Damage

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which regions of the United Kingdom have been most severely affected by storm damage for each year from 1985 to 1993.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

This is a matter for the chief executive of the Meteorological Office, who will reply directly to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. C. R. Hunt to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 25 February 1994:

I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking which regions of the United Kingdom have been most severely affected by storm damage for each year from 1982 to 1993.

All parts of the British Isles can be affected by storms. Notable storms in the period include 15/16 October 1987 (southern England), 13 February 1989 (Scotland) and 25 January 1990 (much of England and Wales). In general, the windiest places are exposed coasts and hills, particularly in northern and western Scotland. However, building standards do take account of the expected extreme winds in the local area, so that storm damage is not necessarily related. Records of wind damage are held by the Building Research Establishment. Further information can be obtained directly from the Chief Executive, Building Research Establishment, Bucknalls Lane, Garston, Watford, Herts WD2 7JR.

EDUCATION

Special Schools

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children were taught in special schools in 1977, 1979, 1981, 1989 and the latest available year.

Mr. Forth: Pupils in special schools as a percentage of total pupil population in maintained schools in the years concerned, based on the latest data available, are as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1977	1·55
1979	1·59
1981	1·62
1989	1·34
1993	1·25

Prospect School, Berkshire

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education under which Act the ballot for grant-maintained status at Prospect school, Berkshire, has been conducted.

Mr. Robin Squire: The governors of Prospect school, Berkshire passed a resolution on 10 January 1994 to ballot parents on the question of seeking grant-maintained status. The ballot has therefore been conducted under section 28 of the Education Act 1993.

Nursery Education

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the cost of introducing nursery education for all three and four-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The cost would depend on the types of provision, the balance between full-time and part-time attendance and the numbers of parents who choose to take up a nursery place. We estimate that the average annual recurrent unit cost for a full-time equivalent pupil aged under five in the maintained sector is £1,770 at 1993-4 prices. In addition, there would be capital, transport and staff training costs. As at January 1993, 55 per cent. of children aged three and four in England were already in receipt of some form of maintained or independent schooling.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give an indication of the figure available for supplementary capital allocations to local education authorities for 1994-95.

Mr. Forth: The total of supplementary credit approvals to be made available to local education authorities for 1994-95 is £39·398 million.

Drug Education

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the allocation for drug education in schools in each of the last three years.

Mr. Forth: Most current expenditure on schools is incurred by local education authorities, either directly or delegated through local management of schools schemes and totals some £15 billion a year. It is for schools and LEAs to determine in the light of local priorities and taking account of advice and guidance available how much of their total budgets to spend on drugs education. Through the grants for education support and training programme funding was made available on a pump-priming basis to support expenditure of £7·3 million in 1991-92 and £5·0 million in 1992-93 on preventive health education and training in schools, including education about drugs. At national level my Department's preventive health education budget supported drugs-related initiatives with grant exceeding £42,000 in 1991-92 and £149,000 in 1992-93. The provisional figure for 1993-94 is £104.000.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he was consulted by the Colleges Employers Forum on its model contract for further education staff.

Mr. Boswell: No.

Correspondence

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East can expect a reply to his letter to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), dated 25 January.

Mr. Boswell: I replied to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East on 25 February 1994.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Latin America

45. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the aid programme in Latin America.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have a sizeable and successful bilateral aid programme in Latin America. It is focusing increasingly on the key areas of environmental cooperation, natural resources and good government.

Southern and Eastern Africa

46. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom overseas aid to the southern and eastern African countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Africa is a high priority for Britain's bilateral aid programme. In 1992-93 we disbursed almost £304 million of bilateral aid to countries in eastern and southern Africa, excluding CDC investments, to help promote sustainable development and to relieve immediate suffering.

India

47. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will increase the level of aid to India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: India is the top recipient of our bilateral aid and will continue to be a high priority. Planned expenditure for next year is in line with average levels over recent years.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many individuals in how many countries are estimated to have benefited from overseas aid in each of the past five years; how much cash was involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the last five years we have provided bilateral aid to an average of 133 countries each year. By promoting economic and social development, and by helping reduce poverty, our aid is intended to be of wide benefit in the recipient countries. It is not, however, possible to say how many individuals have benefited. The amount of aid which we have provided is as follows:

	Gross bilateral aid £ million[1]	*Total gross aid £ million*[1]
1988-89	933	1,616
1989-90	1,035	1,736
1990-91	1,168	1,893
1991-92	1,081	2,016
1992-93	1,278	2,245

[1] Rounded to the nearest million.

Oman

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the right hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *70.*

Angola

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of United Kingdom aid to Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the start of 1993 we have allocated over £15 million of aid for Angola. This includes our share of EC aid.

Indonesia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much British Aid is currently being given to Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We expect United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure for Indonesia in the current financial year to be about £21 million. Our aid supports projects in such sectors as power, forestry, railways, civil aviation, education, broadcasting and public administration.

South Africa

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to offer aid to South Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This year we will spend up to £15 million, plus over £11 million as our share of EC aid. We will increase our aid to support a new South African Government pursuing sound policies.

TRANSPORT

Driving Standards Agency

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to transfer the Driving Standards Agency to the private sector.

Mr. Key: I have no plans to change the status of the agency. Options for the future of the agency will be reviewed again in around three years. Meanwhile, the chief executive has been asked to make full use of the market testing initiative to secure best value for money.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether consultants have been employed to consider the future status of the Driving Standards Agency.

Mr. Key: No.

Supermarket Construction

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his intention to give a direction to refuse Asda/Thomas Storey, Stockport, Application No. 59583, which was lodged on 7 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: No application for this proposed development has yet been referred to the Department.

Vehicle Testing Stations

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the future status of the Vehicle Inspectorate's testing stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend hopes to announce his provisional conclusions shortly. He recently made available to the Transport Select Committee the consultants' report on the future of the VI's testing functions; a copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *149*, whether the Government's review of the issues surrounding sustainable development resulted in any changes in the Government's policies on transport.

Mr. MacGregor: "Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy" builds directly upon the commitments made in "This Common Inheritance" and subsequent reports. We are, therefore, already taking action on the issues raised. In addition to setting out the environmental situation in the United Kingdom and the principles and processes designed to respond to it, the strategy also highlights key areas for future action.

Polish Airlines

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons he approved the withdrawal of landing rights for the Polish airline LOT; and how he proposes to resolve the dispute.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the letter I wrote to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 16 November 1993 which was deposited in the Library of the House and which explains the background to the current situation. We have been in contact with the Polish Government since the autumn in an attempt to resolve the current difficulties. Contacts are continuing and we hope that it will possible for direct services to be restored soon.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated number of all categories of motor vehicles in the United Kingdom, together with the estimated percentage of them equipped with catalytic converters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The distribution and volume of the United Kingdom vehicle fleet is set out in full in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1993". The latest information on the total volumes of licenced vehicles up to the end of September 1993 is included in the following table.

Total licensed vehicles
End September 1993

Thousands

Taxation class	*Total*	*Petrol*	*Diesel*	*Other*
Private and light goods	22,371·5	20,249·6	2,120·7	4·8
Of which:				
Private cars	20,157·3	19,040·7	1,113·1	3·5
Motor cycles	713·2	712·4	0·7	0·1
Goods vehicles	430·3	15·8	414·4	0·0
Public transport vehicles	107·8	7·2	100·6	0·0
Agricultural machines	319·9	7·8	310·1	2·0
Other vehicles	56·1	39·8	16·2	0·0
Exempt vehicles	961·8	766·3	163·7	31·7
ALL VEHICLES	24,964·2	21,798·9	3,126·5	38·8

The precise number of vehicles fitted with catalytic converters is not known, but is estimated at approximately 2·5 million or 13 per cent. of the total licensed passenger car fleet, excluding diesel cars. Catalysts are also optionally offered on some diesel car models and some motor cycles, but the numbers licensed are likely to be negligible.

Midland Metro

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce Government funding and financial support for the Midland metro.

Mr. Freeman: We will be looking carefully, in the context of this year's public expenditure round, at the scope for making resources available to that a start could be made on Midland metro in 1995-96.

Road Improvements

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) for what reason no commitment to re-route the A40 trunk road in Cheltenham was made in the Government's draft planning guidance for the south west; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he plans to announce a starting date for road improvements to the A436 and the A417.

Mr. Key: The draft regional planning guidance for the south-west is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. It provides the framework for the updating of structure and local plans in the region and is not the appropriate vehicle for commitments to particular road schemes.

Construction of the A417 Brockworth bypass started last month. Further improvements to the A417 in this area are at the very earliest planning stages. It is planned that the A436 will act as a bypass for Cheltenham in conjunction with Brockworth bypass. A constultants' study is in progress to identify the need for, and environmental acceptability of, any improvements.

Cones Hotline

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has considered paying the Automobile Association a fee for running the cones hotline.

Mr. Key: In considering the future development of the cones hotline, we are currently looking at the option of having it run by a private sector agency.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons the cones hotline number is an indirect line.

Mr. Key: Until recently the cones hotline has operated adequately on the Department's general inquiry number. However, it has now been changed to a direct line—0345 50 40 30.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of the cones hotline.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on 2 February, column *759*.

Baggage Security

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of instances annually, over the past five years, in which unaccompanied baggage was erroneously carried on flights departing from United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Norris: No such information is available.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it compulsory by law for all aircraft hold baggage to be reconciled with passengers on all flights departing from United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Norris: It is already a legal requirement for aircraft operators to ensure that all passengers and operating crew, whose hold baggage has been loaded into an aircraft, have boarded and will travel on that aircraft. The baggage of passengers who check in but do not board the aircraft is required to be removed and may not be carried unless it is subjected to security controls. There are circumstances where baggage may be legitimately carried without an accompanying passenger; however, such unaccompanied baggage is not carried unless it is first screened and if necessary hand-searched.

The United Kingdom has always complied with international requirements on passenger baggage. We have even gone further and introduced a recommended practice for airlines to account for and authorise for carriage every item of hold baggage that they carry. This will become a mandatory requirement within a few months.

A27

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the cost of the tunnels on the Department's scheme for the A27 development in Worthing and Shoreham and the costs of the tunnels of the blue route and the extent to which these figures have been reduced by improved technology compared with the technology used on the Brighton bypass.

Mr. Key: This information is available from the Department's representative at the public inquiry into the A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement proposals. I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the properties which have been purchased by his Department in connection with the developments of the A27 in the Worthing area which he has or now proposes to sell; what is the price, and total cost to his Department, of each; and at price each has been *(a)* sold or *(b)* is now on the market.

Mr. Key: Of the properties which have been purchased in connection with the A27 Worthing-Lancing scheme, six have been offered for sale as follows:

Property	*Offers invited in the region of (£)*
52 Longlands, Worthing	130,000
54 Longlands, Worthing	135,000
56 Longlands, Worthing	140,000
44 Copthorne hill, Worthing	75,000
11 Fontwell close, Worthing	90,000
20 Findon road, Worthing	57,000
Total	627,000

A sale has been agreed for 54 Longlands, but it would not be appropriate to disclose the sale price which is confidential to the prospective purchaser.

It would not be appropriate to disclose the price paid by the Department for each property, which is confidential to the former owners, but the total price to the Department for the six properties was £901,750 exclusive of fees and other administrative costs.

Goods Vehicle Information Discs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the discs which goods vehicle operators are required to display are designed to be read by pedestrians who are aggrieved by the vehicle's operation or operator.

Mr. Key: Goods vehicle operator discs are primary intended to assist the police and other enforcement organisations who carry out checks on heavy goods vehicles. Should members of the public who wish to register a complaint concerning a goods vehicle have difficulty in readily identifying the operator of the vehicle, they should contact the local traffice office quoting the vehicle's registration mark.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Information in the precise form requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. An annual monitoring exercise is undertaken of the position as at 1 September each year and figures are passed to the Cabinet Office for inclusion in their annual publication of "Public Bodies 1993". The proportion of DOT appointments held by women shown in "Public Bodies 1993" is 19 per cent. In "Public Bodies 1992" it was 14 per cent. The departmental objective is that the percentage should be increased to 25 per cent. by 1996.

Traffic Regulations (Implementation)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which private organisations have been authorised to implement traffic regulations; and in what circumstances they have been authorised.

Mr. Key: Some local traffic authorities employ contractors to carry out various parking enforcement functions, and some police forces use them to remove vehicles under the direction of constables or traffic wardens. In addition, the Metropolitan police use contractors to fix and remove wheelclamps—again under the direction of constables or traffic wardens. There is no requirement for the traffic authorities and police forces concerned to notify the Department of their arrangements, so there is no central record of those which have employed contractors on these tasks, or of the contractors used.

Trolley Bus Service

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reinstate the proposal to establish a trolley bus service from Bradford city centre to Buttershaw in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The West Yorkshire passenger transport authority did not include this project in its bid for resources in 1994-95. It is for the PTA and the city council to decide whether to include it in their bids in future years.

Free Rail Passes

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision he has made for the continuation of the availability of the free rail passes to former GWR and subsequently BR employees, currently pensioners, under future franchise arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have given a clear assurance that free and reduced rate travel concessions for the retired staff of BR will be safeguarded. Franchised service operators will be obliged, through the terms of the contracts that they will have with the franchising director, to provide concessionary travel on their services to those permanently entitled.

Railway Pension Scheme

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to establish a joint railway industry pension scheme, providing benefits no less favourable than the existing BR pension scheme, which BR staff employed on 5 November 1993 *(a)* who continue to work in the railway industry and *(b)* who, following privatisation, leave the railway industry company in which they were first employed, will have a statutory right to join.

Mr. Freeman: It has long been Government policy to establish such a scheme, which will provide benefits no less favourable than the existing BR pension scheme to BR staff participating, or eligible to participate, in that scheme at 5 November 1993. Those staff will have an "indefeasible right" to remain in the joint industry scheme so long as they remain in continuous employment in the railway industry.

A66

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give estimates of the number of vehicles travelling east to west along the A66 from Stockton to Darlington on *(a)* weekdays and *(b)* Saturdays and Sundays.

Mr. Key: The average westbound traffic flows on the A66 in the vicinity of Elton and Longnewton are as follows:

	Daily	*Peak hour*
Weekday	12,900	1,380
Saturday	9,700	760
Sunday	6,600	600

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct his regional office not to divert traffic from the A66 through Elton during the week beginning 5 March.

Mr. Key: I regret the inconvenience to my hon. Friend's constituents. Diversion through Elton is, on balance, the optimum solution and will go ahead as planned.

Learner Drivers

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish an official syllabus for learner large goods vehicle drivers.

Mr. Key: The Driving Standards Agency has today published "Your Large Goods Vehicle Driving Test". As well as giving clear guidance about preparing for and taking an LGV driving test, the book contains the officially recommended learner LGV syllabus which was developed by the DSA following extensive consultation with the road transport and haulage industries. The book also offers advice on issues that will be equally relevant to the more experienced LGV driver, such as driver attitudes and knowledge, hazard perception and motorway driving. I am placing copies in the Library.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for starting new construction on trunk roads in 1994-95.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to announce that, subject to the completion of the remaining statutory procedures and availability of funds, we will begin work on 22 major national road starts in 1994-95. These starts represent new investment in total over the whole construction period of over £1 billion. The Highways Agency, which will assume responsibility for managing, maintaining and improving the trunk road network at the beginning of the new financial year, will oversee the construction of these starts.

I am also publishing today a reserve list of seven starts that could also begin in 1994-95. In the event of unavoidable delays in the planned starts, these will be brought forward.

The planned and reserve starts are as follows:

Planned starts
A564 Doveridge Bypass[1]
A564 Derby Southern Bypass and Spur
M1 Junction 21-21A Widening Phase 1
M40 Junction—1A-13 Widening
A13 Wennington—Mar Dyke Improvement
A428 Bedford Southern Bypass
A1(M) Alconbury—Peterborough Upgrading Contract 1[1]
A12 Hackney—M11 Contract 2
A12 Hackney—M11 Contract 3
A406 Silver Street—Fore Street Improvement
A568 Widnes Eastern Bypass (South)
M66 Denton—Middleton Contract 2
M65 Blackburn Southern Bypass Contract 2
M6 Junction 20-21A (bridge renewal)
A19 Norton—Parkway Improvement
A34 Newbury Bypass
A34 Chieveley/M4 Junction 13 Improvement
M25 Junction 8-10 Widening[1]
A30 Honiton—Exeter Improvement
M5 Junction 18-19 Widening
A50 Blythe Bridge—Queensway Phase 2
M621/M1 Link

Reserve list
A11 Roudham—Attleborough Improvement
M25 Junction 16-19 Widening[1]
A406/A1/A598 Regents Park Road Junction Improvement[1]
A13 West of Heathway—Thames Avenue Improvement
A69 Haltwhistle Bypass
A27 Polegate Bypass
A35 Tolpuddle—Puddletown Bypass

[1] Design and build schemes.

All the 1994-95 starts will bring substantial economic and safety benefits to users of the national road network and local residents. They are particularly important in helping to reduce the cost of congestion to industry. All the schemes have been subject to full environmental assessment and have been designed in accordance with the latest techniques to minimise the impact on the environment. The planned starts include six bypasses particularly designed to remove traffic from town and village centres.

Three of the planned starts and two of the reserve starts are being progressed under design and build contracts, where the contractor is responsible for both scheme design and construction. These contracts offer increased certainty over timing and cost and greater efficiency of design.

The 22 new starts are in addition to the current construction programme. There are over 50 contracts currently under way. In 1994-95 we estimate total expenditure on new construction will be some £1·3 billion.

Arundel Bypass

Sir Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the proposed date is for commencement of work on the construction of the A27 Arundel bypass.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* Start of construction of the A27 Arundel bypass will depend on the completion of statutory procedures, the outcome of the current review of the roads programme, and the availability of funds.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services Trusts

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to each of the health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has approved the following appointments to the boards of health and social services trusts:

Royal Group of Hospitals HSS Trust
Chairman
Dr. William George Quigley CB

Non-executive directors
Dr. George Alexander Baird
John Carson Esq.
Alan Johnston Gibson Esq.
Paul McWilliams
Sister Mary Turley

Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust
Chairman
G. Henry Moore Esq.

Non-executive directors
Danny Carty Esq.
Harold Ennis Esq.
Mrs. Catherine Francis (Pip) Jaffa
Wilfred Mulryne Esq.
Professor Robert G. Shanks

Down Lisburn HSS Trust
Chairman
Mrs. Gillian Shaw

Non-executive directors
Albert S. Baird Esq.
Mrs. Anne Marie Colgan
Mark Ennis Esq.
Mrs. Denise Fitzsimons
Alfred Linehan Esq.

EASTERN AMBULANCE SERVICE HSS TRUST
Chairman
G. Ivor Oswald Esq. OBE

Non-executive directors
Brian Carlin Esq.
Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Fulton
Ernest George Taylor Esq.

GREEN PARK HSS TRUST
Chairman
Norman Shaw Esq.

Non-executive directors
Sir Kenneth Percy Bloomfield
Lord Alan Henry Brookeborough
Ian Doherty Esq.
Mrs. Christine Lynch
Rollo McClure Esq.

NORTH DOWNS AND ARDS HSS TRUST
Chairman
Jim Shields Esq.

Non-executive directors
Mrs. Ann R. Bagnall
Eric D. Carson Esq.
Charles Coleman Esq.
Mrs. Eileen Siobhan Grant
Stanley McDowell Esq.

NORTH AND WEST BELFAST HSS TRUST
Chairman
Gordon Burnison OBE Esq.

Non-executive directors
Thomas Connolly Esq.
Mrs. Judith M. Eve
Mrs. Anne M. Maguire
Ronald E. Moore Esq.
David Russell Esq.

SOUTH AND EAST BELFAST HSS TRUST
Chairman
Mrs. Brenda McLaughlin

Non-executive directors
Peter Fleming Esq.
Gerald F. Gilpin Esq.
Robin Harris Esq.
Professor Simon Lee
Mrs. Georgina Poulter-Brown

ULSTER NORTH DOWN AND ARDS HOSPITALS TRUST
Chairman
Sir Dennis Faulkner

Non-executive directors
Mrs. Joan Cynthia Baxter
Mrs. Lucinda Blakiston-Houston
David de Bohun Chamberlain Esq.
George Harkness Esq.
Barry McBride Esq.

CRAIGAVON AREA HOSPITALS HSS TRUST
Chairman
Noel Stewart Esq.

Non-executive directors
Professor Michael Connolly
Mrs. Anne Eimear Cullen
David Hall Esq.
Archie Mckelvey Esq.
Mrs. Cecilia M. Woods

CRAIGAVON AND BANBRIDGE HSS TRUST
Chairman
David Somerville Cook Esq.

Non-executive directors
Not yet appointed

NEWRY AND MOURNE HSS TRUST
Chairman
John Francis McEvoy Esq.

Non-executive directors
Walter Cosgrove Esq.
Mrs. Delia Cunningham
George Graham Esq.
Fergal McCormack Esq.

Anglo-Irish Conference

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a detailed report of the discussions which took place in the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference on the proposed United Kingdom parliamentary constituencies; what undertakings were given to the Irish Republic's delegation in regard to those proposals; and what representations made by the Irish Republic's delegation have been brought to the attention of Madam Speaker, as chair of the Boundary Commission.

Mr. Ancram: It is not the custom to publish reports of discussions which take place within the intergovernmental conference, but the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the terms of the communiqué issued after that meeting. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland is an independent body responsible to Parliament and not to the Government, a fact which was made clear at the IGC. It follows that Her Majesty's Government has no role in representing anyone else's views on the Boundary Commission to its Chairman.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Poisons Board.

Mr. Ancram: The current membership of the Poisons Board is as follows:

Mr. T. Ferris, QC *(Chairman)*
Professor D. T. Burns
Dr. D. J. L. Carson
Mr. R. A. Hall, OBE
Dr. B. D. Harper
Mr. W. T. Hunter
Dr. G. D. Johnston
Mr. R. G. P. McMullan
Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. M. Singleton
Dr. W. M. Mawhinney

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Laboratory Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Laboratory Services Advisory Committee are as follows:

Professor J. M. Bridges *(Chairman)*
Dr. G. P. R. Archbold
Dr. P. C. Boreland
Mr. R. G. Coulter
Mr. E. H. Crozier
Dr. B. M. Hannigan
Mr. W. D. Harvey
Mr. B. P. Ingram
Mr. G. W. M. Leahy
Dr. M. Madden
Miss G. Roberts
Professor P. G. Toner

Dr. T. S. Wilson
Mrs. M. Keenan
Mr. J. J. O'Boyle
Miss M. A. Pidgeon
Mrs. K. Savage
Mrs. E. Roche
Miss P. Ginnety
Mrs. M. J. Smyth

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The present membership of the committee is:

Mr. D. Gordon, CBE
Professor J. Bridges
Professor R. G. Shanks
Professor M. Rosen, CBE
Professor B. M. Hibbard
Dr. F. Caldicott
Mr. D. D. Smyth
The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice T. O'Donnell (retired)
The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Carswell

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The current membership of the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Dr. J. A. F. Beirne *(Chairman)*
Mrs. Nora Archibald
Mr. Eric A. N. Culbert
Dr. Yvonne Duff
Mrs. Joan Ewing
Mr. Mervyn Gallagher
Mrs. Deidre Gilchrist
Mr. George Graham
Mr. William Keown
Dr. Joseph H. K. Lim
Dr. Carolyn M. Marriott
Dr. Graham McDonald
Dr. Joseph MacMahon
Dr. Agnes M. McKnight
Mrs. M. Kay Rogers
Mrs. Isobel Thompson

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Clinical Imaging Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Clinical Imaging Services Advisory Committee are as follows:

Chairman:
Dr. J. G. Crothers

Members:
Dr. T. K. Bell
Dr. K. Cranley
Dr. C. W. Majury
Mr. R. McQuade
Miss C. O'Neill
Miss D. Patton
Mrs. A. E. Porter
Mr. S. H. Porter
Miss J. Robinson
Dr. J. Walker

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Clinical Engineering and Medical Physics Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Clinical Engineering and Medical Physics Services Advisory Committee are as follows:

Chairman
Dr. J. E. Galway

Members
Mr. M. W. Algie
Mr. D. A. Adams
Dr. T. K. Bell
Dr. M. Cody
Mr. W. J. Doran
Mr. J. M. Easton
Mr. T. L. Frew
Dr. P. D. Hanley
Dr. G. Kernohan
Mr. J. D. Malcolm
Mrs. S. Mullin
Mr. D. O'Donnell

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee are as follows:

Chairman
Mr. D. Corbett

Members
Mr. D. Dougherty
Mr. C. Watt
Miss A. Diamond
Mr. J. P. Beagon
Dr. J. D. G. O'Hare
Ms A. Bowen
Mrs. M. Singleton
Mr. V. E. Reaney
Mr. T. G. Hannawin
Miss A. McCollom
Dr. D. J. Morrison

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Personal Social Services Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Personal Social Services Advisory Committee are as follows:

Chairman:
Mrs. E. McKay

Members:
Mr. A. S. Buchanan
Mr. C. J. Common
Miss M. S. Irwin
Mr. K. P. Keenan
Miss P. A. Lockie
Ms M. C. McAuley
Mrs. V. McGuffin
Mr. R. I. McKeown
Mrs. G. McKibbin
Mr. R. Moore
Dr. J. R. Pinkerton
Ms M. B. E. Smyth
Mr. P. Sweeney
one vacancy.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Medical Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Central Medical Advisory Committee are as follows:

Dr. S. M. Lyons *(Chairman)*
Dr. A. M. Telford
Professor R. W. Stout
Dr. J. Wilde
Mr. D. S. Gordon
Dr. C. A. Hamilton
Dr. H. A. Jefferson

Dr. E. P. Beckett
Dr. D. A. J. Keegan
Dr. J. M. W. Park
Dr. P. J. Kennedy
Dr. M. J. Toal
one vacancy.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Advisory Committee of the Therapeutic Professions Allied to Medicine.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Advisory Committee of the Therapeutic Professions Allied to Medicine are as follows:

Mrs. C. Rosen *(Chairman)*
Miss M. J. Boyd
Mrs. I. Boyd
Mrs. J. Holmes
Mrs. C. McGartland
Miss R. Nesbitt
Mrs. D. E. Braden
Mrs. C. M. E. Cranston
Mrs. R. M. Maxwell
Mrs. G. E. McDowell
Miss A. McQueen
(one vacancy)

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland is as follows:

Non-executive appointments
Miss E. McNair *(Chairman)*
Mrs. R. Malone
Mrs. M. McGinley
Mrs. A. Colgan
Miss P. Stanley
Professor M. Connolly
Mr. G. R. Camlin

Executive appointments
Dr. O. D'A. Slevin
Mr. E. N. Thom
Miss S. G. Campbell

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members currently appointed to the Charities Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ancram: The current members of the Charities Advisory Committee are:

Sir Eric McDowell, CBE
Mr. J. R. Comerton
Mr. F. J. Ledwidge
Mr. H. T. Morrison
Mr. J. M. Holland

Salmon

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been expended by his Department in each year since the Department of Agriculture first leased and began investigations into the salmon in the River Bush; and how many reports have been produced as a result of that work; how many and which of these reports have been published for sale to the general public; and if he will now publish a comprehensive report of all the findings in a form easily understood by the general reader.

Mr. Ancram: The total expenditure by the Department in each year is not available. However, the running costs relating to the project are published in the annual reports on the sea and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland, copies of which are in the Library. Forty-eight scientific reports arising from the River Bush project have been published. A comprehensive report will not be published until the project has been completed. However, annual reports on the project, written in layman's terms, are published in the annual report on research and technical work of the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland. Copies of the scientific publications and the annual reports are available, on application, from the Department.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the area of spawning grounds available to grilse and salmon in the River Bush catchment area, the number of such fish that this area can accommodate, the number of fish counted in such areas in each of the last five years for which figures are available, the number of parr produced in each of the last five years and the number of smolts migrating in those years; and what is his estimate of the optimum numbers of each cohort of such mature and juvenile fish.

Mr. Ancram: The total usable salmonid nursery habitat, comprising spawning and nursery habitat as both are necessary to produce juveniles, is 41·06 hectares. The internationally recognised methodology for measuring utilisation of habitat is ova deposition, rather than number of adult fish, as number of ova per fish can vary considerably. From the research to date, it has been estimated that the overall optimum ova deposition for the River Bush is 2·46 million ova. Ova deposition actually achieved over the past five years is set out in the table. The target deposition has been exceeded in three out of the last five years.

Year of run	*Ova deposition (millions)*
1988	4·60
1989	1·06
1990	2·44
1991	2·97
1992	2·72
[1]1993	[1]

[1] Not yet collated.

The number of juvenile fish—fry and parr—on the River Bush is ascertained by electrofishing surveys at 137 sites covering all the significant spawning and nursery areas. The table sets out the results of the survey.

Year	*Average number salmon 0+ per 5 min. fishing*
1988	8·26
1989	16·20
1990	5·65
1991	12·48
1992	13·04
5 year average	11·25

It should be noted that the surveys are not fully quantitative. They should provide indices of abundance to compare between years and should not be interpreted as indicative of the number of salmon comprising the standing stock at the time of the survey.

The wild salmon smelt migration is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of smolts*
1988	22,994
1989	17,812
1990	17,354
1991	18,471
1992	10,006

It should be noted that the target ova deposition set by the Department to achieve optimum recruitment may, due to biological and environmental conditions occurring after ova deposition, result in a wide range of recruitment—that is, an egg-based target aims to ensure full utilisation of habitat, but environmental and predation factors influence the eventual number of fish produced. As a result targets cannot be set for these categories of fish and the statistics given on juvenile and smolt numbers are of limited application to the estimation optimum numbers requested as there are no juvenile or smolt targets set.

Farm Incomes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the cash income and *(b)* the real income of Northern Ireland farmers, divided into the main farm sectors, for the longest available series of years since 1964, with the numbers of farm businesses in each of those years, the number of (i) farmers, (ii) full-time farm workers, and (iii) farm family workers, giving the total number of persons employed in farming and the average income of each such person with the latest available year taken as the base year.

Mr. Ancram: Aggregate income estimates by main farm sectors are not available. Table 1 provides details of total income from farming in Northern Ireland agriculture as a whole between 1970 and 1993. These data are presented in both current terms and in real terms in index number form.

This table also presents data on the number of farm businesses between 1970 and 1993 and total income from farming divided by the number of businesses to give a measure of the average income per farm—the amount available to reward owners, spouses and family workers for their manual and managerial labour and to provide a return on their own capital invested. Again, the information is presented in current terms and in real terms in index number form.

Also given are estimates of the annual average wage per full-time male hired worker—20 years and over—over the same timespan, in current and real terms.

In table 2, data are presented on the numbers of farmers, partners and directors, full-time hired male workers, regularly employed family workers and the total agricultural labour force—that is, farmers, partners and directors, their spouses, family workers and hired workers—in the years between 1964 and 1993.

Caution should be exercised interpreting these data owing to the breaks in the series indicated in the footnotes to the tables.

Table 1

Total Income from Farming, Income per Farm Business and Annual Wage per Full-time Male Worker (20 years and over) in Current Terms and in Real Terms in Index Number Form, 1970—1993

	Total income from farming (£ million)	*Number of farm businesses*[3]	*Income per farm business (£)*	*Annual wage per full-time hired male (20+) (£)*	*Total income from farming: real terms index 1993=100*	*Income per farm business: real terms index 1993=100*	*Annual wage per full-time hired male 20+: real terms index 1993=100*
1970	45·52	37,079	1,228	728	126·37	98·07	66·40
1971	46·85	36,190	1,294	829	119·23	94·80	69·34
1972	50·61	35,230	1,436	889	120·43	98·35	69·48
1973	61·62	35,207	1,750	1,068	133·63	109·22	76·09
1974	42·41	34,700	1,222	1,449	79·70	65·09	89·48
1975	46·00	33,641	1,368	1,914	69·38	59·35	94·01
1976	56·34	32,529	2,033	2,147	85·92	75·77	91·32
1977	89·32	32,352	2,761	2,381	99·80	88·77	87·30
1978	87·87	31,715	2,771	2,581	90·72	82·31	87·52
1979	58·51	31,075	1,883	2,988	53·20	49·27	89·26
1980	51·57	30,284	1,703	3,596	39·79	37·81	94·14
1981[1]	112·54	33,740	3,335	3,869	77·53	66·12	87·57
1982	130·52	33,665	3,877	4,165	82·90	70·86	86·91
1983[2]	122·75	33,373	3,678	4,597	74·48	64·22	91·64
1984	160·14	32,814	4,880	4,815	92·57	81·18	91·46
1985	118·92	32,426	3,660	5,186	64·76	57·47	92·77
1986	100·66	31,951	3,150	5,560	53·01	47·72	96·18
1987	154·22	31,203	4,943	5,734	78·07	71·99	95·35
1988	187·11	30,843	6,066	6,141	90·23	84·18	97·28
1989	215·13	30,289	7,103	6,585	96·27	91·46	96·81
1990	162·40	29,850	5,441	5,992	66·35	63·96	93·85
1991	197·87	29,363	6,739	7,779	76·41	74·88	98·69
1992	229·67	29,096	7,893	7,978	85·45	84·51	97·51
1993[4]	272·86	28,775	9,483	8,306	100·00	100·00	100·00

[1] Owing to changes in definition, the numbers of farm businesses in the years before 1981 cannot be compared directly with those from 1981 onwards.

[2] Owing to changes in methodology, the estimates of total income from farming in the years before 1983 cannot be compared directly with those from 1983 onwards.

[3] The numbers of farm businesses in each of the years 1981 to 1992 refer to all holdings in the main census register which produce agricultural products. The earlier series excludes holdings with insufficient crops or livestock to provide at least 50 standard man-days of agricultural work.

[4] Provisional.

Table 2

Northern Ireland agricultural labour force, 1964-1993

Year	*Farmers and partners*	*Full-time hired workers*	*All regularly[1] employed[2] family workers*	*Total agricultural labour force[3]*
1964	42,600	7,300	24,700	100,600
1965	41,900	6,000	23,400	96,200
1966	38,600	6,200	21,500	89,200
1967	38,500	5,700	22,200	86,700
1968	37,600	5,400	21,300	83,200
1969	36,100	5,000	20,800	80,000
1970	36,100	4,700	19,800	78,100
1971	38,700	4,600	17,100	75,700
1972	37,900	4,300	16,200	72,700
1973	37,500	4,300	15,400	71,100
1974	37,300	3,800	14,200	68,900
1975	37,900	3,300	12,400	67,100
1976	37,200	3,200	12,000	67,800
1977	37,200	3,000	11,000	65,800
1978	39,200	2,900	10,000	65,700
1979	38,700	3,100	9,600	64,700
1980	38,500	2,800	9,400	63,500
1981	36,900	2,700	8,800	60,700
1982	36,800	2,400	8,500	60,300
1983	36,800	2,500	8,300	60,800
1984	36,600	2,300	8,200	60,500
1985	36,100	2,200	8,100	60,600
1986	35,900	2,100	7,800	60,000
1987	35,400	2,100	7,500	59,400
1988	35,700	2,100	7,200	59,500
1989	35,000	2,000	7,400	59,100
1990	34,600	2,100	7,200	58,400
1991	34,300	2,000	6,900	57,200
1992	34,500	1,900	6,700	56,500
1993	32,400	1,900	6,000	56,500

[1] Numbers of regularly employed family workers include those working full-time and part-time but exclude farmers' wives. The 1993 figure excludes the husbands of female farmers (previously included as family workers).

[2] Prior to 1975, figures for seasonal and casual workers were not collected separately and would have been included with part-time family and part-time hired workers.

[3] The total agricultural labour force includes farmers and partners, regularly employed family workers (both full-time and part-time), regularly employed hired workers (both full-time and part-time), casual and seasonal workers and farmers' spouses.

Farmers' Early Retirement Scheme

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans the Government have to introduce the early retirement scheme for farmers approved by the European Commission; and what proportion of the scheme is co-financed by the EAGGF/Guarantee Fund.

Mr. Ancram: There are no plans to introduce an early retirement scheme for farmers in Northern Ireland under the provision approved by the European Commission. The regulation covering a discretionary early retirement scheme provides for EC co-financing of 50 per cent. of cost rising to 75 per cent. in objective 1 areas.

Milk Marketing Board

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when a decision on the Milk Marketing Board's proposals to form itself into a farmers voluntary co-operative will be considered.

Mr. Ancram: Ministers are currently examining the proposals in the reorganisation scheme submitted by the Milk Marketing Board for Northern Ireland and the representations received in response to the consultation exercise which ended on 18 February 1994. No decisions will be made until this exercise has been completed.

Wind Farms

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* wind farms and *(b)* propellors (i) have been constructed, (ii) have been approved and (iii) are pending.

Mr. Tim Smith: There are two wind farms containing a total of four turbines currently in operation in Northern Ireland. One further wind farm has been approved, containing 26 turbines. Five applications for wind farms containing a total of 58 turbines are currently under consideration.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy as regards the construction of wind farms; and what circulars he has issued to local planning authorities.

Mr. Tim Smith: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland is the planning authority in Northern Ireland. Its policy for the construction of wind farms is set out on pages 115 and 116 of the policy document "A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland", which was published in September 1993. A copy is available in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Official Gifts

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *32*, if he will give his reason for declining to provide the information on official gifts requested.

The Prime Minister: I have received a large number of such gifts, most of minor value. The cost of providing a list would be disproportionate. All the gifts have been handled in accordance with the provisions set out in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *162*, if he will list those official gifts purchased by Baroness Thatcher on leaving the office of Prime Minister; and how their value is established.

The Prime Minister: No. I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 22 February, *Official Report*, column *162*.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy in respect of official gifts received by his office.

The Prime Minister: The arrangements set out in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" are followed.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the items of jewellery given to the state which are at present housed at No. 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* There are a number of such items.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993" including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *367-68*. The public bodies referred to in that answer, which are not listed in "Public Bodies 1993", are the Kennedy Memorial Trust together with the Chequers Trust, the Chevening Trust and the Dorneywood Trust.

I make no appointments to non-executive agencies and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of public appointments was taken by women in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: On 1 September 1993, 28 per cent. of appointments to public bodies were held by women, compared with 26 per cent. in 1992 and 23 per cent. in 1991.

All Departments have drawn up objectives and goals to achieve further progress in this area over the years to 1996 and beyond. A summary of the departmental plans was published on 16 November 1992, and a copy is available in the Library of the House.

Council of Europe

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, columns *32-33*, if he will list those conventions of the Council of Europe to which the Government have refused to accede from 1964.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *354-55*.

Lady Thatcher (Foreign Visits)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all visits made by Lady Thatcher, when Prime Minister, to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, with a list in each case of all the business people who accompanied her on those visits.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and noble Friend, when Prime Minister, made the following visits to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. My right hon. and noble Friend was not accompanied by business people on any of these visits.

Indonesia
9-11 April 1985

Malaysia
5-8 April 1985
6 August 1988
18-24 October 1989

Thailand
6-9 August 1988

Malaysia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions were held with Malaysians concerning the construction of military bases in Malaysia by British companies during his visit in September 1993.

The Prime Minister: Commercial discussions were held by British companies on a number of issues during the course of the visit.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister what offers of ECGD credits were made during his visit to Malaysia in September 1933; and for which purposes.

The Prime Minister: No offers of ECGD credits were made during my visit to Malaysia in September 1993.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all those who accompanied him on his visit to Malaysia in September 1993.

The Prime Minister: I was accompanied by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade and a party of senior business men representing BICC, Biwater, British Aerospace, British Gas, Cable and Wireless, GEC, John Laing, Johnson Matthey, the National Grid, North West Water, PowerGen, Rolls-Royce and Trinity Holdings, together with my wife, officials, support staff and members of the press.

Thailand

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all visits of Government Ministers and officials to Thailand since 1979 with dates and their purpose of each visit.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is not held centrally and could be made available only at disproportionate cost.

Jewellery

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of all items of jewellery available for wearing by the Prime Minister and his family; and to whom such jewellery belongs.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the items of jewellery in the ownership of the state but kept at No. 10 Downing street.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the inventory of Downing street jewellery, its source, a statement of ownership and who has the rights to wear such jewellery.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* Nearly all the jewellery available for wearing by my family belongs to my wife personally. I have no intention of providing the hon. Member with the details he seeks. There are, in addition, a number of items given to previous Prime Ministers and kept at No. 10 on the official inventory.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *33*, on what date in February 1991 he was first informed that the Foreign Secretary intended to issue a direction to the accounting officer in respect of the Pergau project.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs drew my attention to the concerns of the Overseas Development Administration accounting officer when he minuted me on 16 February 1991 recommending aid and trade provision support for this project on the basis of commitments previously given. The need for a direction to the accounting officer was reported in the subsequent ministerial correspondence.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Bacterial Infections

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what provision he is proposing to increase the level of research into staphylococcus aureus and enterococcus faecium and the development of antibiotics to counteract them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: As part of its clinical research initiative in Nottingham, the Medical Research Council is building up support for several groups studying bacterial infections. One of them has a particular interest in staphylococcal infections. The council is also reviewing the literature relating to septic shock, especially in relation to possible studies of monoclonal antibody therapy. In addition, the Public Health Laboratory Service—a non-departmental public body—is undertaking surveillance programmes to monitor the incidence of multiple antibiotic resistance to staphylococcus aureus and to enterococcus faecium. The development of new antibiotics is principally a matter for the pharmaceutical industry.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Car Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many criminal offences occurred in premises of major car parking providers in each of the last five years;

(2) how many violent attacks on women occurred in car parks in each of the last five years.

Mr Maclean: The information requested is not held centrally. However, the British Crime Survey indicates that in 1991 some 7 per cent. of the 15 million offences counted in the survey took place in publicly and privately owned car parks of any sort. A breakdown of the types of offences involved is in table. The survey indicates that in 1991, 1 per cent. of assaults—woundings, common assaults and sexual offences—against women occurred in car parks, representing two incidents mentioned by the 5,600 women interviewed in the survey.

Offences in car parks in 1991: British Crime Survey

	Percentage of different offences of all offences in car parks[1]
Assaults	4
Robbery/theft from person	1
Bicycle theft	1
Vehicle thefts[2]	77
Vehicle vandalism	16
All offences in car parks[3]	100

[1] Public and private car parks in a wide variety of locations, including car parks at the workplace.

[2] Thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles, and attempts.

[3] Excludes threats.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of awards made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the last three available years; and what is the estimated cost in 1994-95 after the introduction of the tariff scales.

Mr. Maclean: Compensation paid by the board in the last three years, and estimated compensation in the current financial year and in 1994-95 is as follows, in cash terms:

Financial year	*Compensation paid (£ million)*
1990-91	109·33
1991-92	143·66
1992-93	152·49
1993-94	164·00
1994-95	188·00

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The readily available information about public appointments for which my Department is responsible is given in "Public Bodies". A copy of the 1993 edition is in the Library.

Film Classifications

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to create a not suitable for home viewing classification for films in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have no such plans. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) on 16 December 1993, column *780*.

Young Offenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-old girls were found guilty in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) Crown courts in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and for which offences;

(2) how many 15-year-old girls were cautioned or found guilty in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and for which offences;

(3) how many 15-year-old boys were found guilty in (i) magistrates courts and (ii) Crown courts in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and for which offences;

(4) how many 15-year-old boys were cautioned or found guilty in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and for which offences.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1992 is given in the tables. Data for 1993 will not be available until autumn 1994.

Table A: *number of 15-year-old females cautioned and/or found guilty of all offences at all courts by type of offence and type of court*
England and Wales 1992

Offence	*Cautioned*	*Found guilty*		*Total cautioned or found guilty*
		Magistrates' courts	*Crown Court*	
Indictable offences				
Violence against the person	786	173	3	962
Sexual offences	7	2	—	9
Burglary	188	69	5	262
Robbery	22	26	9	57
Theft and handling stolen goods	4,713	332	—	5,045
Fraud and forgery	98	6	—	104
Criminal damage	41	20	3	64
Drug offences	94	4	—	98
Other (excluding motoring offences)	24	26	—	50
Motoring offences	[1]	—	—	—
Total	5,973	658	20	6,651
Summary offences				
Offences (excluding motoring offences)	837	155	—	992
Motoring offences	[1]	9	—	9
All offences	6,810	822	20	7,652

[1] Not applicable.

Table B: *number of 15-year-old males cautioned and/or found guilty of all offences at all courts by type of offence and type of court*
England and Wales 1992

Offence	*Cautioned*	*Found guilty*		*Total cautioned or found guilty*
		Magistrates' courts	*Crown Court*	
Indictable offences				
Violence against the person	1,783	692	26	2,501
Sexual offences	284	44	16	344
Burglary	2,213	1,415	64	3,692
Robbery	79	161	48	288
Theft and handling stolen goods	8,784	1,843	14	10,641
Fraud and forgery	196	40	—	236
Criminal damage	402	211	19	632
Drug offences	676	70	4	750
Other (excluding motoring offences)	308	215	19	542
Motoring offences	[1]	74	1	75
Total	14,725	4,765	211	19,701
Summary offences				
Offences (excluding motoring offences)	4,791	1,718	6	6,515
Motoring offences	[1]	380	2	382
All offences	19,516	6,863	219	26,598

[1] Not applicable.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many incidents of self-harm involving 15-year-old girls on remand in penal custody were recorded in each month of 1993; and in which institutions these incidents occurred;

(2) how many incidents of self-harm involving 15-year-old boys on remand in penal custody were recorded in each month of 1993; and in which institutions these incidents occurred.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 28 February 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent questions about self-harm by 15 year olds in prison custody.

The information you have requested is not routinely collected centrally, and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-old girls were remanded in custody pending trial or sentence in 1993 and received custodial sentences at the conclusion of their trial;

(2) how many 15-year-old boys were remanded in custody pending trial or sentence in 1993 and received custodial sentences at the conclusion of their trial.

Mr. Maclean: The latest information is for 1992 and is provisional. During that year 377 males aged 15 were received as untried or convicted unsentenced by a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales, of whom 141 were recorded as being subsequently received under a custodial sentence. No female aged 15 was received as a remand prisoner in 1992.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-old girls were sentenced to immediate custody in each month of 1993; and for which offences;

(2) how many 15-year-old boys were sentenced to immediate custody in each month of 1993; and for which offences.

Mr. Maclean: The available information for receptions of sentenced prisoners into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in 1993 is given in the tables.

Provisional Receptions of 15-year-old males into prison service establishments, England and Wales each Month by Offence in 1993[2]

Month	*Violence against the person*	*Sex offences*	*Burglary*	*Robbery*	*Theft and handling*	*Other offences*	*Offence not recorded*	*Total offences*
January	3	1	11	2	6	5	1	29
February	4	2	10	4	14	2	1	37
March	4	3	14	7	14	6	2	50
April	1	—	13	6	10	9	—	39
May	6	1	22	6	7	7	—	49
June	3	—	15	4	19	3	2	46
July	1	2	18	7	20	6	1	55
August	8	—	15	—	21	5	2	51
September	1	—	22	6	13	7	2	51
October	5	—	18	7	13	6	1	50
November	7	—	26	9	9	4	3	58
December	3	—	18	3	8	3	3	38
Total	46	9	202	61	154	63	18	553

[1] Aged 15 years as at date of sentence.

[2] Excludes those committed in default of payment of a fine.

[3] Includes 2 inmates received for drugs offences.

Provisional receptions of 15-year-old females[1] *into prison service establishments, England and Wales each month by offence 1993*[2]

Month	*Violence against the person*	*Robbery*	*Theft and handling*	*Other offences*	*Total offences*
January	—	—	1	—	1
February	—	—	1	—	1
March	1	—	—	—	1
April	—	—	1	—	1
May	1	—	—	—	1
June	1	—	—	—	1
July	3	—	1	—	4
August	—	1	—	—	1
September	—	1	1	1	3
October	3	2	—	—	5
November	1	2	—	1	4
December	—	—	—	2	2
Total	10	6	5	4	25

[1] Aged 15 as at date of sentence.

[2] Excludes those committed in default of payment of a fine.

Deportees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which countries deportees escorted in 1993 by the police forces of *(a)* Cambridgeshire, *(b)* Devon and Cornwall, *(c)* Durham, *(d)* Greater Manchester, *(e)* Leicestershire, *(f)* Norfolk, *(g)* West Mercia, *(h)* South Wales, *(i)* the Metropolitan police and *(j)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary were being deported.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In-flight escorts were provided, as follows:

Police force and country to which person removed

Cambridgeshire
  Slovakia
Devon and Cornwall
  Bermuda
Durham
  Jamaica
Greater Manchester
  Jamaica
Leicestershire
  Hong Kong

Norfolk
  Algeria
West Mercia
  Israel
South Wales
  Hong Kong
Metropolitan Police
  Algeria, Angola, Canada, Croatia, Egypt, Ghana, Jamaica, Nigeria, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Sir Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda and the United States of America
Royal Ulster Constabulary
  New Zealand

Medomsley Prison

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what discussions she has had about recommissioning Medomsley prison; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has for the former prison in Medomsley, Consett.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Director General of the Prison Service that there are currently no plans to recommission Medomsley. The site is surplus to prison service requirements. An appraisal has been conducted of the Medomsley site to assess whether it might prove a suitable location for a new secure training centre for persistent juvenile offenders. No final decisions have yet been reached on sites for secure training centres.

Public Alert Systems

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the need for a national public alert system, and of the cost of establishing one; and what provisions currently exist for a public alert system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The then Home Secretary, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), announced on 12 November 1992 that the national siren warning system was to be closed and that future warning arrangements would be based around television and radio broadcasts. Such arrangements already exist and studies are being carried out to see what enhancements may be required and at what cost.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has made on the future of emergency planning and public alert systems as part of the local government review.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In response to a request from the Local Government Commission for England, my officials have recently written to suggest that while firm arrangements must depend on local government structures finally adopted, it will be important that those who provide local services are able to be linked with a coherent strategic framework that can ensure an effective response to major emergencies.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which agencies are currently responsible for emergency planning and the provision of public alert systems.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for emergency planning lies across many parts of central and local government with a wide range of agencies and with the private sector. This is why the Home Office promotes the concept of integrated emergency management.

My Department has a specific responsibility for the provision of national air attack warning on which studies are in hand to establish whether enhanced arrangements are necessary.

Airline Securities Consultants Ltd.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report of his Department's investigation of the complaints alleging excessive force by Airline Securities Consultants Ltd. when it is complete.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to her question on 1 February, columns *649-50.*

DEFENCE

Fissile Material

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United Kingdom is still producing fissile material for weapons purposes.

Mr. Aitken: There has been no change in Her Majesty's Government policy on the production of fissile material. Production of this material for weapons purposes is kept at the minimum level required to meet defence needs.

Trident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why his Department has decided to raise the maximum warhead ceiling for the United Kingdom's ballistic missile-carrying submarines when Trident replaces Polaris.

Mr. Aitken: The introduction of Trident represents no change in the Government's policy of maintaining only the minimum nuclear deterrent required for our security needs. We have long made it clear that we do not intend to use the full capacity of the Trident system and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 16 November that each submarine will deploy with no more than 96 warheads, and may carry significantly fewer.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has decided how many warheads will be deployed on the first Trident submarine when it enters operational service.

Mr. Aitken: Planning for HMS Vanguard's first operational deployment is well advanced and assumes a particular number of warheads, within the maximum ceiling of 96 announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 16 November 1993.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *516*, if the maximum technical capability of Trident to deploy 192 warheads applies to Trident missiles fitted with the mark IV bus.

Mr. Aitken: Yes. All United Kingdom Trident missiles will be fitted with the mark IV bus.

Warhead Deployment

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's planned warhead deployment of the recent agreement with Russia to de-target Russian territory.

Mr. Aitken: The joint declaration signed in Moscow on 15 February on the detargeting of strategic nuclear missiles will not affect our planned warhead deployment.

Habitats

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what actions he will take or policy changes he will make to implement the requirements of European Union directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence gives a high priority to the conservation of the land in its ownership and is co-operating with the statutory bodies concerned with the implementation of European Union directive 92/43 EEC (Habitats and Species Directive). In particular, management plans are being created to integrate the protection of flora and fauna with the primary military use.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Twenty-four per cent. of new appointments made during 1993 to MOD non-departmental public bodies were women.

Offshore Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which blocks his Department recommended should be excluded from the 14th round of offshore oil licensing; and on what grounds.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence is consulted on all proposals to undertake oil exploration work to ensure that they and essential military activities are not incompatible. For operational reasons it would be inappropriate to identify the particular blocks where such military activity takes place. The licenses subsequently issued reflect the outcome of negotiations between this Department, the Department of Trade and Industry and the companies concerned.

Hunting Dogs

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who pays for the kennel costs and upkeep of the dogs belonging to the Britannia Beagles Association at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth; and what was the total cost to the Exchequer in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Hanley: The Britannia Beagle Association is fully responsible for the cost of water, food, electricity and staff of their kennels which are lodged at and predate BRNC Dartmouth. Maintenance costs are the responsibility of my Department but the kennels require little upkeep and no costs have been incurred during the last three financial years.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all his Department's establishments where hunting dogs are kennelled and list the total amounts spent by his Department, in the last five years, on the upkeep of the dogs at each establishment.

Mr. Hanley: Hunting dogs are kennelled at the following establishments: Sandhurst, Bovington, Catterick, Colchester, Larkhill, Shrivenham, Warminster and Dartmouth. The upkeep of the dogs is paid for out of private subscription and fund-raising, although these are cases where utilities, such as light and water—the costs for which could not be separately identified, and would in any case be minimal—will be borne by my Department.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list details of accidents involving low-flying RAF jets over Wales in 1991 in which the deaths of civilian pilots flying other aircraft were involved; and if he will make a statement about the settlements made to the bereaved civilian families.

Mr. Hanley: There was one such accident in 1991 which involved a RAF Jaguar and a civilian Cessna aircraft. No claim has been made against the Ministry of Defence by the next of kin of the civilian who died in the accident.

Mr. Stephen Kock

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions Mr. Stephen Kock has represented Her Majesty's Government in campaigning for defence exports to Oman, Jordan, Indonesia and Thailand.

Mr. Aitken: Mr. Stephen Kock has not, on any occasion, been asked to represent Her Majesty's Government on these matters.

Battle of Normandy

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will arrange for financial assistance to be given to the sons and daughters of British service men who died at the battle of Normandy to enable them to attend the 50th anniversary ceremony in France; and if he will give special consideration to cases where such sons and daughters are the last surviving next-of-kin and are now retirement pensioners.

Mr. Hanley: While the Government sponsor a war widows grant-in-aid scheme to help widows visit their husbands' graves once at public expense, I regret that it is not possible for my Department to extend financial assistance to all relatives of those British service men who died at the Battle of Normandy. Commercial arrangements are available and in many cases are being arranged by local veterans associations.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what financial assistance will be given to widows of those involved in the D-day landing to enable them to go to France in June to receive commemorative medals.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Gulf War

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Government department authorised the export of new uniforms, webbing, disruptive patterned material and other battledress and related equipment manufactured in the United Kingdom, to the Government of Iraq in the 10 years prior to Operation Desert Storm.

Mr. Needham: I have been asked to reply.

Prior to the introduction of sanctions on 9 August 1990 the goods listed would not have required an export licence unless specially treated for use against chemical or biological agents. No Government permission needed to be obtained for the export of untreated military clothing.

Following the imposition of sanctions any applications received for the supply of military clothing would be submitted to the UN Sanctions Committee (Iraq) for approval. No such licences have been issued.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Robins

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give specific details of the premises and their use in which robins were killed under licence in 1990 and 1992.

Mr. Soames: The details requested are as follows:

Year	*Type of premises*
1990	Supermarket, Hove, East Sussex
1992	Wholesale food shop, Leicester
	Food warehouse, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

Wrens

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what happened to the wrens for which a licence to kill was issued in 1992 but for which no deaths are recorded.

Mr. Soames: The licence was issued to allow the shooting of one wren trapped in a supermarket. Before the licence was used, one last attempt to catch the bird was successful and the bird was released.

Forestry Plantations

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will list all the plantations at present owned by the Forestry Commission in Somerset and those disposed of within the last 10 years giving, in each case, their acreage and the extent of public access, and which of them are included in the current disposals programme;

(2) if she will list all the plantations at present owned by the Forestry Commission in Devon and those disposed of within the last 10 years giving, in each case, their acreage and the extent of public access, and which of them are included in the current disposals programme.

Mr. Jack: Lists and maps of all Forestry Commission woodlands are in the Library of the House. I shall also send the hon. Member a list of the woodlands in Somerset and Devon which will indicate those which the commission is currently selling or planning to sell.

Lists giving details of the areas of forest land sold by the commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. A list of the forest land sold by the commission in 1993 is being prepared and will be placed in the Library shortly.

The commission does not maintain records of the extent of public access to individual woodlands, so this information is not included in the lists.

Offshore Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which blocks her Department recommended should be excluded from the 14th round of offshore oil licensing; and on what grounds.

Mr. Jack: I have nothing to add to the reply given on 16 February 1994 by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, at column *835*.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the dumping of nuclear waste at sea; and how her plans have changed as a result of the London convention consultative meeting of 8 to 12 November 1993.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *986*.

Wool

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding the operation of the British wool marketing scheme; what complaints she has received from British wool merchants regarding the purchase of British wool by foreign buyers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this issue. Included among these were complaints from two companies of British wool merchants regarding the ability of foreign buyers to purchase wool directly from United Kingdom producers. My right hon. Friend has also received representations from the Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. which emphasise that approximately 98 per cent. of all United Kingdom wool merchants strongly support the Government's decision to retain the British wool marketing scheme.

Farm Business Survey

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the average area in terms of *(a)* hectarage and *(b)* acreage of (i) hill and upland less-favoured area farms and (ii) severely disadvantaged less-favoured area farms participating in each of the local surveys conducted by universities and colleges in connection with the annual farm business survey;

(2) what is the average stocking per farm in terms of *(a)* cattle livestock units, *(b)* sheep livestock units and *(c)* cattle and sheep livestock units for hill and upland less-favoured area farms and severely disadvantaged area farms respectively participating in each of the local surveys conducted by universities and colleges in connection with the annual farm business survey.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* The information requested is shown in the following tables for those farms classified in the 1992-93 farm business survey for England as cattle and sheep farms in the less-favoured areas as a whole or in the severely disadvantaged areas. The data provided are unweighted averages and merely describe the sample. In order to make estimates for the populations from which the samples are drawn, it is necessary to weight the sample information. The sample for Nottingham is too small to give reliable results.

Cattle and sheep (LFA) farms: unweighted sample averages per farm, 1992-93

Province	*Farm area (hectares)*	*Farm area (acres)*	*Livestock units*		
			Sheep (lsu)	*Cattle (lsu)*	*Cattle and sheep (lsu)*
Newcastle	307	757	80	69	149
Askham Bryan	258	637	66	55	120
Manchester	178	440	54	72	126
Nottingham	110	273	45	71	116
Exeter	130	322	57	65	122

Cattle and sheep (SDA) farms: unweighted sample averages per farm, 1992-93

Province	*Farm area (hectares*	*Farm area (acres)*	*Livestock units*		
			Sheep (lsu)	*Cattle (lsu)*	*Cattle and sheep (lsu)*
Newcastle	332	821	86	68	154
Askham Bryan	258	637	66	55	120
Manchester	195	483	56	73	129
Nottingham	110	273	45	71	116
Exeter	149	368	69	63	131

WALES

Bird Killing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many licences have been issued in each of the last five years for the taking of cormorants and saw-billed ducks in each river system in Wales; how many birds were taken, pursuant to each licence; what consultation he had with the National Rivers Authority and conservation bodies; and what was the nature and origin of the evidence submitted to him to justify the issue of such licences.

Mr. Redwood: No such licences have been issued. It is the Department's practice to consult the CCW and the Welsh region of the National Rivers Authority on applications.

Housing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce for Wales a system of licensing for landlords of privately rented accommodation in multiple occupation similar to that currently operating in Scotland.

Mr. Redwood: Local authorities in Wales can already operate registration schemes and have extensive powers to deal with houses in multiple occupation.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Between 1 January and 1 December 1993, I and my predecessor appointed 50 women—25 per cent.—and 149 men to public bodies.

Early Year Forums

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available funding from the children and family support grant to support voluntary sector early year forums; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: One application for grant aid in 1994-95 has been made to support an early years forum in Clwyd. Details of grant awards under this scheme have yet to be announced.

Technology Education

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to ensure that design and technology are established as statutory entitlements for all pupils at stage 4 in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have accepted the recommendations of the Curriculum Council for Wales on the review of the national curriculum, including the proposal that technology should become optional for 14 to 16-year-old pupils —key stage 4—and that they should be encouraged to take forward their education in technology at this key stage through a variety of routes. The right course for Wales is to concentrate on the basics of language, mathematics and science and to leave further subjects to choice according to pupils' need to pursue GCSE or vocational qualifications, such as a full general national vocational qualification, if they so wish. I am encouraging schools not only to maintain the progress that they have made with technology at key stage 4 but also to provide appropriate courses in this subject.

European Union Funding

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the 10 capital projects which received the greatest amount of European Union funding in Wales in each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Grants under Welsh structural funds programmes are made on a programme basis and cannot be attributed to single calendar years. The 10 largest grants under the programmes for the calendar years 1989-91—1987-91 in the case of the Dyfed-Gwynedd-Powys programme—and 1992-93 were as follows:

1989-91	£
Llanelli Relief Road, Trostre/Yspitty	6,888,464
Technical and Vocational Training Centre, Haverfordwest	6,117,606
Milford Docks Redevelopment Phase 2	4,685,500
Additional Coastal Protection Works, Towyn	3,108,000
Docklands Distributor Road, Newport	2,778,278
Welshpool Tourism and Leisure World	1,933,350
A4067 Pontardawe to Glanrhyd	1,893,202
Bala Lake Tourism Development	1,750,000
New Pavilion Theatre, Rhyl	1,749,396
West Promenade Car Park, Rhyl	1,694,178
1992-93	£
A472 Maesycymmer/Newbridge[1]	5,426,500
Lower Rhymney Valley Relief Road Phase 2[1]	3,971,400
Pontypridd Inner Relief Road	3,324,960
Children's Village, West Promenade, Rhyl	2,753,335
Quest Centre Phase 1, Cardiff Bay	2,744,100
Former Coed Ely Colliery Redevelopment	2,489,200
Fishguard Harbour Development	2,190,000
A4119 Dualling—Ynysmaerdy Industrial Estate	2,091,800
Brecon Leisure Complex	1,734,000
JKI/Firestone Redevelopment, Wrexham Industrial Estate	1,600,000

[1] Grant subject to resolution of outstanding issues with the European Commission.

Information for EU grants other than from the structural funds could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much Wales received from the European social fund in each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information for the period from 1990 is set out in the table.

ESF for Wales 1990-93

	£
1990	10,094,700
1991	28,503,500
1992	29,064,600
1993	51,792,500

Notes:

1. Before 1990 all applications were handled directly by the European Commission and information is not held centrally in the United Kingdom.
2. The amount shown for 1993 represents the amount of ESF committed as final claims have not yet been received. For all other years the figures show the amounts claimed.
3. No reliable information is available for objectives 3, 4 and 6 in 1990 so the figure for that year covers objectives 2 and 5b only.
4. The objective 3 and 4 money received by Central Government for programmes in Wales for 1991 and 1992 is calculated as a percentage of the national figure.

Social Housing

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of their budgets each local authority spent on the provision of social housing in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Information is not collected centrally on the proportion of revenue budgets spent on the provision of social housing. Information on actual, rather than budgeted, capital expenditure is available but this forms only a small part of the total spending on social housing.

Tai Cymru

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much grant Tai Cymru received in each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to table 8.6 of "Welsh Housing Statistics No. 13 1993".

Welsh Economic Council

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to set up a Welsh economic council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I intend to make a statement on the Welsh Economic Council in the very near future.

After-school Care

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what money was made available in 1993 to help employers, voluntary groups or schools set up after-school care; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1993-94, £153,000 is available in Wales for after-school and holiday care through the Government's out of school child care grant initiative. A further £18,240 has been made available through the child and family services scheme to support a kids club network development officer in south-east Wales.

The Chwarae Teg Consortium is co-ordinating the childcare grant initiative on behalf of the training and enterprise councils. It is proposed to spend a further £2 million on the initiative over the next three financial years.

Radioisotopic Pollution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information regarding the levels of radioisotopic pollution in the Trawsfynydd lake; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Data on levels of radioisotopes in Trawsfynydd lake are collected in the course of routine monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Results are presented in the "Aquatic Environment Monitoring Report" published annually by that Department's directorate of fisheries research. The latest issue, No. 38—item 6.10 of which refers to Trawsfynydd—is in the Library of the House.

Touche Ross Survey

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of the Touche Ross survey of school governors in Wales; and when the Touche Ross survey of school governors in Wales will be published.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 17 February, column *947*, to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley).

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the current capacity shortfall for cardiac surgery in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* that area of Wales currently served by the University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

Mr. Redwood: In addition to their own resources, health authorities in Wales are fully funded for the target level of cardiac surgery set in 1989. Additional resources are being made available, and new facilities developed, to ensure that the total estimated need in South Wales, which we announced in June last year, can be met by Welsh hospitals. Health authorities in North Wales are fully funded to secure appropriate levels of cardiac services from a number of specialist centres both within and outside Wales.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Association of the Directors of Social Services in Wales, the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the chairmen of the health authorities and trusts and the voluntary sector in relation to the reduced grant to the Alzheimer's Society; and what assessment he has made of the effect of future grant levels on Alzheimer's patients in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office continues to give financial support to the Alzheimer's Disease Society Wales office. In addition, we provide support for some individual projects at county level on a time limited, reducing basis, with the agreement of the statutory and voluntary agencies concerned. These grants are discussed, as appropriate, with the agencies involved.

Health and social services authorities are responsible for assessing the need for services for people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers and for making arrangements to meet that need, in consultation with all relevant interests.

Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each non-departmental public body in his departmental sponsorship, the value of consultancy contracts approved and commenced in each of the past three financial years.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is not held centrally.

Conflicts of Interest (Advice)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the additional advice on conflicts of interest given by the then permanent secretary of the Welsh Office in March 1993 to the chief executives of all non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Redwood: Yes.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation in relation to the reduction in the number of consultants to be employed by the corporation.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman has suggested to me that the development corporation could save money by employing fewer consultants and doing more work in-house. I have encouraged him to work up such proposals.

Munchhausen's Syndrome by Proxy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with area child protection teams in relation to approving a protocol on covert video surveillance in hospitals in the case of Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy, non-accidental injury and allied suspected conditions and episodes.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he consulted the Secretary of State for Scotland regarding his plans for a special advisory body on sustainable development before deciding not to set up a similar body for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: No, because effective arrangements already exist in Wales for consulting Welsh interests on matters relevant to sustainable development. For example, my Department organised a successful seminar in Cardiff in September 1993 on this topic. I am not immediately persuaded that these arrangements need to be formalised via a new advisory body. They will, however, be developed further through the national round table and citizen's environment initiatives.

SCOTLAND

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his reasons for establishing a special advisory body for sustainable development in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Separate advisory bodies across the full range of Scottish Office responsibilities are appropriate from time to time to help in the effective delivery of policies and programmes in Scotland. In this instance, in view of the range of interests, my right hon. Friend considered that there would be advantage in establishing such a body to facilitate action in Scotland on agenda 21.

The Government's panel on sustainable development, chaired by Sir Crispin Tickell, will, of course, be advising on strategic policies and progress for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Studentship Selection Committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The current Secretary of State appointees are shown in the table:

Professor J. Trainer (Chairman), University of Stirling
Professor J. Butt, University of Strathclyde
Professor D. Harding, University of Edinburgh
Professor R. Jack, University of Edinburgh
Professor W. Gordon, University of Glasgow

Professor R. J. Bauckham, University of St. Andrews
Professor S. W. Smith, University of Dundee
Professor J. R. Cameron, University of Aberdeen
Professor J. B. I. McDonald, University of Glasgow
Professor P. H. Ramsay, University of Aberdeen

All members were nominated by the principal of their respective university, with the exception of Professor D. Harding, who was nominated by the senate of the university of Edinburgh.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish Examination Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The members currently appointed to the Scottish Examination Board by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are listed in the table, with the source of their nomination where relevant:

Chairman appointed by Secretary of State:
Mr. I. L. Fraser OBE (Chairman)
Chosen by Secretary of State for experience in industry, commerce or other relevant qualifications:
Mr. R. Dobson
Mrs. A. J. Gardner
Mrs. A. I. Ritchie
Miss V. M. Pugh
Mr. J. B. Wright
Universities of Scotland nominated by Scottish Universities Council on Entrance:
Professor R. J. Lyall
Professor P. R. Boyle
Dr. J. M. Hannah
Professor H. M. Hine
Professor M. K. Thomas
Professor D. J. Tedford
Professor E. H. Thomson
Professor R. J. Knops
Education Authorities nominated by COSLA:
Councillor T. M. Dair
Councillor Mrs. K. Hutchison
Councillor T. R. Dumble
Councillor T. McAughtrie
Councillor Mrs. E. Macginnis
Councillor Mrs. J. P. Orskov
Director of Education nominated by ADES:
Mr. D. S. Alexander
Mr. N. R. Galbraith
Teachers employed in Education Establishments nominated by various teacher unions:
Mr. J. Bell—EIS
Mr. G. M. Munro—HAS
Mr. A. Hannah—SSTA
Mr. D. Drever—EIS
Mrs. E. C. Marsh—AHTS
Mr. G. MacBride—EIS
Mr. J. B. O. McNair—HAS
Mr. K. Paterson—PAT
Mr. G. A. Rubenski—EIS
Dr. P. W. Thomson—EIS
Mr. B. Williams—SSTA
Central Institutions nominated by Committee of Principals and Directors of Central institutions:
Professor C. E. R. Maddox
Institutions of Further Education nominated by Association of Principals of Colleges:
Principal W. Greenock
Colleges of Education nominated by Conference of Scottish Centrally Funded Colleges:
Professor Kirk
Educational Advisers nominated by Association of Educational Advisers in Scotland:
Mrs. D. McVean
Independent Schools nominated by Scottish Council for Independent Schools:
Mr. R. Nimmo

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Animal Diseases Research Association.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The Animal Diseases Research Association is a registered friendly society. There are currently 49 members of the directorate of ADRA. They are listed in the table. All officers and directors except the president, vice-president and the co-opted and special directors are elected by the members of the association present and entitled to vote at an annual general meeting or a special general meeting. Directors are elected by members on a regional basis. The president and vice-president are elected by the directors. The source of the appointments of the co-opted directors and special directors are shown in the table.

Hon. President—His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch

Hon. Vice-Presidents
Sir John Gilmour
J. Cameron
C. B. R. Gray

President
J. Stobo

Vice-President
J. Matts

Directors
Scotland North
R. J. Lennox
R. Simpson
A. D. Forbes
G. A. D. Clyne
R. Paterson

Scotland South
K. A. Brooke
J. Duncan
J. Sharp
I. MacMillan
W. Brown
J. Jeffrey

England North
H. McLaren
C. Slade
P. Johnson
Fiona Fell
A. Harker
M. Walton

England South
J. Matts
Lesley Stubbins
D. Harbottle
J. Hindson
Catherine Paine
D. Mackie

Wales
T. Tudor
R. Howells
H. Hughes
J. Willyman
A. Lewis
J. Jones

Northern Ireland
J. Campbell

Co—opted Directors
W. Elliot—Sheep Representative
D. J. Biggar—Cattle Representative
Dr. K. A. Linklater—Veterinary Representative
Dr. P. Wells—Industry Representative

Lady Sanderson—ADRA Equine Fund

Special Directors

J. Ross—Secretary of State for Scotland
Councillor C. Hebenton—COSLA
Councillor A. Milne—COSLA
T. Elliot—RHAS

Trustees

W. A. Biggar *(Chairman)*
J. G. S. Gammell
J. Gilmour
J. Izat

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 774, if he will list those hon. Members defeated in the general election of June 1987 who, at any subsequent date, have been appointed to public bodies by him or his predecessor; and if he will list those appointments.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* As indicated in the reply referred to by the hon. Member, no hon. Member who was defeated in the general election of 1987 currently holds appointment on any non-departmental public body or NHS body for which my department has responsibility. The information held centrally by my Department does not show whether defeated Members were appointed to such bodies earlier.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish a register of new appointees to executive bodies or advisory bodies which would show previous and present political affiliations, together with financial contributions to any political parties.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* No. Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude and merit. No central record is kept of the political affiliation of those appointed to public bodies.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued to non-departmental public bodies regarding the admission of public to meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* None. Given the very wide range of non-departmental public bodies for which the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible, general guidance would not be appropriate.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the arrangements made by each non-departmental public body appointed by him, to enable members of the public to have access to agendas, minutes and reports of such bodies.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* It is not normal practice to make the agendas and minutes of the meetings of NDPBs available to the public. Those NDPBs which are covered by the Companies Acts are required to publish annual reports, as are some other bodies. In a number of cases, the body is required by statute to produce an annual report on the exercise and performance of its functions for the Secretary of State which he is obliged to lay before Parliament. Many executive NDPBs, both statutory and non-statutory, make their annual report available to the public. Full details of the availability of annual reports in relation to executive NDPBs are given in my letter of 16 November 1993 to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), a copy of which was placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his practice to consult the leaders of the opposition parties in Scotland prior to making appointments to the chairmanship of non-departmental public bodies within his Department's responsibility.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* No.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the rent assessment panel for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are 78 members currently appointed to the rent assessment panel in Scotland. The list of members as at 14 February 1994 is as follows:

President

G. F. Robertson, FRICS, FCIArb

Vice President

Mrs. M. J. L. Walker, MA, LLB, NP

Chairmen

J. M. Barton, WS
M. J. Burns, MA, LLB
Mrs. L. J. M. Campbell, BL
Mrs. J. Catto, LLB, NP
Miss A. Chisholm, LLB
Miss M. Crighton
C. J. Forrest, WS
J. R. Gardiner, BL, NP, WS
Miss S. T. Givens, MA, LLB
J. M. D. Graham, LLB, NP
The Hon. Simon E. G. Guest, LLB, WS
Miss C. S. Hederson, MA, LLB, NP
Professor J. A. M. Inglis, CBE, MA, LLB
E. G. Kennedy, LLB, NP
Miss D. McGhie, LLB
J. G. Malcolm-Smith
Mrs. E. Mochar
N. J. A. Robertson, BL
J. G. L. Robinson, BA, LLB
E. O. St. John, BL, WS
O. H. Spiers, MA
B. C. T. Wood, BL

Valuers

J. M. Bennett, FRICS, ARVA
K. I. Crichton, FRICS
F. M. Halliday, FRICS
Mrs. U. L. Heaney, MA, FRICS
M. Kay, FRICS
A. C. Love, FRICS
R. R. McConnell, FRICS
L. J. McFarlane, FRICS FRVA
R. A. M. MacKenzie, FRICS
MacPherson, MA, FRICS
E. Milne, FRICS
W. W. Mitchell, FRICS, FRVA
Miss C. Oliphant, ARICS
P. Paterson, FRICS
J. B. Pettinger, FRICS, ARVA
T. F. Phillips, FRICS
A. J. Prentice, FRICS, ARVA
J. D. O. Ramsay, FRICS, FFB
G. Scott, FRICS, FRVA
R. T. Shanks, FRICS
J. G. Smith, FRICS
I. D. Sutherland, FRICS
J. T. Sutherland, FRICS
J. S. Traill, MSc, FRICS, MRTPI
A. E. L. Weir, FRICS, FRVA

Lay Members

Mrs. P. Bolton
S. J. Boyd, AIPM
Mrs. H. Charlton
Ms A. S. Daghlian
I. S. Davidson
M. Fleming

J. Forbes
Mrs. C. K. Fraser
W. G. Fyfe, MA, BD, STM8
A. Gray
W. Hill, FIHsg
Mrs. E. R. Innes
N. MacPhail
A. McQuaker
Mrs. S. B. Mathieson
J. S. Methven
Mrs. A. O'Neale
Mrs. E. Park
Mrs. D. Rankin
Mrs. S. Ritchie
R. C. Robinson
Mrs. S. Ross
Mrs. M. M. Roxburgh
J. I. Stevenson
Mrs. A. Tankel
J. Thomson, MBE, JP
Mrs. A. Woodward-Nutt

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the Rowett Research Institute.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* There are currently fourteen members of the board of the Rowett Research Institute. Their names and the sources of the appointments are:

Chairman
Mr. J. Provan—Secretary of State for Scotland
Mr. M. Mackie, Jnr—Secretary of State for Scotland
Professor A. Trichopoulou—Secretary of State for Scotland
Mr. W. J. Ferguson—The Scottish Agricultural College
Professor H. M. Keir—University of Aberdeen
Principal J. M. Irvine—University of Aberdeen
Professor C. Kidd—University of Aberdeen
Dr. R. W. Brimblecombe—Confederation of British Industry
Mr. F. G. Perry—Confederation of British Industry
Professor P. Cohen—Learned Societies The Royal Society
Professor A. J. F. Webster—Nutrition Society
Mr. C. S. MacPhie—Co-opted by the Rowett Research Institute
Mr. D. S. C. Levie—Co-opted by the Rowett Research Institute
Professor C. H. MacMurray—Co-opted by the Rowett Research Institute

HEALTH

Hospital Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the change in numbers and cost of hospital general and senior managers between 1986 and 1991;

(2) how much was spent on hospital general managers and senior managers in England in the last year for which figures are available and the previous year.

Dr. Mawhinney: General and senior management posts were introduced in phases from 1986 before which the national health service was clearly undermanaged. In the hospital and community health services in 1986 and 1991 there were respectively 510 and 12,420 whole-time equivalent staff paid on general and senior managers' terms. HCHS salary costs for this group of staff were £25·7 million in 1986-87, £383·8 million in 1991-92 and £494·1 million (provisional) in 1992-93. Comparisons over the years are meaningless because the growth in numbers and costs is mainly due to the reclassification of staff previously included in other administrative and professional categories, including many senior nurses. General and senior managers account for only 2 per cent. of the total NHS work force and 3 per cent. of total NHS expenditure on salaries and wages, but the proposals set out by my right hon. Friend on 21 October 1993 contained a commitment to streamline the structure of the NHS, to slim down its management and to make it simpler and sharper.

NHS Administrative Costs

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in the NHS management executive, the NHS Supplies Authority, the Prescription Pricing Authority, the medical advisers support group and the medicines research centre in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: Disaggregated costs for managers, advisers, administrative and clerical staff in these five organisations are not available centrally. The total manpower costs for the national health service management executive in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 were £24 million, £20 million and £29 million respectively. These figures are not directly comparable because of organisational changes between the NHSME and the rest of the Department of Health. The total manpower costs for the national health service supplies authority were £640,000 for the six-month period from 1 October 1991, when the authority was formally established, and £32·2 million in 1992-93 when 4,500 staff were transferred from NHS regional and district health authorities. The total manpower costs for the Prescription Pricing Authority were £20·19 million, £22·17 million and £24·13 million in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. The total manpower costs for the medical advisers support group were £71·11 million in 1990-91—part year in which the MASG was set up—£157·96 million and £175·94 million in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively. The total manpower costs for the medicines research centre were £83 million in 1990-91—part year in which the MRC was set up—£114·25 million and £111·83 million in 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively.

HIV

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies born in each of the last five years were found at birth to be HIV positive; what percentage remained HIV positive one and a half years later; and if she will make a statement on HIV in the new-born.

Mr. Sackville: Between the beginning of 1989 and October 1993, 235 children born in England have been recognised at or after their birth as born to an HIV-infected woman. HIV infection has been confirmed in 76 of these and 49 are known to be uninfected. The infection status of the remaining 110 has not yet been resolved. However, the figures do not provide a reliable guide to the transmission rate as they do not cover all women who are HIV positive, but only those who were already known to be so, or whose status was recognised retrospectively as a result of the child developing symptoms. It is generally accepted that the proportion of infants born to HIV-infected women who are infected themselves is best estimated from prospective studies such as the European collaborative study, which estimates the transmission rate at 14 per cent.

Highfield Hospital

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the letters sent to her by the Save Highfield Hospital Campaign on 20 November 1993 and 31 January 1994 and to the petition on Highfield hospital which was handed to her on 20 November 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Save Highfield Hospital campaign has been informed that the proposal to close Highfield hospital and transfer services to Worcester royal infirmy was dealt with in accordance with laid-down procedures. As agreement was reached locally with the two community health councils involved and followed a full public consultation exercise, North Worcester health authority was able to implement the proposal without recourse to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Children's Rights

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for carrying forward the work of the children's rights development unit in connection with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child following the decision to cease its funding; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The children's rights development unit is an organisation independent of Government and questions relating to its future work should be referred to that organisation.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the schemes her Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: There are two schemes to assist staff affected by the fall in house prices:

1. *Bridging Loans*

The Department may assist a member of staff transferred at the public expense who is in severe and immediate financial difficulties as a result of taking out a bridging loan which subsequently exceeds the selling price of property. Provided the member of staff cannot make good the shortfall of funds from his or her own resources and, that a value for money case can be clearly established, the Department can offer:

an interest free advance of up to 12 months salary repayable over 15 years; and/or

an additional housing cost allowance to cover the interest charges on extra mortgage borrowing; and/or

as a last resort where other options are not possible, to write off up to £15,000 of the bridging loan. Amounts in excess of this require Treasury approval.

2. *Mortgage Redemption (negative Equity)*

Where staff transferred at the public expense face genuine financial hardship an advance of up to 12 months salary may be made, repayable over 15 years.

In 1992-93 eight members of staff received advances of salary averaging £7,860 under these provisions. To date the comparable figures for 1993-94 are two and £16,500.

Mental Hospitals (Nursing Staff)

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the level of competence and skills of the nursing staff at *(a)* Broadmoor hospital and *(b)* other mental hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Those who manage hospitals are responsible for ensuring that the nursing staff they employ have the required competence and skills. The management of Broadmoor hospital and the other special hospitals is the responsibility of the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

The review of mental health nursing which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in 1992 has now been completed and the report will be published shortly.

Oral Health

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 January, *Official Report,* column *530,* when she expects to publish the report of the oral health strategy group.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February at column *1042.*

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the membership of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs; and which of them have specialist knowledge in the treatment of skin conditions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The names of the members and their areas of medical expertise are listed. Dr. Grattan is a consultant dermatologist with a specialist knowledge in the treatment of skin conditions. The committee can also seek advice from external experts if it wishes to do so.

Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs Membership

Name	*Areas of Medical Expertise*
Chairman	
Dr. J. S. Metters	Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health
Members	
Professor A. M. Breckenridge	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, University of Liverpool
Professor C. M. Castleden	Professor of Medicine for the Elderly, University of Leicester
Mr. D. L. Coleman	Community Pharmacist, Norfolk
Professor H. D. Edmondson	Professor of Oral Surgery and Oral Medicine, Dental School, University of Birmingham
Dr. P. R. Fellows	General practitioner, Gloucestershire Chairman of Gloucester Local Medical Committee
Professor D. Ganderton	Visiting Professor in pharmacy, King's College, London. Chairman of the British Pharmacopoeia Commission
Miss A. F. Glasier	Consultant gynaecologist, Director of Family Planning, Lothian Health Board
Dr. C. Grattan	Consultant dermatologist, Norfolk and Norwich Hospital
Dr. A. Greenhough	Professor of Clinical Respiratory Physiology, King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry
Dr. G. Hargreaves	Former GP with experience of the Pharmaceutical Industry

Name	*Areas of Medical Expertise*
Professor S. Holgate	Specialist in allergic disorders, Southampton Hospital
Dr. D. F. Jones	General practitioner, South Wales
Professor R. M. Jones	Professor of Anaesthetics, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Mr. A. G. Kerr	Consultant ENT Surgeon, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast
Mrs. S. Noyce	Pharmacist adviser to Sefton FHSA
Dr. S. J. Richards	General practitioner, Exeter
Dr. C. H. Swan	Consultant physician (gastro-enterology) City General Hospital, Stoke-on-Trent
Professor P. J. Tyrer	Professor of Community Psychiatry, St. Mary's Hospital Medical School, London
Dr. D. M. B. Ward	General practitioner, Glasgow

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the referral to the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs of treatments for skin diseases; what action she has taken as a result; when she expects the report of the committee; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A number of representations have been received about drugs acting on the skin. These have been drawn to the attention of the independent advisory committee, which will be reporting as soon as its review is complete. Any recommendations resulting from the work of the committee will be published for consultation before final decisions are taken.

Food Safety

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she takes to ensure that animal tests currently used for the safety assessment of food products are effective for identifying constituents of diet that are potentially toxic or harmful to humans.

Mr. Sackville: The use of toxicity studies in laboratory animals for the safety testing of food and other products is of proven value and has gained acceptance by the scientific community worldwide. Most chemically-induced toxic effects seen in humans are also seen in appropriate animal studies. Animal studies are assessed by expert toxicologists experienced in extrapolating the information to predict likely effects in humans. Allowances are made for the uncertainties involved, particularly any differences between species.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made towards the introduction of validated alternatives to the use of animals in the toxicity and safety testing of food products.

Mr. Sackville: Validated alternatives to laboratory animals are available for assessing mutagenic potential of chemicals in food and other products. These data are also of value in screening compounds for their carcinogenic potential.

Much effort is being put into the development of alternatives in other areas, particularly for screening for local irritant effects, where it is hoped to have validated alternatives within a few years. However, the replacement of animals for general toxicity testing is much more difficult because of the need to reproduce the very complex biochemical and pharmacological interactions that occur in animals. There has been some progress in reducing the number of animals used in certain tests and reducing the distress that may be caused, for example by the use of the fixed dose procedure as an alternative method for investigating acute toxicity. This was validated in a large international study sponsored by United Kingdom Government Departments and the European Community. The new procedure obviates the need for calculating LD50 values.

Sir James Ackers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the special circumstances in view of which she made a payment of £10,000 to Sir James Ackers.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) on 29 April 1993, at columns *492-93.*

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *385*, if she will list for each trust chair and non-executive director in the Northern region the name of the organisation by which they are employed.

Dr. Mawhinney: We do not maintain up-to-date information relating to the names of appointees' employers.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *385*, if she will list for each trust chair and non-executive director in the Northern region their known party political affiliation.

Dr. Mawhinney: The political affiliation of chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts plays no part in the appointment by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and would be known only where an appointee is actively pursuing a political career at the time of the appointment. No attempt is made to check on whether that activity is continued after appointment, so current political affiliations are not known.

Age Limits

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what age limits her Department *(a)* recommends and *(b)* requires for appointment to community health councils, health authorities, health service trusts, family health service authorities and any other bodies for which age limits are recommended or required; and if in each case she will state the reasons why limits have been set.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no statutory age limits for members of national health service authorities and trusts, nor for community health council members. Regional health authorities have been recommended not to appoint members to community health councils older than 70 years except in special circumstances.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of public appointments made by her Department in 1993 were of women; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In 1993, 35 per cent. of members of national health service bodies and health non-departmental public bodies were women. This includes 40 per cent. of appointees to fourth-wave NHS trusts.

Secure Accommodation

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many females aged *(a)* 12, *(b)* 13, *(c)* 14, *(d)* 15, *(e)* 16, *(f)* 17 and *(g)* 18 years were detained in secure accommodation on the last day of each month of 1992 and 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention in secure accommodation;

(2) how many males aged *(a)* 12, *(b)* 13, *(c)* 14, *(d)* 15, *(e)* 16, (f) 17 and *(g)* 18 years were detained in secure accommodation on the last day of each month of 1992 and 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention in secure accommodation;

(3) how many females aged *(a)* 12, *(b)* 13, *(c)* 14, *(d)* 15, *(e)* 16, (f) 17 and *(g)* 18 years were admitted to secure accommodation during (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention in secure accommodation;

(4) how many males aged *(a)* 12, *(b)* 13, *(c)* 14, *(d)* 15, *(e)* 16, (f) 17 and *(g)* 18 years were admitted to secure accommodation during (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993; and what were the reasons for their detention in secure accommodation.

Mr. Bowis: The latest available information on the numbers of children and young people admitted to secure accommodation and resident in secure accommodation during the year by legal status and age on admission relates to the year ending 31 March 1992 and has been placed in the Library.

Midwives

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether midwives employed by health authorities and trusts will continue to benefit from their employer's liability insurance cover.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service bodies are not required to take out insurance cover for possible negligence by the health care professionals that they employ, but both health authorities and NHS trusts are responsible for the negligent acts and omissions of their midwife employees acting in the course of their employment. Insurance is desirable for any work done outside the NHS contract of employment, such as Good Samaritan acts in emergencies and providing midwifery services to friends and relatives.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has made to the decision by insurance companies to regard self-employed midwives as a high financial risk; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Baroness Cumberlege, has had discussions with the Royal College of Midwives about this matter; they arrange for their self-employed members to be provided with professional indemnity insurance and are actively seeking to resolve the concerns raised.

NHS Staff

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for September 1989, September 1990 and September 1992, for each regional health authority, the number of nurses, midwives and health visitors by clinical grade and specialty.

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Dentistry

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department will publish the results of the 1993 children's dental health survey.

Dr. Mawhinney: Preliminary results of the survey were published on 22 February, copies of which will be placed in the Library. A full report of the survey will be published later this year.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children were registered with dentists in each of the six months up to and including January.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table. Child registrations increased in each month until 31 December when, on that day, child registrations which had not previously been extended for a further term were automatically deleted from the dental register. Children whose registrations have lapsed will be able to re-register.

Month ending	*Child registrations*
July	7,156,512
August	7,273,977
September	7,396,329
October	7,488,760
November	7,604,594
December	6,196,058

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response she has given to the British Dental Association's letter of 9 February; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State replied to the British Dental Association on 22 February.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for the Environment of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 7: What is the percentage of the implicit element within the standard spending assessment calculation for personal social services relating to charges for services other than residential care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Within the calculations of the standard spending assessments for personal social services other than residential care for the elderly, it is uniformity between authorities in the rate of recovery of gross expenditure through income from charges which is implicitly assumed, not any specific rate of recovery.

Administrative Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing administrative expenditure by family practitioner committees in 1989 *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region;

(2) what was the total administrative expenditure of family health services authorities for each year since their creation *(a)* for England as a whole and *(b)* by region.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 February 1994]*: The information is shown in the table. Family health services authorities manage the introduction of general practitioner fundholding, the monitoring of GP prescribing, and the development of clinical audit in primary care —all initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of patient care and value for money. In 1992-1993 FHSA administrative expenditure represented only 2·5 per cent. of the £6·5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on the FHS.

£000s

Region	*FPC (1989-90) and FHSA (1990-91 to 1992-93) Administration: Revenue Expenditure in England*			
	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern	6,159	9,684	9,438	10,824
Yorkshire	6,304	9,769	9,265	10,973
Trent	5,175	7,811	12,689	14,638
East Anglian	3,021	4,640	5,083	5,663
North West Thames	5,429	9,983	12,964	15,160
North East Thames	4,588	7,677	12,297	14,772
South East Thames	2,903	6,689	10,975	14,604
South West Thames	4,693	6,423	9,711	11,533
Wessex	2,979	6,285	6,417	7,701
Oxford	1,810	5,641	6,403	8,528
South Western	4,168	4,997	7,210	8,151
West Midlands	6,855	9,956	14,314	16,700
Mersey	3,432	3,499	7,146	7,899
North Western	8,993	10,863	12,779	14,735
TOTAL	66,509	103,917	136,331	161,881

Source:

Family Practitioner Committee annual accounts for 1989-90 and Family Health Services Authorities' annual accounts for 1990-91 to 1992-93; net revenue expenditure.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Fraud

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further action he is taking concerning fraud.

Mr. Lilley: I am determined to step up the fight against fraud and abuse. A wide variety of initiatives are being introduced including making more use of information technology, more secure payment methods, a one-stop service and tightening the rules to prevent abuse.

Household Incomes

21. **Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what precentage of households have an income which is less than half the average national household income; and what was the comparable figure for 1979.

Mr. Burt: In 1979, half average national household income was £86 before housing costs and £73 after housing costs, in 1991 prices. The percentage of households with income less than this was 8 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively. In 1990-91, the latest date for which information is available, half average national household income was £118 before housing costs and £101 after housing costs. The percentage of households with income less than this was 23 per cent. and 27 per cent. respectively. The percentage of households below half of the 1979 average household income held constant was lower in 1990-91 than in 1979.

Child Support Agency

23. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further representations he has received on the workings of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: From 20 January to 16 January the Department of Social Security and the Child Support Agency headquarters have received 2,954 written representations covering a range of views about child support policy and Child Support Agency operations.

The cost of establishing the number of written representations made to the Child Support Agency centres and field offices would be disproportionately high. The number of representations made in person or by telephone is not recorded.

28. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what timetable he has drawn up for a further review of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The child support system will continue to be kept under close scrutiny, as it has been since its introduction. The recent changes are testament to that fact. This is a continual process and therefore not one which should be subject to a specific timetable.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to charge the collection fee for child support maintenance to the absent parent when the Child Support Agency takes on all maintenance agreements in 1996 where the parent with care is not on income support and where the parents are not using the collection service.

Mr. Burt: Where payments are being made direct to the parent with care but she has requested the Child Support

Agency's collection service, which includes enforcement, the fee will be payable by both parents. Otherwise, no fee will be charged where payments are made direct.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for the protection of mothers who may know the whereabouts of the absentee father, but may be reluctant to divulge it.

Mr. Burt: A parent with care receiving income support, family credit or disability working allowance is required to authorise the Child Support Agency to obtain maintenance, unless the pursuit of maintenance would risk harm or undue distress to her or any child living with her. Where there is such a risk, the parent with care is not required to give authority.

In all cases the agency will act as a buffer between the parent with care and the absent parent, and will not divulge her address to him.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in what proportion of cases the Child Support Agency is currently meeting the performance target it has set itself by writing to parents with an assessment within five working days of receiving all the information needed by both parents.

(2) what steps the Child Support Agency is taking to fulfil the promise in its customer charter to let customers know as a matter of course if there has been undue delay.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 24 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking the steps being taken by the Child Support Agency to fulfil its commitments to write to clients with an assessment within five working days; and to let clients know as a matter of course if there is an undue delay in processing their application.

The Agency is currently monitoring its performance against Charter Standards. At the end of its first year of operation, it will be in a position to determine case clearance times, and to advise clients how long on average the process is likely to take. The Agency will also be in a position to advise clients if there has been undue delay.

I hope you find this reply useful.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current backlog for second tier review applications arising out of disputes with the Child Support Agency; at what rate second tier review applications are being lodged each month; how many second tier review applications are being cleared each month; how many post-second tier applications are being sent on to appeal each month; and what is the average length of time that applicants then wait for an appeal to be heard.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Derek Brown to Mr. Frank Field, dated 25 February 1994:

In her absence, the Chief Executive Mrs. Hepplewhite has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking about the average times taken to process reviews and appeals in the Child Support Agency.

You asked about the position on requests for second tier reviews. At 31 January the Agency had received and cleared the following:

Month	*Received*	*Cleared*
April to November	8,000	1,500
December	3,700	800
January	4,900	3,500
Total	16,600	5,800

The number of reviews requested has increased over the last three months. This is as expected, and reflects the significant increases in the number of assessments now being processed by the Agency.

Requests that had been received but not processed are being actioned. The Agency has increased the number of staff undertaking this work, and significant progress is being made. During January four times as many cases were processed as in the preceding month.

Finally you asked about appeals. Appeals are primarily a matter for the Independent Tribunal Service which is an Independent Statutory Authority. I understand that, to the end of January 1994, a total of 611 appeals had been lodged, of which 82 cases had been heard by the Child Support Appeal Tribunal. Figures are not currently available on the proportion of these that had already been subject to a second tier review. Given, however, that the only category of client who has a right of appeal direct to the Tribunal are those appealing against a decision to impose a reduced benefit direction, it is likely that a large majority of appeals had already been subject to a second tier review.

The President of the Independent Tribunal Service informs me that information on the average length of time applicants wait for an appeal to be heard is not available. The average length of time from receipt of an appeal to the date the tribunal decision is, however, 17 weeks.

I hope this reply is helpful.

26. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had in relation to the operations of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Between April 1993 and 16 February 1994 the Department of Social Security and the Child Support Agency headquarters received 13,715 written representations covering a range of views about child support policy and Child Support Agency operations.

The cost of establishing the number of written representations made to Child Support Agency centres and field offices would be disproportionately high. The number of representations made in person or by telephone is not recorded.

Family Credit

24. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families receive family credit; and how many received family income support in 1978-79.

Mr. Burt: In September 1993, 515,000 families were receiving family credit compared with only 78,000 receiving family income supplement in March 1979.

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current average award for family credit.

Mr. Burt: The average weekly award is £43·30.

Source: Five per cent. sample of Family Credit recipients as at 31 May 1993.

Pensions

25. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost of uprating the retirement pension in 1994-95.

Mr. Hague: The estimated cost is £717 million.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for a real increase in pensions in the current year.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the full uprating of pensions in line with inflation from April, plus extra help with the cost of VAT on fuel, amounting to 50p a week for single pensioners and 70p for couples.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what percentage of people in receipt of state pensions receive less than 100 per cent. of the full pension; and what number of people this represents;

(2) what is the average percentage of state pension received by those in receipt of less than 100 per cent. of the full state pension.

Mr. Hague: The available information is in the tables.

Number of retirement pensions in Great Britain

Category of pension	*Number with retirement pension*	*Number with less than 100 per cent. basic retirement pension*	*Percentage receiving less than 100 per cent.*	*Average percentage for persons in receipt of less than 100 per cent.*
All retirement pensions	9,581,660	1,085,450	11	62
Category A men	3,293,560	161,030	5	76
Category A women	2,336,620	666,780	29	56
Category BL wives	1,330,740	45,790	3	74
Category ABL wives	628,490	2,930	—	85
Category B widows	1,884,860	61,530	3	79
Graduated pensions only	134,130	134,130	100	N/a
Additional pensions only	13,260	13,260	100	N/a

N/a—Not available.

The percentage of people residing overseas

Category of pension	*Number with retirement pension*	*Number with less than 100 per cent. basic retirement pension*	*Percentage receiving less than 100 per cent.*	*Average percentage for persons in receipt of less than 100 per cent.*
All retirement pensions	613,860	550,120	90	14
Category A Men	234,880	212,540	90	17
Category A Women	154,540	140,660	91	15
Category BL Wives	108,690	98,770	91	6
Category ABL Wives	32,190	24,520	76	1
Category B Widows	75,690	65,760	87	13
Graduated pensions only	7,040	7,040	100	N/A
Additional pension only	830	830	100	N/A

Notes:

[1] Figures given are for people of contributory Retirement Pension (including Graduated Retirement Pension or Additional Pension only) at 31 March 1993 excluding widowers receiving Category B pension (total number at 31 March 1993 is 750).

[2] Category A pension is payable on a person's own contributions.

[3] Category BL pension is payable to a married woman based on her husband's contributions—the standard rate is approximately 60 per cent. of the standard Category A rate.

[4] Category ABL pension is payable to a married woman based on her own and her husband's contributions—the standard rate is the same as that for Category BL.

[5] Category B pension is payable to surviving spouses on the basis of their late spouses' contributions—the standard rate is the same as that for Category A.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the Budget speech of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 1037, if pensioners who do not receive 100 per cent. of a state pension will receive the full 50p addition in respect of VAT on fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The extra help towards VAT on fuel will be included in the standard rate of basic retirement pension. The rate of pension is reduced where basic pension entitlement is less than 100 per cent. This will have the effect of reducing the extra help in proportion to the percentage rate of basic pension entitlement.

The standard married woman's rate of basic retirement pension, based on her husband's contributions, will be increased by 20p per week thereby providing pensioner couples in receipt of the standard rate with an overall additional increase of 70p per week.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in his speech, all pensioners on income support will receive the full 50p single and 70p for couples, whether or not they are entitled to a reduced rate retirement pension.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what gross weekly cost his Department estimates will be incurred by the increase of all state pensions to compensate for the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel in each week during April.

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested.

It is estimated that the average gross weekly cost from 11 April, when the 1994 uprating will become effective, will be approximately £4 millon.

Disability Working Allowance

27. **Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many, and what proportion of, applicants for disability working allowance in the last 12-month period for which information is available, were disqualified because of their earnings or rise in family income.

Mr. Scott: Out of a total of 12,665 applications received between December 1992 and November 1993, 850 new and repeat claims were disallowed because their income exceeded the level of disability working allowance. This represented a proportion of 6·7 per cent.

Poverty

29. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the Government's assessment of the extent and scale of poverty prevailing in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Statistics on patterns of household disposable income, for the United Kingdom are provided in "Households Below Average Income 1979-1990/91", published in June 1993, a copy of which is in the Library.

30. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households were in the bottom decile of income distribution in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table:

Numbers of pensioner families with incomes in the bottom decile of income distribution (000s)

	1979	*1990-91*
Before housing costs		
Couples	510	290
Single	890	620
All	1,400	910
After housing costs		
Couples	550	160
Single	580	290
All	1,200	450

Notes:

1. Estimates are based on the Family Expenditure Surveys, rounded to nearest 10,000.
2. Numbers relate to pensioner benefit units.

Social Fund

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessments he has made of the operation of social funds within benefits agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The operation of the discretionary social fund is monitored routinely. We believe that the basic principles of the fund are right and working well, but we continue to evaluate its effectiveness and to introduce operational improvements as required.

Pensioner Households (Assets)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the current value of the assets held by the average pensioner household; and what was the comparable position in real terms in 1978-79.

Mr. Hague: We do not have information on the capital value of pensioners' assets. The estimated average weekly income which pensioners received from their savings or investments are in the table.

Year	*Couples*	*Singles*	*All*[1]
1979	£16·20	£8·60	£11·20
1990-91	£45·10	£21·60	£30·30

[1] Single people over state pension age and couples where the husband is over state pensions age.

All estimates derive from the family expenditure survey and are at 1990-91 prices. Averages are across all pensioners, whether or not receiving an income from savings or investments.

Long-term Unemployment

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of the long-term unemployed to his Department in 1993.

Mr. Burt: The cost of those receiving benefit for more than six months cannot be separated from the planned total benefit expenditure of unemployed people which for the year April 1993 to April 1994 is £10·39 billion.

Notes:

The information is taken from table 5 of the 1993 departmental annual report which is in the Library. The 1994 annual report will be published shortly and will be placed in the Library.

The benefits included are: unemployment benefit, income support, family credit, child benefit, one-parent benefit, housing benefit, community charge benefit, and social fund loans.

Benefits

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account the 1994 uprating benefits for pensioners and sick and disabled people has taken of the rate of inflation.

Mr. Hague: The uprating of benefits from April 1994 is based on the movement in the retail prices index over the preceding September-to-September period. In addition to price indexation, the standard weekly rates of basic retirement and invalidity pensions, severe disablement allowance and income support for sick and disabled people will be increased by 50p single rate or 70p couple rate to provide extra help for VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which area of benefits he proposes to make cuts.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement to the House on 1 December 1993 at columns *1037-59* announcing a full uprating of benefits, substantial extra help towards VAT on fuel and proposals for the reform of a number of benefits. The subsequent Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 1994 was approved by the Commons on 16 February, and will be debated by the Lords on 28 February.

We continue to keep social security under review to ensure that we have the kind of system which will serve the country well into the next century.

Family Allowances

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase family allowances; and by how much.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced that child benefit will be increased in line with prices from April 1994. The rates will increase to £10·20 for the eldest eligible child in the family and £8·25 for each other child.

Disability Allowance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to increase the disability allowance.

Mr. Scott: On 1 December 1993 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced increases in disability living allowance, attendance allowance and disability working allowance from April 1994 as part of the annual uprating of all social security benefits.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: For the year ended 31 August 1993, 47 per cent. of all new appointees were women.

In support of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's public appointments initiative, this Department set a goal for 40 per cent. of new appointees to public bodies to be women. This goal has been exceeded, increasing the overall percentage of women holding public appointments from 27 per cent. in 1991 to 32·5 per cent. in 1993.

Occupational Pension Plans

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to introduce legislation allowing employees who have an occupational pension plan an annual statement of the valuation of their savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The Government are considering, in the light of the report of the Pension Law Review Committee, the whole question of what information should be provided to members of occupational pension schemes, either routinely or on request. Under current legislation, members of defined contribution occupational pension schemes already receive an annual statement showing the value of the member's rights and members of defined benefit schemes have a right to request one.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 1 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Judiciary

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish the total number of lay magistrates, as at 1 January, with statistics showing *(a)* the occupational and age breakdowns of this total, *(b)* the proportion of women and *(c)* the proportion of magistrates of black, Asian and non-white origins; and if he will give the same set of information for the year 1989.

Mr. John M. Taylor: At 1 January 1994 the total number of lay magistrates in England and Wales, including the Duchy of Lancaster, was 30,054, of whom 13,903—46·3 per cent.—were women. At 1 January 1989 the figure was 28,211, of whom 12,214—43·3 per cent.—were women. No information is available centrally on the number of magisrates of black, Asian of non-white origin but in 1993 5·5 per cent. of those appointed were from ethnic minorities; in 1989 the figure was 4·7 per cent. Statistics on occupation and age could be provided only at disproportionate cost, but should the hon. Member require this information for a particular bench it could be supplied to him.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes took place between 12 February 1993 and 1 January 1994, in the total number of *(a)* Lords of Appeal in Ordinary, *(b)* Lords Justices of Appeal, *(c)* heads of division, *(d)* High Court judges, *(e)* circuit judges, *(f)* recorders, *(g)* assistant recorders, *(g)* stipendiary magistrates and *(i)* full-time chairmen who are (i) men, (ii) women, (iii) barristers, (iv) solicitores, (v) black or Asian and (vi) ex-Oxford or Cambridge; and if he will give revised figures for the average ages in each category.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *11*, which updated the information I gave on 12 February 1993.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Planning Policy

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when planning policy guidance note 15 was issued for public consultation; and when he expects to issue it in its final form.

Mr. Brooke: A draft was issued for public consultation on 8 July 1993 together with an associated paper on the protection of conservation areas. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I expect to publish the final version, embodying decisions on the latter, in the late spring or early summer.

Historic Buildings

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Secretary of State for the Environment and *(b)* the chairman of English Heritage in respect of the effect on historic buildings of enabling development.

Mr. Brooke: None.

Turner Paintings

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which paintings by Turner are currently on loan to Government Departments and agencies.

Mr. Brooke: There are two paintings by Turner, both from the Tate gallery, currently on loan through the agency of the Government art collection to Government Departments and agencies. These are "TG0487 The Quiet Ruin; a sketch, evening" and "TG2990 Ariccia (Italianate Landscape)". Both are on display at 10 Downing street.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Standards

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the results of his Department's consultations into future United Kingdom resourcing of the preparation of standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: On 10 June last year, *Official Report*, column *302*, I announced that I was reviewing the need for Government financial assistance to the British Standards Institution, BSI, and ways in which the BSI and standards contribute to improving competitiveness. A consultation document was issued to which over 400 replies were received. I am now able to announce my conclusions and the action which my Department and the BSI plan to take.

Our consultation has shown that the business community believes that standardisation makes an important contribution to competitiveness. Both through voluntary use in the marketplace and in the legislative field, especially in the single market harmonisation programme, standards contribute increasingly to a level playing field in Europe and world wide. The cost of the BSI's role in the standards-writing process, around £30 million per year, is borne largely by industry through subscriptions and purchases of standards. Industry accepts this as appropriate but also values the financial support of Government as a way of maintaining the neutrality and impartiality of the process; as a reflection of Government's own use of standards in procurement and legislation, and on behalf of the wider public interest in standards.

I have listened carefully to the views of business and have concluded that my Department should continue to provide financial support but in the future such assistance should be more precisely targeted. For 1994-95 my Department will contribute £7·3 million to BSI and industry in respect of standards-writing. This will consist of £1·5 million grant in aid to the BSI; £2·5 million of targeted assistance to the BSI to be spent in areas of work to which industry attaches priority—including training of delegates and other support from BSI for overseas standards work—£2·45 million direct to industry through the assisted international travel scheme—an increase of £500,000 to reflect the higher proportion of standards committee work now taking place overseas—and a further £750,000 to industry under schemes to expedite the drafting of standards and £100,000 to consumers to cover the costs of their representation.

In the course of the Government review, concerns have also been expressed about BSI's relationship with its members and about other aspects of corporate governance. I am pleased that the BSI has responded to the concerns of its members and has already taken steps to sharpen up its internal efficiency. Now it will respond further by giving business a bigger say in determining programmes and resource allocation; by being more proactive in overseas standards meetings; and by providing more training for business delegates to overseas meetings. The BSI is also reviewing its relationship with, and its accountability to, its stakeholders in the course of changes to its royal charter and byelaws.

One particular standard which has generated much comment is BS5750, the standard for quality management systems. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Technology has already made an announcement to the House on 7 February, *Official Report*, column 2, about help for small businesses applying for BS5750. I have asked the BSI to consider how it can build on the success of BS5750 and to use its role in standards-making to work with British industry towards the improvement of the general quality of its products.

Concerns have also been expressed to Government about the hybrid role of the BSI as both the national standards organisation and a certification and testing body. My Department has discussed these issues with the BSI. In response to the concerns expressed, the BSI will be taking steps to reinforce the ring-fencing of the BSI standards within the overall organisation.

This is primarily a matter for the BSI and its membership. The BSI must continue to have the confidence of its members and I have asked my officials to keep me informed on developments.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the report of the consultation which has been issued, together with a copy of the responses, other than those where respondents requested the information remain confidential.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider the principles of trade and sustainable development before signing the Uruguay round global trade accounts in Marrakesh in April.

Mr. Needham: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry will attend the Marrakech ministerial meeting of the Uruguay round trade negotiations committee in mid-April, and he will sign the final act of the Uruguay round on behalf of the United Kingdom. The Government are in no doubt that the Uruguay round results, when implemented, will advance the interests of sustainable development throughout the world.

Tidal Energy

Mr. Jopling: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current position with regard to the survey being done to assess the potential to generate electricity from the tidal flows in the Duddon estuary in Cumbria.

Mr. Eggar: A preliminary feasibility study on the Duddon estuary has recently been completed and the final report should be published in approximately one month.

The feasibility study included an assessment of the design, alignment, energy capture, cost and likely cost of electricity from a barrage scheme across the Duddon estuary, together with an assessment of the environmental impact of such a scheme.

European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what safety hazards arise from changing the plug on 16 amp electrical appliances from CENELEC to British standard if it is plugged into circuits of the new European standard lower voltage;

(2) what safety hazards arise from fitting a CENELEC two-pin plug into a BS three-pin socket; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Safety considerations will be an important part of the wider consultations to which I referred in my answer to the hon. Member on 23 February, *Official Report*, column *229*.

Fire Safety

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who conducted the consultation in relation to the construction deregulation task force report in relation to fire protection; if he will place a copy of that report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Consultation on the recommendations of the construction industry deregulation task force on fire safety regulations and their enforcement and other related issues is currently under way as part of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 17 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *381*. The working papers of the task force will be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

Coal Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he is now in a position to publish the total imports in 1993 of *(a)* house coal and *(b)* industrial coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of coal imported during 1993 was as follows:

	Thousand tonnes
Industrial coal	2,028
Domestic coal	628

Following the introduction of the "Intrastat" system for collecting data on trade with our EC partners, the figures involve some estimation of unrecorded imports. They are, therefore, likely to be subject to greater subsequent revision than figures collected on the previous basis.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department has taken to prevent the importation of coal from countries who use child labour slavery or labour exploitation to mine such coal.

Mr. Eggar: As a general rule, there are severe practical difficulties in identifying goods, allegedly produced using child labour or exploited labour, given the complexities of international trade. Also, it is highly doubtful whether the social conditions that give rise to such practices can be improved by restricting trade.

In the specific case of coal from Colombia, which the hon. Member may have in mind, I recently met Dr. Pretelt, the president of Carbocol, who assured me that Colombian labour law, and mining law, prohibits women and under-18s from going underground, and that no Colombian coal for export is mined by children. The Government call on all states which have ratified international instruments covering slavery, servitude, forced labour or child labour to meet their obligations.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish for 1993 details of the 10 major importers of coal and the quantities and cost of the coal imported.

Mr. Eggar: Details of individual companies' coal imports are commercially confidential.

Newspapers and Magazines

Mr. Rooker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take to end the restrictions on supply of newspapers and magainzes by wholesalers to small retail outlets.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Following the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the supply of national newspapers in England and Wales on 9 December 1993, a statutory notice of the Secretary of State's intention to make an order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 in relation to the wholesale supply of national newspapers to retailers in England and Wales was published on 21 December. The MMC's report related only to the supply of national newspapers in England and Wales and the order would not therefore extend to the supply of magazines. A copy of the notice has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his Department's proposals with regard to newspaper distribution.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Following the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the supply of national newspapers in England and Wales on 9 December 1993, a statutory notice of the Secretary of State's intention to make an order under the Fair Trading Act 1973 in relation to the wholesale supply of national newspapers to retailers in England and Wales was published on 21 December. A copy of the notice has been placed in the Library of the House.

Coal Mining

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of coal mining jobs lost since 1979 *(a)* in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency and *(b)* in south Wales.

Mr. Eggar: Since January 1979, the number of coal mining jobs lost in South Wales is 27,218. Information on job losses in the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency is not available.

Car Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from motoring or other organisations regarding the no liability clause of major car parking providers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: This issue has been raised with the Government on a number of occasions, most recently at a meeting on car park security at the Home Office on 2 February which was attended by car park operators and other interested bodies, including motoring organisations. Any specific complaints about anti-competitive actions in respect of car parking should be referred to the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg.

Trade Marks

Mr. Wells: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the totals of applications and registrations made for trade marks in each year since 1988; and what is the mean average processing time required by the Patent Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: The answer is:

	Applications	*Registrations*
1988	38,000	14,381
1989	40,052	22,374
1990	39,632	28,389
1991	34,983	30,421
1992	35,968	35,137
1993	34,871	33,071

For 1993-94 the Trade Marks Registry has a target to register 80 per cent. of unopposed trade mark applications within 24 months of receipt.

The rights in the eventual registration start from the date of application.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to be able to announce the budget for the Insolvency Service commencing in April 1994; what plans he has to increase the level of resources available to the Insolvency Service in 1994-95 to enable the agency to increase the number of directors prosecuted for fraud and the number of directors disqualified for misconduct; and if he will give reasons for his decision.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I hope to be able to publish the results of "MINIS '94" early in the 1994-95 financial year.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money was paid to consultants employed by the Insolvency Service in 1993.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In 1993 a total of £888,550 was paid to consultants employed by or engaged in work for the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to why an unabridged copy of the Stoy Hayward report into the Insolvency Service has not been placed in the Library.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The summary which has been placed in the Library has been agreed by Stoy Hayward as a fair reflection of its report.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to use the private sector to assist the official receiver in his duty to investigate compulsory insolvencies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The focus of the recently announced feasibility study is to assess the costs, benefits and value for money of options to increase private sector involvement in the mechanical processing work of the official receiver thus ensuring that official receivers are able to concentrate more on their investigating role.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to whether cost will be the major consideration in deciding if work currently carried out by the Insolvency Service will be transferred to the private sector.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Value for money will be the major consideration in determining the scope for involving the private sector more in the mechanical processing work in insolvencies.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement as to the effectiveness to the Insolvency Service of the staff currently on loan from other Government Departments.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Staff on loan to the Insolvency Service from other Government Departments have proved generally very effective in assisting on a range of tasks and in the service's efforts to increase the focus on its investigative role.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the projected figures for compulsory insolvencies, differentiating between bankruptcies and companies, for the next five years.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department does not publish forecasts for insolvencies. The working assumption being used in the current "MINIS" resource allocation exercise is that there will be some 28,000 bankruptcies and 7,000 compulsory liquidations in the financial year 1994-95.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the conclusion in the Stoy Hayward report into the Insolvency Service relating to the costs of the private sector undertaking the work of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The recently announced feasibility study will involve further, more detailed work to assess the costs and benefits of the various options identified in the first stage of the review. Any further comment must await the results of the feasibility study.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what resources the inspector general and agency chief executive of the Insolvency Service requested for each of the past six years; and what were the resources granted.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy on 9 February, *Official Report*, column *321*.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff in the Insolvency Service are currently on loan from other Government Departments; which are the Departments concerned; and how many are on loan from each.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As at 1 March 1994, the Insolvency Service has 93 staff on loan from other Government Departments. These are HM Customs and Excise, 34 staff, Employment, 23, Inland Revenue 20, Social Security, 15, and Health, one.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether payment for the second stage review of privatising part, or all, of the Insolvency Service will come from the Insolvency Service budget.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The purpose of the review of the future of the Insolvency Service is to examine the ways in which official receivers may concentrate more on their investigatory role by involving the private sector more in the mechanical processing work in insolvencies. The costs of the second stage of the review will be met from Insolvency Service resources.

Gas Suppliers

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action his Department has taken to encourage other Government Departments to use independent gas suppliers.

Mr. Eggar: It is for each Department to choose the gas supplier that offers the most appropriate combination of price and service standard.

United Kingdom Exports

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *233*, on United Kingdom exports, when relevant figures for the full 1993 calendar year will be available; and if he will publish relevant figures for each *(a)* month and *(b)* quarter of 1993 for as many months or quarters as are currently available.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom exports of goods to the EC is published monthly by the Central Statistical Office. Information on invisible exports to other EC countries is available only annually and the Central Statistical Office plans to make figures for the whole of 1993 available in August 1994.

Oil Exploration

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if any cuttings discharged from exploration or appraisal wells since 31 December 1993 have contained oil exceeding the 1 per cent. limit laid down by the Paris Commission; and if he will name each operator who has breached the limit.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Since December 1993 there have been no requests by operators for exemptions from section 3 of the Prevention of Pollution Act 1971 to discharge oil contaminated cuttings from exploration and appraisal wells.

Bio-fuels

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the most recent forecasts of the contribution bio-fuels are expected to make to energy production from renewable energy sources.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The Department of Trade and Industry does not make forecasts of the contribution any renewables are expected to make to energy production. The Government are working towards a figure of 1500 MW of new electricity generating capacity from renewable energy sources. The renewable energy advisory group report, published in November 1992 as Energy Paper 60—HMSO, ISBN 0 11 414287 4, £15·95—copies of which are in the Libraries of both Houses, gave estimates of the potential for each renewable source of energy and the assumptions on which these estimates were based. Ultimately, the contribution from renewables depends on how competitive they are and whether constraints on their exploitation can be overcome. For example, the waste contracting policy of the waste disposal authorities will largely determine whether municipal wastes are available for beneficial use by energy recovery.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for the appointment of trustees to the Maxwell Pensioners Trust, the Maxwell Pensioners Charitable Trust, the Motability 10th Anniversary Trust, the Far East (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund and Queen Mary's Roehampton Trust. He also appoints the pensions ombudsman, the social fund commissioner and the chief executives of the Department's agencies.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Economic and Social Council

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the results of the elections of the Economic and Social Council in New York on 25 January; how the United Kingdom voted; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Economic and Social Council held an organisational session at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 25 January. During the meeting the president of ECOSOC and three vice-presidents were elected by acclamation. There were no other ECOSOC elections held on 25 January.

Spying

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications he has had with his counterparts in *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* Australia in regard to (i) spying by a Central Intelligence Agency officer and (ii) bugging of offices in Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: I have had no communications with my counterparts in the United States of America or Australia about the allegations referred to in the hon. Member's question. Officials have been in contact but I am not prepared to comment on their exchanges.

Malaysia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the role of the diplomatic wing of the Foreign Office in the Pergau dam project.

Mr. Goodlad: The diplomatic wing plays a full role alongside other Government Departments in considering and advising on aid and trade provision projects, including the Pergau dam.

"The European Community: Facts and Fairytales"

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, columns *553-54*, how many copies of the booklet "The European Community: Facts and Fairytales" were published; what was the budgeted and the actual cost; and how many copies were requested by members of the public.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some 35,000 copies of the booklet "The European Community: Facts and Fairytales" have been printed. The budgeted cost was £11,500. The total cost was £12,498. The initial distribution was 10,000 copies. Since then, a further 23,500 copies have been requested, mainly by Members of Parliament, United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament, trade associations, chambers of commerce, consumer organisations and individual members of the public.

British Youth Council

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds funding has been withdrawn from the British Youth Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The decision to phase out funding for the international work of the British Youth Council was taken because BYC's activities are essentially an extension of its domestic identity, and we can no longer justify giving this activity priority for scarce FCO funds.

Non-governmental Organisations

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings of the round table forum with non-governmental organisations on arms control, security and non-proliferation his Department has hosted since 1979; when the last forum was held; when the next one will be held; and what criteria are used in deciding which groups are to be invited.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible, without incurring a disproportionate cost, to determine accurately how many meetings were held after 1979. They were, however, usually held on a twice-yearly basis. Invitations to take part were issued to groups known to be actively interested in arms control and disarmament issues. There are no plans at present to hold another meeting in the near future.

Central European Undergraduates

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to establish official programmes of support for central and eastern

European undergraduate students who wish to pursue courses at universities in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the EC's Tempus programme a number of undergraduates from central and eastern Europe spend short periods of study at United Kingdom higher education institutions.

Her Majesty's Government's scholarships and training programmes are targeted at postgraduates and young professionals. For example in 1993-94 the FCO is providing some 500 scholarships worth over £2·5 million for central and eastern Europe under the British Chevening scholarships programme, formerly FCOSAS.

UN Conference on Women

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the siting in Beijing of the United Nations conference on women in 1995; what views have been expressed by his Department to the United Nations and other interested bodies regarding the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The choice of Peking as venue for the World Conference was made by United Nations member states on the recommendation of countries in the Asia region of the United Nations and in accordance with the United Nations principle of geographical rotation. We want to play a strong role internationally on women's rights and we believe that more can be achieved for women throughout the world by attending the 1995 conference than by not doing so.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers and officials will expect to be attending the United Nations conference on women in 1995.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No decision has yet been taken on the exact composition of the United Kingdom delegation to the conference, but we expect the Minister who leads the delegation to be a woman. It is likely to include representatives from the Women's National Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, as well as Government officials.

Mrs. Liberty Nicos Cloke

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision will be taken on the application made by Mrs. Liberty Nicos Cloke and her son—Ref: 15508—at the United Kingdom in the Philippines to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to let the hon. Member have a substantive reply in due course.

Commission of European Communities

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will produce a table to show the average number of people employed by the Commission of European Communities now and in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Goodlad: There were 14,325 Commission employees in February 1993. We are seeking the figures for previous years.

Entry Clearance (Jamaica)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the independent monitor of refusals in entry clearance cases has to visit Jamaica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The independent monitor, Lady Anson, will visit our posts in Dhaka, Bombay, Istanbul and Accra between 1 and 15 March. She has no plans to visit Jamaica.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all projects under consideration for support under the aid and trade provision in countries with a per capita income of over $700 per year; and what progress is being made in his policy of concentrating on developing countries with per capital income below the level announced in June 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member for Monklands, West to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 28 June 1993, *Official Report*, column *356*.

Of the transitional projects mentioned, the small technical co-operation projects referred to are no longer under consideration having been won or withdrawn; and the other two projects listed are still under consideration. As announced on 17 June 1993, the aid and trade provision is now focused on credit-worthy low-income countries with a GNP per capital under $700, and all new ATP cases from that date are subject to this policy.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the priorities in the allocation of the aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding reply 28 February 1994]:* The priorities in the allocation of the aid and trade provision are the support of sound development projects of particular commercial and industrial importance to Britain in credit-worthy, low-income developing countries.

Caribbean Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the professional discipline, *(b)* the duties and responsibilities and *(c)* the annual cost to the Overseas Development Administration, including the cost of offices and support staff, of each of the technical co-operation officers working in the field of banking, finance insurance and/or taxation in (i) Anguilla, (ii) the Cayman Islands, (iii) Montserrat and (iv) the Turks and Caicos Islands; and if he will place a copy of the job description of each of those posts in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are four such posts filled by technical co-operation officers in the Turks and Caicos Islands, all in the general finance field; two in Montserrat, one in finance and the other in taxation; and none in Anguilla or the Cayman Islands.

The cost of offices and support staff are met by the host Governments. The cost to the Overseas Development Administration of each officer depends on individual personal circumstances but the average cost, including salary and accommodation and air fares, is approximately £70,000 per annum.

A note containing the terms of reference for each post has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Somaliland

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what strategic plan has been proposed by the United Nations Development Programme to improve conditions in Somaliland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Principal responsibility for strategic planning in all regions of Somalia lies with UNOSOM's development office. Providing the environment is secure, UNDO aims to undertake planning missions to the north-west region soon. In the north-west, UNDP is supporting small-scale community-based rehabilitation projects and reviewing plans for demobilisation, revenue generation and reintegration of the population.

Thailand

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the World bank report entitled "Thailand: the Pak Mun Hydropower Project—Mid-Term Review" in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As I explained in my reply of 13 December to the hon. Member, *Official Report*, columns *475-76*, this report remains confidential under the bank's disclosure of information policy; so I regret that I cannot place a copy in the Library. The bank, however, has recently published an information note on the Pak Mun project, copies of which are being placed in both Libraries of Parliament.

Arun III, Nepal

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether the United Kingdom position on the Arun III project proposal has been determined; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects the Arun III project proposal to be presented to the board of the World bank;

(3) whether the ODA has completed an independent assessment of the Arun III project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Subject to completion of the necessary formalities, the World bank expects to present the Nepal power generation project to the board of directors at the end of April. We will form a view once the project documents are circulated. We have not commissioned an independent assessment.

Pergau Dam

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will institute a public inquiry into the circumstances of the grant of aid to the Pergau dam project in Malaysia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: *[holding reply 28 February 1994]:* No. The Government will co-operate fully with the inquiry of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee into this matter.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on the proposals put forward in the draft communication of the Commission of the Council and the European Parliament on immigration and asylum policies on how to counter the dangers of polarising opinions on immigration.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The European Commission has not yet published its proposed communication on immigration and asylum policies. When it is made available to member states, copies will be deposited in both Houses and the Government will submit an explanatory memorandum in accordance with the scrutiny procedures for title VI matters.

Marriage Guidance

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of grant his Department has given to *(a)* Relate and *(b)* the London Marriage Guidance Council for each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: Administration of the Government's marriage guidance grant in aid programme is the responsibility of the Home Office. The grant to Relate for each year from 1987-88 to 1993-94 is set out in the table:

	£
1987-88	912,870
1988-89	935,910
1989-90	958,890
1990-91	1,006,840
1991-92	1,107,500
1992-93	1,511,400
1993-94	1,530,500

In addition, over the period in question, Relate has received Home Office funding for specific projects totalling £648,000.

The London Marriage Guidance Council does not receive funds from central Government.

Cannabis

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what authority a general practitioner can prescribe cannabis;

(2) what is his policy in respect of the issuing of a cannabis licence to *(a)* a general practitioner, *(b)* a consultant neurologist or *(c)* a patient.

Mr. Maclean: Cannabis is a controlled drug designated under section 7 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and it is therefore unlawful for a medical practitioner to prescribe it to a patient. Our policy of not issuing licences under the 1971 Act to allow it to be prescribed is based on long-standing advice that cannabis has no recognised medical use.

In the absence of convincing evidence, which would need to include the necessary evaluation and approval by the Medicines Control Agency, that there was a legitimate use for cannabis in specific medical conditions, I see no reason to reconsider this policy.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all court cases since 1990 that resulted in cannabis being made available to multiple sclerosis sufferers.

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of any such cases.

Correspondence

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East will receive a reply to his letter dated 12 January to the Midland inquiry unit with follow-up to the Minister of State on 17 January.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I wrote to the hon. Member on 22 February.

Mobile Phone Theft

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to curb the theft of mobile phones, especially from motor vehicles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office is supporting the Department of Trade and Industry in its discussions with the mobile phone industry on what further measures can be taken to reduce the theft of mobile phones, such as the promotion of equipment marking and improved controls of electronic serial numbers.

The Home Office is also continuing its car crime prevention campaign. One of the key aims of this is to encourage motorists not to leave valuables in their cars.

Deportation Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will respond formally to the Police Complaints Authority report on deportation policy arising from the investigation into the death of Joy Gardner; and if he will place a copy of the report's recommendation in the Library.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Police Complaints Authority has not made any such report.

Car Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many car parking providers have joined the Association of Chief Police Officers-Automobile Association secure car parking scheme;

(2) how many of the major car parking providers have joined the Association of Chief Police Officers-Automobile Association secure car parking scheme; and what is his policy on the scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. However, a range of car parking providers, including local authorities, British Rail and private operators, have so far received "Secured Car Parks" awards. As of 23 February 1994, 167 awards—129 gold and 38 silver—had been made to car parks under the scheme.

The Home Office fully supports this initiative and has recently provided £30,000 to assist in its promotion. I urged major car park operators to participate in it when I met with them on 2 February to discuss car park security.

Young Offenders

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the study undertaken by Dr. Jonathon Brostoff and Superintendent Peter Bennett to compare the dietary histories of persistent young offenders with matched control groups of non-offenders and clinically diagnosed hyperactive children was started; and when it is likely to be completed.

Mr. Maclean: The study began on 1 July 1993 and is due to be completed by 31 December 1994.

Fine Defaulters

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are presently serving sentences in prison for the non-payment of fines.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Stephen Byers, dated 1 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are presently serving sentences in prison for the non-payment of fines.

On 31 January 1994 there were 540 fine defaulters (518 males and 22 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Traffic Restrictions, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the implications for central London arising from the City of London's traffic restriction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the traffic scheme introduced by the City of London police was the subject of prior consultation, and that there is continuing liaison between the two forces to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum. I understand that, as a result, no significant problems have been experienced.

European Commission

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed by the European Commission to work under the direction of the Commissioner responsible for internal and judicial affairs, and immigration; and what is the equivalent number employed by or seconded to the European Council working on the common policy on justice and home affairs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that approximately 30 staff in the European Commission and 11 staff in the Council of the European Union are engaged in work arising from title VI of the treaty on European Union.

Quayyam Abdul

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will instruct the high commission in Islamabad to issue a visa to Quayyam Abdul ref: TH/63011/93, following the decision of the immigration appeal tribunal on 30 December to refuse the Home Office leave to appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In accordance with normal procedures a copy of the determination refusing leave to appeal was sent to Islamabad on 20 January. It is for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office post in Islamabad to decide whether to issue entry clearance. The hon. Member will be informed of the outcome in this case.

Wahid Akhtar

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will instruct the British commission in Islamabad to issue a visa to Wahid Akhtar, ref: TH/2480/93, following the decision of the immigration appeal tribunal on 17 December to refuse the Home Office leave to appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In accordance with normal procedures a copy of the determination refusing leave to appeal was sent to Islamabad on 28 January. It is for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office post in Islamabad to decide whether to issue entry clearance. The hon. Member will be informed of the outcome of this case.

Immigration (Jamaicans)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what complaints the immigration and nationality department complaints audit committee has received concerning Jamaican nationals refused entry as visitors to the United Kingdom at Gatwick last December; to whom complaints may be made; and to what address they should be sent.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I would refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 January, *Official Report*, columns *338-39*, to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). The complaints audit committee has received no such complaints, but since it is not responsible for the investigation of individual complaints it would pass any such correspondence direct to the complaints unit, immigration and nationality department for action.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each region, how many prisoners were occupying police cells at the latest date for which figures are available because of lack of prison accommodation; how many police officers were diverted from their duties as a result; and what is the cost in financial terms for police pay or otherwise.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. Derek Lewis to Mr. David Young, dated 1 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for information about the number of prisoners occupying police cells at the latest date for which figures are available, because of lack of prison accommodation; how many police officers were diverted from their duties as a result: and what is the cost in financial terms for police pay or otherwise.

On Monday 28 February 1994, the number of prisoners being held in police cells due to lack of prison accommodation was 294. All of these were held by Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Northumbria, Lancashire and Humberside police forces.

Information on how many police officers were diverted from their duties as a result of these lockouts is not readily available. Police forces arrange their own duty rostas, and usually use overtime or rest call ins to look after Prison Service inmates.

As yet we have insufficient details from the police to provide information about police costs. I will write again as soon as we have it.

Constituency Reorganisation

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will table the interim costs of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission's reorganisation by each constituency in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The costs incurred by the Boundary Commissions for England and Wales in carrying out their general reviews of parliamentary constituencies were, at 31 December 1993, £5·5 million. The information is not available on a constituency basis.

Deaths by Fire

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a table showing the deaths by fire of *(a)* infants, *(b)* adolescents, *(c)* adults and *(d)* the elderly for the latest 20 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The latest published statistics of the number of fire-related deaths by age from fires attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom are shown in table 23 of the annual Home Office report, "Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1991", a copy of which is in the Library. I will reply as soon as possible with information for earlier years.

PRIME MINISTER

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise the issue of the global proliferation consequences of plutonium reprocessing at the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield at his forthcoming meeting with President Clinton in Washington.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has no plans to do so.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had over the last three months with the Indian Prime Minister on matters concerning Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has had no direct discussions with the Indian Prime Minister since their meeting in January 1993. My right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed Kashmir with Narasimha Rao during his visit to India last November.

We have continued to take every opportunity to discuss our concerns about Kashmir with the Indians. Senior officials had extensive talks in Delhi in early February.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 1 March.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in the United States for a series of meetings including with President Clinton and the United Nations Secretary-General.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much his office has spent on official gifts for visiting dignitaries since November 1990; and what are the criteria for determining the cost and appropriateness of such gifts.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* I have been asked to reply.

It is not the normal practice of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to provide official gifts for visiting dignitaries.

ENVIRONMENT

Correspondence

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter sent to him by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed on 10 November on the subject of Castle Morpeth borough council's objections to the Government's proposals on market franchise rights.

Mr. Curry: I replied to the right hon. Member's letter on Monday 28 February.

Deregulation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify for each of the proposals put forward to Government by the business deregulation task forces, and represented by numbers 193, 196, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 229, 264, 273, 283, 287, 292, 309 and 314 in the publication deregulation task forces proposals for reform *(a)* which the Government have already taken action on, *(b)* which are under further consideration and *(c)* which are not being considered further.

Mr. Gummer: The substantial deregulation action that my Department is taking in relation to all the task force recommendations, including those cited, to reduce unnecessary controls on business while safeguarding environmental and public safety is fully set out in each of the three categories at pages 36 to 44 of the DTI publication "Deregulation—Cutting Red Tape" that was issued on 19 January. A copy of this publication was placed in the Library of the House on that date.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Baldry: In addition to the bodies identified in "Public Bodies 1993", and excluding departmental committees, of which no central record is maintained, the Secretary of State makes appointments to the following bodies:

New bodies established since Public Bodies 1993 (1 April 1993)

Appointment	*Annual salary £*
Birmingham Castle Vale Housing Action Trust	
Chairman	25,315
Deputy Chairman	8,590
10 Members	5,030
English Partnerships	
Chairman	unpaid
Deputy Chairman	24,605
4 Members	6,310
Local Government Staff Commission	
Chairman	25,200
2 Members	13,890
Tower Hamlets Housing Action Trust	
Chairman	25,315
Deputy Chairman	8,590
8 Members	5,030
Executive Agencies	
Ordnance Survey	
Director General	[1]—
3 management board non-executives	5,262
Planning Inspectorate	
Chief Planning Inspector	[1]—
4 Members of Advisory Board	unpaid
Building Research Establishment	
Chief Executive	[1]—
QE II Conference Centre	
Chief Executive	[2]—
The Buying Agency	
Chief Executive	[2]—
Security Facilities Executive	
Chief Executive	[2]—
Other Bodies	
Office of Water Resources (OFWAT)	
Director General	[3]—
7 National Park Authorities (England)	
One-third of Members	unpaid
Broads Authority	
9 of the 35 Members	unpaid
Sutton Housing Trust	
4 of the 7 Trustees	2,120
Commission for Local Administration	
Chairman	[4]—
2 Commissioners	[3]—

[1] Civil Service Grade 3.
[2] Civil Service Grade 5.
[3] Civil Service Grade 2.
[4] Civil Service Grade 1.

Appointments to the Commission for Local Administration are made by Her Majesty the Queen on the advice of the Secretary of State. One commissioner receives an addition of £1,000 per annum as deputy chairman.

The Secretary of State also appoints the local government independent adjudicator—£5,750—and nominates 14 members for the European Community's Committee of the Regions. The appointments are formally made by the EC Council of Ministers.

Highways

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column 5, if he will list the powers available to highway authorities to regulate or restrict vehicular use on byways open to all traffic and the circumstances in which these powers can be used.

Mr. Atkins: Local authorities' powers to regulate and restrict traffic are contained principally in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended. They apply to all roads over which the public has access—which includes byways open to all traffic. The powers are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Peat

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to include, as members of the working group into peat and related matters, independent producers of peat alternatives who are not involved in the peat industry.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no plans to include independent producers of peat alternatives as members of the working group into peat. However, the scope of the greater use of alternative materials is an important feature of the group's work. I propose to consult the producers before finalising any future policies for peatlands.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the minutes of the meetings of the working group into peat and related matters.

Mr. Baldry: I have no plans to place the minutes of the meetings of the working group on peat in the Library. However, I will be publishing later this year, for wide consultation, a report summarising the information that has been made available to the group, together with a draft policy paper and a draft guidance note. Copies of these will be placed in the Library.

Mencap, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when outstanding transitional special needs management allowance will be paid to Liverpool Mencap; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Housing Corporation is responsible for the payment of revenue support in respect of special needs projects operated by housing associations. To protect the position of these Mencap schemes, the corporation offered to make funding available to the housing association involved, Liverpool Housing Trust. Having assessed the information provided by the trust, the corporation will be paying transitional special needs management allowance in April.

Homelessness

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimate of the annual cost of providing public housing or other publicly funded residential care for people who are homeless in England; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The information requested by the hon. Member is not held centrally.

Contracts

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those contracts let by his Department in the last five years in which there was a requirement for specialised knowledge of local government accountancy showing for each contract the contractor, the price, the subject, the estimated number of person-days and whether the final report has been published or otherwise made available to the House.

Mr. Gummer: Many of the consultancy and research contracts let by the Department require some knowledge of local government accountancy, even if local government finance is not the main subject. It is not practicable to identify all the contracts that might be involved or the detailed information requested by the hon. Member except at disproportionate cost.

Children at Risk

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the allocation within Lewisham's standard spending assessment, on a per capita basis, for children at risk, during the next financial year; what is the allocation for each of the other London boroughs; on what basis this formula operates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bal[illegible] The children's personal social services element for 1994-95 for Lewisham is £107 per head of resident population. Information for other London boroughs is in the table. The formula uses a "client group approach"; the client group is the estimated number of children at risk. Cost adjustments are made to reflect the increased costs associated with social conditions and differences in the costs of provision between areas. The formula for the children's PSS element, along with the formulae for other SSA elements, has been revised in the light of the SSA review.

Table showing the children's personal social service (PSS) element for 1994-95 per head of resident population for Lewisham and the other London boroughs

Borough	*PSS for Children (£/head)*
Lewisham	107
City of London	26
Camden	114
Greenwich	83
Hackney	175
Hammersmith and Fulham	108
Islington	150
Kensington and Chelsea	81
Lambeth	164
Southwark	129
Tower Hamlets	138
Wandsworth	79

Borough	*PSS for Children (£/head)*
Westminster	85
Barking and Dagenham	42
Barnet	42
Bexley	25
Brent	108
Bromley	26
Croydon	51
Ealing	68
Enfield	42
Haringey	125
Harrow	35
Havering	25
Hillingdon	35
Hounslow	59
Kingston-upon-Thames	28
Merton	39
Newham	118
Redbridge	41
Richmond-upon-Thames	25
Sutton	30
Waltham Forest	74

Rent Assessment Panels

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *109*, what is the breakdown by occupation of the members of the 13 rent assessment panels in England.

Sir George Young: A total of 143 hold a legal qualification, 172 are surveyors or valuers, and 127 are appointed as lay members. The occupations of the lay members are varied: where details are known centrally, they are recorded in the list of members which was placed in the Library on 18 January.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the last meeting of the public information panel of his Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee was held; and what information he has as to the next planned RAWPIP meeting.

Mr. Atkins: The last meeting of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee's public interest panel was held on 23 February 1990. Future meetings of the panel are a matter for the committee.

Council Tax

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals against banding for council tax are outstanding in Lambeth; how many have been determined *(a)* on the grounds of manifest error, *(b)* by agreement and *(c)* following a hearing; and how long it will be before all outstanding appeals are likely to be settled or determined.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 February, column *967*.

Details of the number of the settlements which were resolved by agreement, the number which were withdrawn by the proposer and the number determined by tribunal for each local authority area are not collected centrally.

As I announced on 11 January, we expect four out of five appeals to be dealt with before the end of the year and the remainder to be settled as rapidly as possible thereafter.

Sea Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the numbers of sea birds washed up on British coasts over the last three months; what were the causes of death; in what areas these birds were washed up; and what types of birds they were.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's statutory conservation advisers do not keep records of the numbers of sea birds washed up dead on British coasts because this information has been found to be of limited value in interpreting wildlife mortality incidents.

During the past three months there have been two major incidents involving the deaths of seabirds. One concerned pollution off the Lancashire coast at the beginning of the year and I refer the hon. Member to the answer he was given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London on 26 January, *Official Report*, column *245*.

More recently, between 25,000 and 60,000 guillemots and shags are estimated to have been washed up on the north and east coast of Britain. Starvation is believed to be the principal cause of death, possibly due to a combination of strong onshore winds which may have disturbed normal feeding activity and, perhaps, a mismatch between bird location and food activity.

Three other incidents have occurred in the Irish sea involving oil pollution in which over 1,500 sea birds were affected, including common scoter, guillemot, great crested grebe and razorbill.

Local Authority Rents

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the average local authority rent in each London borough for each year since 1980 with the percentage increase for each year in real terms.

Sir George Young: I have today placed in the Library a table showing the average local weekly unrebated rent for each London borough in financial years since 1988-89, including provisional figures for 1993-94. The percentage increases of rents expressed at 1988-89 prices for each year from 1989-90 are also given.

The information for London boroughs could be provided for the years before 1988-89 only at disproportionate cost.

Rent Officers

Mr. Peter Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if rent officers, in their determination of fair rents for unfurnished private accommodation in inner London, are currently obliged to disregard scarcity; and if he will make a statement on recent changes in fair rents in inner London.

Sir George Young: When determining the fair rent for any property, the rent officer is required to follow section 70 of the Rent Act 1977. This requires the rent officer to assume that the number of people seeking accommodation is not substantially greater than the number of homes available for letting: colloquially this amounts to disregarding any element of market rents which is due to scarcity.

Fair rents generally have been rising in recent years. This is a matter for rent officers and rent assessment committees, but it seems likely that, among other factors, it reflects the increased availability of evidence about market rent levels and a view that the discount to be allowed for scarcity has diminished following the deregulation of new lettings in 1989.

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he received representations from the environment directorate of the European Commission in relation to the compatibility of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage with the European Commission habitats directive and wild birds directive; if he will place a copy of such communication or letter in the library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend received a letter from the Environment Commissioner about the Cardiff bay barrage on 27 January. Such communications are confidential between the Government and the Commission.

Local Goverment Commission

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions he has reached on the Local Government Commission's report on Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have today written to Sir John Banham, chairman of the Local Government Commission for England, about the Commission's report, "Final Recommendations on the Future Local Government of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset".

I am still considering the recommendations for both Avon and Somerset. Having carefully considered the commission's recommendations for Gloucestershire, together with representations made to me, I am not at present convinced that effective and convenient local government will be best achieved by making no change to the current structure of local government in the county.

I therefore intend to direct the commission to conduct a further review of Gloucestershire; but before issuing a formal direction I have invited the commission's views on timing.

As with the further reviews of Derbyshire and County Durham, which I announced on 29 November 1993, I shall be directing the commission to have regard to the revised procedure and policy guidance issued in November 1993. I announced on 3 February that the final sentence of paragraph 3 of the policy guidance had been deleted by the High Court ruling on 28 January.

The review of Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset was conducted in accordance with the original policy guidance which I issued to the commission in July 1992. The revised policy guidance which I issued on 2 November 1993 clarified the Government's views on a number of issues, including the importance of local consensus. Representations have been made to me by local authorities in Gloucestershire that they should be given the opportunity to make fresh proposals on the basis of the new guidance. I consider that the local authorities and people of the area ought to be given that chance.

A copy of my letter to Sir John Banham has been placed in the Library.

Vacant Dwellings

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what progress local authorities are making in reducing the numbers of vacant dwellings they own; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Government have been encouraging local authorities to keep the number of empty council dwellings to a minimum so that the most effective use is made of the council housing stock. I am pleased to say that the local authorities have responded well to this encouragement and have been making good progress in recent years in reducing the number of their vacant dwellings.

As at 1 April 1993 "management vacants"—those ready for occupation immediately or after minor works —were 40,000 compared to 54,000 in 1987—a drop of 26 per cent. The total number of vacant council dwellings were 71,000 compared to 112,000 in 1987.

Management vacants provide an indication of the empty dwellings available to meet housing need. The 20 authorities with the highest number of management vacant at 1 April 1993 are:

Ranking of authorities by numbers of Management Vacants at 1 April 1993.

	Stock	*Management Vacants*	*Percentage*
1) Hackney	40,802	1,911	4·68
2) Manchester	83,710	1,306	1·50
3) Sheffield	73,935	1,104	1·49
4) Liverpool	56,906	969	1·70
5) Leeds	79,638	907	1·14
6) Birmingham	107,288	896	0·84
7) Lambeth	44,523	825	1·85
8) Tower Hamlets	40,099	679	1·69
9) Southwark	55,377	617	1·11
10) Salford	34,750	608	1·75
11) Greenwich	33,202	557	1·68
12) Newcastle upon Tyne	40,368	550	1·36
13) Islington	37,608	547	1·45
14) Bristol	35,986	519	1·44
15) Wolverhampton	33,839	503	1·49
16) Nottingham	37,895	502	1·32
17) Coventry	21,441	483	2·25
18) Bradford	30,917	458	1·48
19) North Tyneside	24,058	435	1·81
20) Walsall	32,459	427	1·32

I am today placing in the Library a complete list of local authorities ranked on this basis.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* I am not aware that any such instruction has been issued to the accounting officer of my Department during the period in question.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Beekeepers

Sir David Steel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps the Government are taking to safeguard the incomes of beekeepers, following the cut in customs duties for honey imported from outside the EC agreed in the recent general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations.

Mr. Jack: The problems faced by European beekeepers were discussed by the Agriculture Council on 24 January this year. At the request of the presidency the Commission will now make an analysis of the market situation and produce a reflections document for further consideration by the Council.

Farms

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has relating agricultural employment to farm size, as measured by standard gross margin; what information she has on the employment generation record of different sizes and types of farm; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Information collected in the annual census of agricultural holdings includes the number of persons engaged in agriculture according to whether they are farmers, partners, spouses of farmers family or hired workers, full or part time, male or female. It also includes details of the level of cropping and stocking of holdings which enables the economic size and type of the farm to be determined. These data are available on a consistent basis for each year from 1988. Data for 1992 are contained in the table.

Numbers of persons employed in agriculture in England as at June 1992

	Farm size group measured in ESU[1]				
	Less than 8 very small	*8- < 40 small*	*40 < 100 medium*	*100 < 200 large*	*200 and over very large*
Family workers					
full time	1,208	3,783	6,60[illegible]	4,173	1,767
part time	2,704	3,637	2,674	999	420
Hired workers					
full time	4,034	7,427	14,767	16,781	31,195
part time	3,411	6,553	7,386	5,046	8,906
Salaried managers	619	879	1,145	1,336	3,018
Farmers, partners and directors (including spouses)	61,460	63,848	54,559	22,928	10,542

[1] 1 ESU is equivalent to 1,000 ecu of standard gross margin at average 1979 to 1981 values.

North-east Drift Net Fishery

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations her Department has received about the opening date of the north-east coast drift net fishery; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have been asked by representatives of certain salmon angling and conservation organisations to postpone the opening date of the north-east coast salmon drift net fishery until 1 July. We are giving that request careful consideration and I hope to further address this matter in the near future.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what intention her Department has to phase out hill livestock compensatory allowance payments; what representations she has received regarding any intention to phase out hill livestock compensatory allowance payments; and if she will make a statement regarding the maintenance of hill livestock compensatory allowance payments for the duration of this Parliament.

Mr. Jack: I have received a number of representations about the future of hill livestock compensatory allowances. I have no intention of phasing out these payments, which are vital to the continuation of extensive livestock farming in the hills and uplands, and I fully recognise the contribution which this sector of agriculture makes in economic social and environmental terms.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish a table showing, in 1992-93 prices, the gross public spending for each year since 1990-91 and the projected expenditure for each year to 1995-96 for each executive non-departmental public body sponsored by her Department, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 15 February 1994]:* I attach a table showing total gross expenditure by executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department for the years 1990-91 to 1991-92, adjusted to 1992-93 prices. The figures for 1992-93 are shown in the publication "Public Bodies 1993", which is available in the Library of the House. Expenditure figures for 1993-94 are not yet available. Projected expenditure figures for future years will appear when the estimates are laid before the House.

Table of Executive Non-departmental Public Bodies

£ million

Body	Total gross expenditure 1990-91	Total gross expenditure 1991-92	Total gross voted expenditure 1990-91	Total gross voted expenditure 1991-92
Agricultural Training Board	[1]n/a		11·428	7·580
Apple and Pear Research Council	0·193	0·369	nil	nil
Food From Britain	8·628	8·374	4·969	4·673
Home Grown Cereals Authority	6·800	7·867	1·211	[2,3]1·105
Horticultural Development Council	1·965	3·219	nil	nil
Horticulture Research International	17·586	21·887	14·395	20·448
Meat and Livestock Commission	48·488	49·264	10·838	[3]9·622
Royal Botanic Gardens	18·926	20·456	14·564	16·826
Sea Fisheries Industry Authority	8·675	9·208	4·032	2·652
Wine Standards Board	0·379	0·355	0·162	0·155

[1] 1 October 1989-30 September 1990=£9·975 million and 1 October 1990-31 March 1992=£14·053 million. Not indexed to 1992-93 price levels.

[2] All but £100,000 (–VAT) was paid in respect of agency work, which the HCGA carries out on behalf of IBEA.

[3] Includes expenditure funded by and MAFF the Intervention Board executive agency.

Forests (Access)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the average cost to English local authorities for each access agreement for privatised Forestry Commission land;

(2) what assessment has been made of the cost to English local authorities of access agreements for privatised Forestry Commission land.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The Forestry Commission recently wrote to all 45 county councils in England asking, among other things, for an estimate of the costs they incurred in making access arrangements. Thirty-three county councils replied, but only two completed the answer on cost; one estimated the cost at £100, the other at £1,000.

WALES

Earth Tremors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the last four years, and for the current year to date *(a)* the location and *(b)* the Richter scale measurement of earth tremors that have occurred; and what structural damage was reported.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has placed the information requested in the Library of the House. The British Geological Survey has located 1,478 earthquakes in the United Kingdom and its offshore area in the period January 1990 to mid-February 1994. Two of these, at Bishop's Castle on 2 April 1990 and at Caernarfon on 19 July 1992, caused slight damage in Wales.

Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many homes were available for rent in Wales in 1984; and how many are currently available.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of dwellings available for rent in Wales is published annually in "Welsh Housing Statistics". At 1 December 1984 there were estimated to be 378,000 dwellings available for rent in Wales; at 1 April 1993 there were 343,000. In the same period, 53,000 council tenants purchased their own homes and between 1 January 1985 and 30 April 1993, a total of 82,000 new homes were built in Wales.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total income received by each district council from the sales of council houses in each of the past five years; what percentage of these has been reclaimed by his Department; and what is the projected figure, from each council, for the building of new council housing in the next financial year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on capital receipts for each local authority from the sale of council houses in each of the last five years is given in the following table. The Welsh Office does not reclaim capital receipts. These are used by local authorities to meet credit liabilities or for new capital spending in accordance with sections 59 and 60 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The Welsh Office does not have complete information on local authority housing capital expenditure plans for 1994-95 following my right hon. Friend's announcement of capital allocations on 14 December 1993.

Capital receipts from the sales of council houses

(£'000s)

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Alyn and Deeside	2,257	3,723	2,213	1,078	1,030
Colwyn	1,305	1,025	705	378	379
Delyn	1,070	1,928	1,332	894	806
Glyndwr	1,875	1,933	868	471	524
Rhuddlan	1,541	1,413	832	535	362
Wrexham Maelor	4,433	10,385	4,328	3,191	2,759
Carmarthen	1,549	1,793	1,651	1,182	1,040
Ceredigion	2,291	3,133	1,843	1,288	1,565
Dinefwr	1,198	1,153	1,163	600	450
Llanelli	3,258	3,317	2,336	2,060	1,489
Preseli Pembrokeshire	3,137	4,214	2,333	1,485	1,774
South Pembrokeshire	1,745	1,938	1,124	829	516

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Blaenau Gwent	2,932	4,759	2,163	1,604	1,031
Islwyn	4,118	4,187	1,325	1,520	1,124
Monmouth	4,097	4,333	2,252	1,983	1,613
Newport	6,972	8,600	2,744	2,112	1,881
Torfaen	7,170	9,218	4,653	3,101	3,311
Aberconwy	2,566	3,242	1,231	874	515
Arfon	2,085	2,688	1,204	890	669
Dwyfor	352	498	591	239	271
Meirionnydd	1,054	1,207	427	406	241
Ynys Mon	2,918	3,757	1,871	1,011	629
Cynon Valley	1,302	1,542	1,073	879	651
Merthyr Tydfil	2,663	2,944	1,373	712	976
Ogwr	5,144	5,992	3,500	2,503	1,614
Rhondda	557	742	621	340	373
Rhymney Valley	3,023	4,602	3,440	2,238	1,885
Taff Ely	4,707	6,180	3,539	2,667	2,162
Brecknock	1,977	2,088	1,132	780	586
Montgomeryshire	1,864	2,228	1,080	1,000	878
Radnorshire	774	908	575	440	525
Cardiff	14,349	16,819	7,028	5,361	3,765
Vale of Glamorgan	5,755	5,065	2,253	1,967	2,006
Port Talbot	4,211	5,204	2,661	2,377	1,733
Lliw Valley	1,731	2,966	2,393	1,331	1,024
Neath	2,482	3,043	1,913	1,279	991
Swansea	8,467	9,258	4,200	2,988	1,986
Total Districts	118,929	148,025	75,971	54,593	45,134

Source: Local authority returns.

Diabetes

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of people suffering from diabetes *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Health Planning Forum's report "Physical and Sensory Disability", which was published by the Welsh Office in November 1991, estimated that there were between 50,000 and 60,000 non-insulin-dependent diabetics in Wales. No estimate is available centrally of the number of people with insulin-dependent diabetes. There are no estimates of numbers of diabetics available centrally for areas within Wales.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the facilities, and consultant staff specifically available for the treatment of diabetes *(a)* within Wales, *(b)* within the Mid Glamorgan health authority and *(c)* within Merthy Tydfil and Rhymney.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Details of facilities available in Wales for the treatment of diabetes are not held centrally. Much treatment of diabetic patients is undertaken by general practitioners. The Welsh Medical Committee produced a report "Diabetes Care in Wales—Service Provisions and Recommendations" in 1991, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. It demonstrates that all district general hospitals in Wales have consultant physician staff with a special interest in diabetes.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultative circulars have been issued by his Department under the terms of the Education Act 1993, on the matter of pupils with educational problems; how many were in the Welsh language; whether he expects Welsh-medium schools or Welsh-speaking teachers, school governors or education administrators to respond to these circulars in English; and if he will make a statement on the policy of his Department in these matters.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has issued for consultation with local education authorities, teacher associations and other organisations draft circulars on the development of special schools, on the organisation of special educational provision and on pupils with problems. In addition, the Department has issued a consultation paper on the special education needs tribunal and on the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. The draft code of practice has been made available in both the English and Welsh languages. As is our general policy, those wishing to write to the Department may do so in either English or Welsh.

The Department's policy has been to issue circulars of guidance on education matters simultaneously in both the English and Welsh languages, whenever possible. However, there have been occasions when it has not been possible to obtain a Welsh translation to allow those being consulted sufficient time to consider the proposals. In order to give them this, it has been necessary to issue a document in English only.

As with all Welsh Office documents which go to schools, the final versions of these circulars will issue in both languages.

The Department's policies and practices as regards services for users of the Welsh language are currently being reviewed in the light of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Department will publish, in due course, following consultation, a scheme having regard to the statutory guidelines of the Welsh Language Board as approved by Parliament.

Bird Killing

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has, by species, of the number of raptors killed in Wales, in each of the last three years, by *(a)* shooting, *(b)* poisoning or *(c)* other means.

Mr. Redwood: The information available to the Department is shown in the following table:

		1991			*1992*			*1993*	
	Shot	*Poisoned*	*Other*	*Shot*	*Poisoned*	*Other*	*Shot*	*Poisoned*	*Other*
Sparrowhawk	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	4
Merlin	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Barn Owl	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1
Common Buzzard	0	1	25	2	1	14	0	4	13
Kestrel	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	3
Goshawk	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Peregrine Falcon	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Long-Eared Owl	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Tawny Owl	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red Kite	0	1	3	0	6	1	0	3	3

Dentists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dental practitioners in the whole of Dwyfor and Arfon areas are taking on patients on the NHS; and if he will take urgent action to ensure an adequate supply of dentists in this area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are six general dental practitioners in the Dwyfor and Arfon areas who are taking on new NHS patients, four of whom are accepting only children. The Secretary of State has given permission to the family health services authority to employ up to four whole-time-equivalent salaried dentists to ensure the availability of NHS dental services. At present there is one part-time peripatetic salaried dentist in post.

St. David's Day

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will recommend that St. David's day be designated a bank holiday and a national holiday in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: No.

Rechar Programme

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the projects and their cost covered by the Rechar programme to date in *(a)* the Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney constituency and *(b)* South Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

A548

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to upgrade the A548 between Bagillt and Mostyn, Clwyd.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for Clwyd county council as the local highway authority.

Transport Policy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives the Welsh Office has launched in the last 10 years to increase public awareness about the social, economic and environmental effects of transport policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Policy and activities have been set out in editions of "Roads in Wales", the annual departmental report, "This Common Inheritance" and annual progress reports, "Sustainable Development—The UK Strategy" and in various planning policy guidance notes.

NHS Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning pay review bodies as they affect the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The role played by the national health service review bodies in setting national pay rates for the staff groups within their remits will be kept under review having regard to developments in the extension of local pay determination by national health service trusts.

Smoking

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in the last five years in reducing the number of people who smoke.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Provisional analysis of the 1993 health in Wales survey carried out by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales suggests that the number of adults aged 18 to 64 who smoke daily has decreased from 27·9 per cent. to 24·5 per cent. for women and from 31·8 per cent. to 27 per cent. for men in the five years 1988 to 1993.

Cancer Treatment Centre, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the cancer treatment centre at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd to be on stream; how many professional staff will be employed; and what is the likely cost.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The project team established to manage the development of the cancer treatment centre at

Ysbyty Glan Clwyd is undertaking the detailed planning process which will identify staffing and other costs and a timetable.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretry of State for Wales what discussions he has had with health authorities in north-west England concerning the likely impact upon cancer treatment centres in Wirral, Merseyside and Manchester consequent upon the eventual opening of the treatment centre at Ystyby Glan Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The decision to develop a cancer treatment centre in north Wales was taken following extensive examination and consultation with interested or affected organisations, including Merseyside and north-western regional health authorities and Wirral district health authority.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he expects to publish the indicative budgets for the Welsh training and enterprise councils; and what proposals he has for improving accountability in the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office is finalising contracts with TECs for 1994-95 budgets and the information is not yet available.

The Government have decided that TEC level information should be released publicly only after the beginning of the contracting year. The information must remain commercial in confidence while TECs are negotiating with their providers. The information requested on allocations for 1994-95 will therefore be publicly available on 1 October 1994.

TECs are companies limited by guarantee and subject to the audit provisions of the Companies Acts 1985 to 1989. They are also subject to internal audit, and to further audit scrutiny by the National Audit Office and the European Court of Auditors. The Welsh Office contracts with TECs each year through operating agreements which set out additional requirements of accountability, including the preparation of published reports and arrangements for public meetings.

Cathays Park

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the occupation of the office space to be vacated in the Cathays park II section of the Crown buildings, Cathays park by the departure of NCM Credit Insurance Ltd. and the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood: The NCM is due to vacate the building by 31 March 1995 but, before final decisions can be taken about potential reuse of the space it now occupies, during the next financial year it will be necessary for my Department to carry out detailed option and investment appraisals.

The ECGD is continuing in occupation although it has recently vacated space following a reduction in staff numbers. Taking advantage of this, plans are now being finalised to relocate the training enterprise and educational department from Companies House.

Mostyn Docks

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now announce his decision relating to the planning consent at Mostyn docks.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 15 February, *Official Report*, column 762.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the effect on job prospects in Clwyd of a refusal of planning permission for the Mostyn dock planning application in Mostyn, Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All material considerations, including the effect on employment in the area, will be taken into account in the consideration of the planning application.

Public Appointments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had in relation to the appointment of Sir Richard Lloyd Jones as chairman of the Welsh Arts Council; and what account he took of the views of the Committee of Public Accounts in relation to the conduct of Welsh Office non-departmental public bodies prior to confirming the appointment.

Mr. Redwood: I have received no representations on this matter.

In making the appointment, I took account of relevant considerations. Sir Richard will make an excellent chairman.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to issue guidelines on the publication of the political affiliations of the appointees to non-departmental public bodies; what proposals he has to make such publication retrospective; what proposals he has to extend such publication of affiliations to the Masonic Order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The general procedure for the making of public appointments is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" which is available in the Library of the House.

Youth Training Schemes

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide an up-to-date table showing for Wales and the counties of Wales for each year from 1989, the number of places on youth training schemes and the number of people who have been waiting for over eight weeks for a place.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The numbers of filled youth training places in Wales at March of each year since 1989 and the figure for December 1993 are shown in table A. Statistics are collected by TEC area, not by county.

In every year since 1989 there has been sufficient funding available to provide youth training places for all of those who sought them. Demand for youth training places fell by 35 per cent. between March 1989 and December 1993 because numbers of young people attaining school leaving age dropped by 16 per cent., and the proportion of those staying on in full-time education increased from 35 per cent. to over 60 per cent. in that period.

The number of young people in each TEC area who had been waiting eight weeks or more for a place on youth training as at January 1993 and January 1994 are shown in table B. Figures for earlier years are not available, as the first count was in September 1992. Figures are not collected on a county basis.

Table A
Number filled youth training places in Wales 1989-93

	Numbers
March 1989	23,779
March 1990	22,665
March 1991	16,352
March 1992	16,180
March 1993	14,129
December 1993	15,409

Table B
Number waiting eight weeks or more for YT place

	14 January 1993	*13 January 1994*
Gwent	43	3
Mid Glamorgan	111	123
North East Wales	77	9
North West Wales	65	23
Powys	17	14
South Glamorgan	59	4
West Wales	17	28
Total	389	204

St. Quintin's Castle

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in securing the future of St. Quintin's castle, Llanblethian, near Cowbridge.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am pleased to be able to tell the House that we have secured the owner's agreement to place this monument in state care through a guardianship agreement with the Secretary of State.

Inward Investment

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what representation the Welsh Office has in the Invest in Britain Bureau.

Mr. Redwood: The Invest in Britain Bureau is part of the Department of Trade and Industry. The bureau works in close partnership with Welsh Development International and other territorial and regional bodies to promote inward investment to the United Kingdom. WDI is also represented on the interdepartmental committee on overseas promotion which co-ordinates the United Kingdom's inward investment promotional activities.

TRANSPORT

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who are the members currently appointed to the London Regional Transport board.

Mr. Norris: The names and positions of the members of the board of London Regional Transport are listed below:

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
Chairman
Sir Wilfrid Newton CBE

Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive
Dr. Alan Watkins

Mr. Anthony Sheppeck
Mr. Denis Tunnicliffe

NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS
Vice-Chairman
Mr. David Thompson

Mr. Oscar Roith
Mr. Keith Brown
Mrs. Helen Robinson
Mr. J. Keith Davies
Sir Alan Bailey
Mr. Robert Dorey
Mrs. Rosemary Day

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Norris: Additional public appointments made by my right hon. Friend are:

Acting Conservator of the River Mersey;
The Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Alcohol and Drug Misuse—chairman and four members;
The Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Disorders of the Cardiovascular System—chairman and six members;
The Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Diabetes—chairman and six members;
The Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Disorders of the Nervous System—chairman and 10 members; and
Some chairmen and from one to 10 members of 17 port authorities and harbour boards.

My right hon. Friend also appoints the rail regulator and the Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, both of whom head non-ministerial Government Departments.

My right hon. Friend appoints external members of executive agencies advisory boards. Currently there are seven such members:

Driving Standards Agency	(1)
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency	(3)
Transport Research Laboratory	(1)
Vehicle Certification Agency	(1)
Vehicle Inspectorate executive agency	(1)

He expects to be making appointments of external members to the advisory boards of the Highways Agency, the Marine Safety Agency and the Coastguard Agency which are due to be established on 1 April 1994.

City of London Traffic Restrictions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive an application to make permanent the current traffic restrictions being operated by the City of London.

Mr. Norris: The matter is currently being considered by the Corporation of the City of London. Under schedule 5 to the Local Government Act 1985, if an objection from an adjacent London borough is made to the City's draft traffic regulation order the matter will be referred to the Secretary of State for him to determine.

A12

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that work will start to improve the safety of the verges along the central reservation of the A12 between Witham and Marks Tey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Witham bypass is our top priority for a verge improvement scheme and works should start here this summer. Similar improvements between Feering and Marks Tey will follow on from this initial scheme. Further announcements will be made at the time contracts are due to be let.

Severn Tunnel Fire and Collision

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he now expects publication of the findings and report of the inquiry into the Severn tunnel fire and collision 1991; what proposals he has for making a statement or issuing the Government's response to it; and if he will place a copy of the report's findings and his response in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to my replies given to the questions by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *465-66*.

Blackwall Third Crossing

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement about the Blackwall third crossing.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply on Monday 21 February 1994 to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), *Official Report*, column 77.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* From records currently available, no formal directions have been issued since 1979.

London Underground Ltd.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial constraint Her Majesty's Government have placed on contracts between London Underground Ltd. and a supplier of passenger rolling stock, which would delay the date on which that stock would otherwise enter into service in London, whether under the ownership of London Underground or any other body or company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* It is for London Transport and London Underground Ltd. to decide on the timing of the acquisition of rolling stock. Such decisions may be subject to scrutiny or approval by the Secretary of State to ensure that they are appropriate and represent value for money.

SCOTLAND

Waverley Rail Line

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what feasibility study has been commissioned into reopening the Waverley rail line running through the Borders; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No feasibility study into the reopening of the Waverley line has been commissioned by the Scottish Office. Decisions on the reinstatement of the line are a matter for the appropriate track authority.

Forestry

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether the forestry review group will consider ways that forestry policy can be adapted to deliver social as well as economic and environmental benefits and to meet the needs of rural communities; and if it will make recommendations on this subject;

(2) whether the forestry review group will review the appropriateness of the current allocation of the Forestry Commission's research budget as between its economic, social and environmental objectives; and if it will make recommendations on this subject;

(3) if he will ask the interdepartmental review group on forestry to consider the economic, environmental and social benefits to be derived from allowing independent certification of Forest Enterprise managed forests.

Sir Hector Monro: No. None of these matters falls within the terms of the reference of the forestry review group.

Planning Applications

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Scretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement giving the reasons why the Scottish Office has introduced the revised fee scale for planning permission applications.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's policy is to achieve full recovery of planning authorities' costs for handling planning applications. Accordingly, fee scales are subject to regular review and, as part of that exercise, are assessed against the most recent information on costs and income available from planning authorities. The latest returns indicate that the recovery rate in Scotland is around 51 per cent. My right hon. Friend, therefore, decided to seek parliamentary approval for the increases introduced in January 1994, to be followed by further increases in January 1995.

Sheriff Court Fees

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research was conducted prior to the Sheriff Court Fees (Amendment) Order 1993 into the future numbers of those raising or defending court actions and the costs of administration to the Scottish legal aid system; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* Estimates of the future workload of the civil business of the sheriff courts are used to generate the memorandum trading account which indicates the income required from court fees. The implications of the revised fees for the Scottish legal aid fund were taken into account during the public expenditure round.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the hourly rate for work carried out under the civil legal aid scheme; and what provision is there for uplift to be applied in the hourly rates of remuneration.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* The rates are governed by the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1989. Current rates are set out in the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Amendment Regulations 1992, SI 1992/372, copies of which are in the Library. The regulations also make provision for the circumstances where an uplift may be granted and for the circumstances in which disputes as to the amount of fees allowable may be referred for taxation by the auditor.

Sport and Recreation

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet issued a draft national policy guideline on sport and recreation containing further guidance on the implicatons of the Taylor report, as indicated in his answer of 27 October 1992, *Official Report,* column *582;* and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* A draft national planning policy guideline on sport and recreation has not yet been issued, but we plan to issue a consultation draft to all interested parties in the course of the coming year.

We will also be issuing shortly a further guidance circular dealing with the safety of terracing at football grounds where clubs outwith the Premier Division have opted to retain standing accommodation.

Salmon

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from representatives of the Scottish salmon farming industry on competition in the European Union salmon market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* Both I and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for agriculture and the environment in Scotland have received numerous written representations from the Scottish farmed salmon industry. We have also met representatives of the industry on several occasions in an effort to address the present market imbalance between supply and demand. Following my hon. Friend's meeting with the Norwegian Fisheries Minister on 18 February, my Department is arranging a meeting between representatives of the Scottish and Norwegian industries to discuss the position.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department received a copy of the report produced by Ernst and Young on competition in the European Union salmon market; and what has been his reponse.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* I received a copy of the Ernst and Young report on 9 February, whereupon my Department advised the Scottish Salmon Growers Association to forward a copy to the European Commission for its consideration and possible action.

Fish Farms

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in each of the last four years fish farming applications to the Crown Estate have been referred to the independent advisory committee.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* In the last four years two applications to the Crown Estate have been referred to the Fish Farming Advisory Committee, one in 1990 and one in 1991.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the present members of the independent advisory committee established to assist the Crown Estate in dealing with fish farming applications which give rise to special difficulties.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The present members of the Fish Farming Advisory Committee are:

Chairman:
Professor George Dunnet
Deputy Chairman:
Mr. Alan McMillan
Other Members—Representatives of:
Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Scottish Natural Heritage
Highland River Purification Board
Clyde River Purification Board
Argyll and Bute District Council
Highland Regional Council
Western Isles Islands Council
Orkney Islands Council

Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what public relations company is employed by Scottish Natural Heritage; how much money was paid to them this financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Scottish Natural Heritage does not employ a public relations company.

Wind Farms

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* wind farms and *(b)* propellors (i) have been constructed, (ii) have been approved and (iii) are pending.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy as regards the construction of wind farms; and what circulars he has issued to local planning authorities.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The Government's policy is to stimulate the development of renewable energy sources, including wind power, wherever they have the prospect of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. Such developments should contribute to diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies. In June 1993, a national planning policy guideline "Renewable Energy" and a planning advice note "Wind Energy Developments" were issued in draft to planning authorities in Scotland. We plan to issue finalised guidelines later this year.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Police Advisory Board for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The members are:

Chairman
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie QC, Minister for Health and Home Affairs

Nominated by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Councillor G. Bird, Fife Regional Council
Councillor E. B. Fallon, Lothian Regional Council
Councillor A. C. Ferguson, Strathclyde Regional Council
Councillor J. Jennings, Strathclyde Regional Council
Councillor R. B. Martin, Lothian Regional Council
Councillor J. P. Robison, Strathclyde Regional Council
Councillor B. A. Topping, Grampian Regional Council
Mr. J. Raymund McCluskey, Assistant Secretary, COSLA

Nominated by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland
Dr. I. T. Oliver QPM, President, Chief Constable, Grampian Police
Mr. H. W. C. MacMillan QPM, Vice President, Chief Constable, Northern Constabulary
Sir W. G. M. Sutherland QPM, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, Chief Constable, Lothian and Borders Police
Mr. W. Wilson QPM, Chief Constable, Central Scotland Police
Nominated by the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents
Chief Superintendent J. Johnstone, President
Chief Superintendent J. Urquhart, Honorary Secretary

Nominated by the Scottish Police Federation
Constable J. Fraser, Chairman
Constable D. Keil, General Secretary
Sergeant D. McHugh, Lothian and Borders Police
Sergeant S. Falconer, Tayside Police
Inspector J. McDonald, Tayside Police
Inspector W. Stevenson, Grampian Police

Independent Members appointed by the Secretary of State
Mr. Y. Ali OBE, Managing Director of AA Brothers, Glasgow
Mrs. M. Esslemont, Facilities and Services Co-ordinator, Conoco (UK) Ltd.
Ms J. Freeman, Director, Apex Scotland
Mrs. P. V. Hayden, Managing Director, Hayden Entertainment and Leisure Ltd., Inverness
Mrs. L. McKay, Depute Principal, Glenrothes College

Secretary
Mr. B. J. O'Connor, Scottish Office Home and Health Department

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Central Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace, Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The current membership of the Central Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace is:

The Right Hon. Lord Ross *(Chairman)*
Councillor Mrs. H. Biggins
Sir David Butter, KCVO, MC
Councillor A. M. Craig
Councillor Mrs. V. J. Crerar
Mr. J. C. Gordon
Sir William Gray
Mr. J. Henry
Mr. J. Henshelwood
Councillor Mrs. L. Hinds
Councillor D. C. Leslie
Mr. A. E. McIlwain, CBE
Provost B. M. C. Milne
Mr. W. W. Milne
Mr. D. R. Smith
Viscount Thurso
Professor D. Walker CBE
Mrs. P. Wallace
Councillor F. W. Welsh

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what statistics are available on the level of infertility treatment available in Scotland; and what plans he has to collect further data;

(2) if he will list the regional health boards which provide infertility treatment *(a)* under the national health service, *(b)* under the national health service to men and *(c)* privately; and if he will list the establishments which have contracted with the boards to provide such treatment.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* All health boards purchase infertility services. The table gives the number of in-patient and day case treatments and investigations for female infertility in NHS hospitals in 1992. Infertility services are also provided in primary care settings. Information on male infertility services and on private providers is not held centrally.

The management executive is currently reviewing the collection of data on infertility services.

Hospital	*Number of Discharges*
Ninewells Hospital, Dundee	742
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	505
Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh	458
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	332
Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock	253
Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow	206
Monklands District General Hospital, Lanarkshire	190
Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow	179
Royal Alexandra Hospital (Aka Paisley DGH)	169
Glasgow Western Infirmary	144
Southern General Hospital, Glasgow	132
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Dumfries	118
Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy	108
Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock	107
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	106
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness	96
Stirling Royal Infirmary	95
Hairmyres Hospital, East Kilbride, Lanarkshire	93
Law Hospital, Carluke, Lanarkshire	86
Vale of Leven District General Hospital, Dumbartonshire	85
Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh	77
St. John's at Howden, West Lothian	74
Borders General Hospital	64
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	61
Perth Royal Infirmary	60
Caithness General Hospital	49
Roodlands General Hospital, East Lothian	22
Other	58
TOTAL	4,669

Note: Hospitals with 20 or fewer discharges have been grouped with 'Other'.

Roads, Highland Region

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Highland regional council about grant-aided expenditure for road maintenance in the highland region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* The convener and officials of Highland regional council have made representations about this matter. The 1994-95 grant-aided expenditure assessment for road maintenance was allocated to regional and islands authorities in accordance with the methodology agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the change in income tax in 1994-95 against the 1978-79 indexed regime broken down into the top 1 per cent., 5 per cent., 10 per cent. and bottom 50 per cent. of taxpayers showing the total and the average change.

Mr. Dorrell: This calculation produces the figures in table A. But the comparison is hypothetical since if an indexed version of the 1978-79 tax regime had prevailed over the last 14 years the income base would not have grown in the way it has.

Table A

Calculations using the 1994 income base

Quantile group of taxpayers under the 1978-78 indexed regime	*Number of taxpayers*	*Reduction in tax*	*Average reduction*
Per cent.	*Thousands*	*£ million*	*£*
Top 1	300	10,200	38,000
Top 5	1,300	13,900	10,400
Top 10	2,700	16,300	6,100
Bottom 50	13,400	4,300	320
All taxpayers	26,800	31,400	1,170

In contrast to these hypothetical figures, table B shows how the share of income tax actually paid by high income groups has risen since 1979, while the share of the income tax burden borne by low income tax payers has fallen.

Table B

Calculations using the income base for each year

Per cent.

	Share of income tax in:	
Quantile group of taxpayers	*1978-79*	*1994-95*
Top 1	11	17
Top 5	24	34
Top 10	35	45
Bottom 50	18	13
All taxpayers	100	100

Overseas Ownership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 787, what is his estimate of the amount by which output and employment would have increased if the goods and services acquired by overseas residents for £91 billion had remained under British ownership and control.

Mr. Portillo: Direct inward investment in the United Kingdom can involve either the purchase of existing assets or investment in new plant and machinery. Decisions to locate production in the United Kingdom are an endorsement of the skills and productivity of United Kingdom workers and recognition that the United Kingdom is a good place to do business.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 787, what is his estimate for the latest two years of the amount of tax paid on the £91 billion together with *(a)* the reduction in the wealth of the United Kingdom as a result of the profit and know-how element accruing to the foreign owners and *(b)* the reduction in output and employment in technology as a result of foreign control.

Mr. Portillo: Investment itself does not generally attract tax—apart from transaction taxes. Estimates of the United Kingdom taxes paid on profits due abroad can be found in table 5·1 of the Blue Book. For the latest two years the figures are £3,960 million in 1991 and £3,498 million in 1992.

The presence of foreign-owned firms strengthens competition and encourages innovation in the United Kingdom. Inward investment increases or safeguards employment and output.

Value Added Tax

Sir David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to repay VAT that has already been levied on sports clubs' membership subscriptions in breach of article 13A.1(m) of the EC sixth VAT directive.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise will invite claims from non-profit-making clubs registered for VAT for a refund of any net overpayment of VAT since 1 January 1990 once the new VAT exemption has been implemented. Copies of an information paper giving further details and including a draft Treasury order have been placed in the Library.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column 787, what is his estimate of amount of income earned on the £122 billion invested abroad in the latest two years for which an estimate is reasonably possible; how much of that income was remitted to the United Kingdom and how much United Kingdom tax was paid on *(a)* both gross earnings and *(b)* the net remittal; and what is his estimate of (i) the amount by which the income and wealth of the United Kingdom would have increased if the £122 billion had been invested in the United Kingdom and (ii) the amount of tax which would have been collected thereon.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates of the earnings by United Kingdom residents are published in table 5.2 of the Pink

Book. In the last two years the figures were £12,773 million in 1991 and £14,077 million in 1992. The amount of income remitted back to the United Kingdom is shown in the same table. Estimates of the United Kingdom taxes paid on income earned abroad, whether or not remitted to this country, are not available.

It is unclear what the level of United Kingdom income and wealth would be if there were no direct investment overseas or inward investment to the United Kingdom. But the implied interference with decisions made by companies and individuals suggests that they would both be considerably lower.

Economic Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the objective of the Government's economic policies.

Mr. Nelson: The overall objective of the Government's economic policy is to promote sustained economic growth and higher living standards.

Economic Recovery

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which sectors of the economy the recovery has taken place; and what criteria he has used in judging that these sectors have recovered.

Mr. Portillo: The recovery has proceeded across a broad front. Since the trough of the recession in the first quarter of 1992 the manufacturing, energy and service sectors, which together comprise over 90 per cent. of gross domestic product, have all shown sustained rises in output.

Inspectors of Taxes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he adopts for assessing the performance-related pay of inspectors of taxes; and when they were adopted.

Mr. Dorrell: Under a performance management system introduced in 1992 each inspector of taxes, in common with other staff in the Inland Revenue, draws up with his/her line manager an annual performance agreement which excludes measurement in terms of individual amounts of tax assessed on or collected from taxpayers. His/her achievement against the agreement is assessed into one of three categories of performance. This determined performance pay awards for Inland Revenue staff in August 1993. A similar process will take place in April 1994 for 1994 performance pay.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the schemes his Department operates to assist staff facing financial hardship following a transfer, showing *(a)* the particular criteria and rules applying to each one, including the circumstances under which any loans can be written off, *(b)* the total amount loaned or granted under the schemes in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94 and *(c)* the number of staff assisted in 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Nelson: When staff have to relocate as a result of the needs of the Department, assistance is given to meet reasonable costs involved in relocation, including the cost of professional fees, stamp duty and removals. In addition, payments may be made to cover the cost of bridging finance taken to purchase a new property. Where an officer experiences difficulty in selling his existing property and this results in financial hardship the Department may:

1. relax the conditions attached to advances of salary;
2. base additional housing costs allowance (AHCA) on actual price differentials rather than average prices;
3. relax the conditions attached to payment of housing cost supplements (HCS);
4. as a last resort write off part of the bridging loan after sale.

Each individual case is assessed the treated on its own merits.

For 1992-93 and 1993-94 the number of cases where write-off action has been taken is:

1992-93	1 case	£4,850 written off
1993-94	1 case	£4,000 written off

Energy Management Systems

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investment his Department has made in energy management systems; and what economies in public expenditure have resulted over the past two years.

Sir John Cope: The building management system in the Treasury building in Parliament street is currently being enhanced at a cost of £11,000. When completed, this will allow accurate monitoring of energy usage and should lead to economies.

Tobacco Taxation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution to Treasury finance is made by taxation from tobacco consumed by children under 16 years of age in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: It is estimated by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that around 842 million cigarettes are smoked each year by children between the ages of 11 and 15 in the United Kingdom. The excise duty on that number of cigarettes is about £65 million.

Personal Allowances

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *356*, what is his estimate of the numbers of additional income tax payers aged over 65 years in 1994-95, over the figures for 1992-93, as a result of freezing the rate of age-related personal allowances in two years; and how much extra income tax will be raised as a result.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 February 1994]:* Compared with indexing the 1992-93 personal allowance for those aged 65 or over to 1994-95 levels by reference to the statutory formula, the revenue yield from leaving this allowance unchanged in the last two Budgets is £140 million and about 160,000 more people will pay tax. If account is also taken of the effect of changes in the level of the married couple's allowance for those aged 65 or over, then about 140,000 more people will pay tax than would do so under statutory indexation of all allowances. However, 200,000 elderly couples on low incomes gain as a result of increasing the age-related MCA. Since 1979, pensioners' average income has increased by 42 per cent.

By April 1994, pensioners in receipt of income support will have seen their incomes rise by at least 11 per cent. since April 1992.

Council Tax

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what working definition of separate property is used by his Department for the purposes of assessing council tax; and whether granny annexes are liable for a separate charge to the house in which they are contained.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The view taken by the Valuation Office agency is that for council tax purposes separate living accommodation does not necessarily mean accommodation which can be sold separately from the main building but rather a unit which has all the necessary facilities to allow it to be used as separate accommodation—for example, living and sleeping space, washing and cooking facilities and WC located within a single area.

Any annexe satisfying this test, whether or not it is a granny annexe, is required to be banded and is liable to a separate charge from the house within which it is self-contained.

DEFENCE

Royal Naval Auxiliary Service, Yeovilton

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will consider the viability of transferring any overload of RNAS Yeovilton's capacity to RAF Chivenor; (2) what assessment he has made into RNAS Yeovilton's capacity to take squadrons from RNAS Portland.

Mr. Hanley: As part of the defence cost study, "Front Line First", my Department is examining the scope for further rationalisation of the defence estate, including naval support infrastructure, to enable reductions to be made in support costs.

It is too early to speculate on the outcome of these studies.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to locate the Royal Navy's EH101 helicopters at RNAS Yeovilton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no current plans to locate the EH101 at RNAS Yeovilton.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Fleet Air Arm squadrons based at RNAS Yeovilton.

Mr. Hanley: The Fleet Air Arm squadrons based at RNAS Yeovilton are Nos. 845, 846 and 707.

Royal Naval Auxiliary Service, Portland

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the Fleet Air Arm squadrons based at RNAS Portland.

Mr. Hanley: The Fleet Air Arm squadrons based at RNAS Portland are Nos. 702, 772 and 815.

Malaysia

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what currency defence purchases by the Malaysian Government under the 1988 memorandum of understanding are made; how the rate of exchange between the United Kingdom and Malaysian currency is determined; and whether payments can be or have been deferred.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter for the customer and the supplier.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions under the 1988 memorandum of understanding the Malaysian Government have rejected the recommendation of contractors put forward by GEC or British Aerospace.

Mr. Aitken: The choice of supplier is a matter for the customer. My Department does not make such recommendations.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the individuals who have resigned for the Defence Export Services Organisation since 1979 in order to take up employment with a defence contractor; and if he will name the defence contractor in each case.

Mr. Aitken: The information is not available for the period before January 1990. Since then, two members of the Defence Export Services Organisation resigned, in 1992, to take up employment with Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. and Short Bros. Ltd. respectively.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present establishment of the Defence Export Services Organisation; if he will list those individuals who have been seconded from the private sector to the Defence Export Services Organisation since 1979; and what were the lengths and dates of such secondments and the company or organisation from which each individual was seconded.

Mr. Aitken: The total establishment of the Defence Export Services Organisation is 707. This includes marketing, military and project management staff together with staff engaged in disposals and export policy. Records before 1981 are incomplete, but show that the following individuals have been seconded from the private sector to the DESO since 1979:

Name	*From whom seconded*	*Duration of secondment*
Sir Ronald Ellis	Bus Manufacturers Holding Co.	September 1976 to September 1981
Sir James Blyth	Lucas Aerospace	October 1981 to 1985
J. P. Weston	British Aerospace	April 1982 to 1985
G. Dawson	Scicon	November 1982 to October 1984
A. F. J. Barrow	Lloyds Bank	November 1983 to 1985
R. D. Douglas	Rolls Royce plc	October 1984 to October 1986
Sir Colin Chandler	British Aerospace	1985 to September 1989

Name	*From whom seconded*	*Duration of secondment*
P. Curry	Morgan Grenfell	1986 to February 1988
H. L. Meyers	Rolls Royce plc	November 1986 to July 1989
G. W. Findlay	Grindlays Bank plc	February 1988 to February 1990
D. J. Hastie	British Aerospace	April 1988 to October 1989
S. Brett	British Aerospace	August 1988 to August 1989
S. Barker	Westland Helicopters	July 1989 to July 1991
A. J. Barron	Midland Montague	May 1990 to November 1991
Sir Alan Thomas	Raytheon	July 1989 to date
M. Faulkner	Trafalgar House	April 1992 to date
D. Mitchell	British Aerospace	October 1993 to date

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will identify those employees who, since 1979, have left employment with a defence contractor in order to take up a post within the Defence Export Services Organisation; and if he will identify the contractor in each case.

Mr. Aitken: The only staff to join the Defence Export Services Organisation from defence contractors have been on short-term secondment.

Army Bands

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answers of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 10 February, *Official Report*, column *485*, and 22 February, *Official Report*, column *133*, if he was aware that the uniformed band of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers was performing at a Conservative party function when he delivered a speech at Ayton castle on 28 January; and what payment was received by the regiment from the Roxburgh and Berwickshire Conservative and Unionist Association for its performance.

Mr. Hanley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence became aware when he arrived at the function that a uniformed band was playing. The band left before my right hon. and learned Friend gave his speech and was paid expenses of £182·42.

Redundancy

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to improving the redundancy package available to members of the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The terms of the redundancy package have been designed specifically to meet the requirements of the armed forces and compare very favourably with those offered by other employers. There is no need to improve them.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many redundancy applications he received from *(a)* officers and *(b)* soldiers during the third phase of the Army redundancy proposal.

Mr. Hanley: Some 792 officers and 6,942 soldiers who met the promulgated qualifying criteria applied to be considered for redundancy in the third phase of the Army's programme. Records of applications from other officers and soldiers who were ineligible for consideration are not available.

War Pensions

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of war pensions claims outstanding due to access being denied to records in offices closed due to the discovery of asbestos within them.

Mr. Hanley: Access to records required for the consideration of war pensions claims has been restored fully with effect from Monday 28 February 1994. There is a backlog of some 25,000 claims due to the closure of the archive and my Department will do its best to deal with them expeditiously.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will arrange for appropriate identity cards to be issued to war pensioners so as to enable them to make use of concessions offered both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply.

A card confirming the status of an individual as a war pensioner will be available on request from the war pensions unit by mid-1994.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Benevolent Fund

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the organisations located within the boundaries of Pendle borough council that have received grants from the Duchy's benevolent fund since 1974.

Mr. Waldegrave: To list the organisations within the boundaries of Pendle borough council that have received grants from the Duchy's benevolent fund since 1974 would entail disproportionate cost. However, figures available for 1993 are as follows:

Invalids-at-Home:

A grant of £150 to an invalid in Colne.

A grant of £500 to a handicapped person in Barnoldswick.

Lancashire Palatinate Fund:

A grant of £64 to a handicapped person in Barnoldswick.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications for financial assistance from the benevolent fund recommended for acceptance by his principal advisers he has rejected in each year since 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have not rejected any applications for financial assistance from the Duchy benevolent fund recommended by my principal advisers; nor, according to records available, has any of my predecessors.

Duchy Council

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when Sir Simon Towneley last attended a meeting of the Duchy Council.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 21 February 1994. I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on attendance at meetings of the Duchy Council on 23 February, *Official Report,* column 252. Sir Simon Towneley's name was omitted from that list in eror. His attendance record is 100 per cent.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his oral answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* column 664, what specialist expertise is brought to the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster by the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire.

Mr. Waldegrave: Sir Simon Towneley has a long record of public service to the county. He also has personal experience of estate management maters and has served for over 30 years as a member of the Agricultural Lands Tribunal. His knowledge and experience range over a variety of relevant subjects and are of benefit to the Duchy Council.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider appointing to the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster one or more hon. Members who represent Lancashire constituencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Duchy is not a political institution and the Chancellor of the Duchy is not acting in a political capacity in the conduct of its affairs. Representation of a Lancashire constituency would not of itself constitute a criteria for membership of the Council.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he takes to ensure that members of the Duchy Council who are absent from meetings are kept abreast of matters coming before the Council and of its recommendations and advice to him.

Mr. Waldegrave: Members of the Duchy Council receive a written report from the Duchy Office prior to meetings and minutes of the meetings after they have taken place.

Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report,* column 976, how many individual meetings he has had with the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire; and when and where they took place.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have had no individual meetings with the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire.

Agencies (Management)

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the departmental management of agencies.

Mr. Waldegrave: The efficiency unit report "Making the Most of Next Steps", published in May 1991, made a number of proposals to carry forward the development of executive agencies in government. The Government welcomed the report and the clear principles of delegation to agencies combined with strategic management by Departments on behalf of Ministers which it set out. Since then much progress has been made by increasing and clarifying the accountability of agency chief executives and the flexibilities and discretion available to them, the use of open competition for chief executive posts, and improved target setting procedures. The next steps reviews in 1991, 1992 and 1993 have reported on progress in implementation.

With a steadily increasing proportion of the civil service —now over 60 per cent.—working in executive agencies, the management of agencies and their working relationships with Ministers and Departments is increasingly important to the effective and efficient delivery of Government services. My Department, in consultation with the Treasury, therefore commissioned a study of these issues. The study was carried out by a French civil servant, Ms Sylvie Trosa, on secondment to the OPSS.

Ms Trosa was asked to examine the organisational arrangements in Departments for advising Ministers on the strategic management of agencies, the effectiveness of these arrangements, in particular in relation to the setting of key targets and monitoring agency performance and to consider whether there was duplication or overlap between departments and agencies.

The report concludes that, while next steps has made good progress, there is more to be done to ensure that maximum benefits are achieved from the delegated, clarified management arrangements that have been put in place. In addition to a full analysis of the current position, the report makes a number of detailed recommendations. I have asked the next steps project manager, in consultation with the Treasury, Departments and agencies, to consider Ms Trosa's findings and to prepare a detailed action plan for taking forward the report's recommendations.

I warmly welcome the contribution agencies have made to improved standards of public services under the citizens charter. They have also contributed to the Government's policy of increased openness, through the publication of framework documents, key targets, reports and accounts. The Government have also published regular next steps reviews, reporting on progress within individual agencies and across government as a whole. I am today placing in the Library of the House a copy of this latest study, which is a useful and challenging examination of an important aspect of the next steps programme.

Public Bodies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those non-governmental bodies in which absence from meetings over a specified period entails loss of membership.

Mr. Waldegrave: In some cases, the legislation governing executive non-departmental public bodies gives Ministers the power to remove members from office if they have been absent from meetings without permission for longer than a specified period. However, we do not hold specific information on this issue centrally in relation to the position of each individual NDPB.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table showing the average gross weekly earnings in each standard region in the United Kingdom.

Miss Widdecombe: Information on the average weekly earnings of employees in the standard regions of England, and in Scotland and Wales, is published in table X5 of part A of the 1993 new earnings survey.

Corresponding information for Northern Ireland can be found in table 4(b) of the 1993 Northern Ireland new earnings survey.

Copies of the reports are available in the Library.

Working Single Mothers

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the typical take-home pay of a working single mother in a full-time job for the last year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: Average gross weekly earnings for full-time adult women are estimated to have been £252·60 in April 1993. If both the single person and lone parent tax allowances are applied to this figure it is estimated that the take home pay, after tax and national insurance, would have been £197·87.

Source: New Earnings Survey (Employment Department).

Labour Statistics

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a table showing the 20 highest paid occupations, the 20 lowest paid occupations and the earnings in each category.

Miss Widdecombe: Information showing details of the earnings of employees by occupation is published in tables 8, 9 and X3 of part A of the 1993 new earnings survey. A copy of this is available in the Library.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the standardised rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom differs from that in *(a)* Germany and *(b)* the United States of America; and what factors account for the difference.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest standardised rates of unemployment published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for Germany, where unemployment is rising and for the United States of America and the United Kingdom, where unemployment is falling, are listed in the following table. Differences in unemployment rates are due to many factors and these factors vary in their effect from country to country. As mentioned in my reply to the hon. Member's other question on Japan, one of these factors is the particular point reached in a country's economic cycle.

Standardised rate (seasonally adjusted)

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	[3]9·9
Germany[1]	[3]6·3
United States of America	[2]6·6

[1] There are no standardised rates available for Unified Germany. Figures relate to what was the former Federal Republic of Germany and will be lower than for the Unified Germany.

[2] January 1994.

[3] December 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what multiple the standardised rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom is of that of Japan; and what factors account for the extent of the difference.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest figures published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development show that the standardised rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom is about three and one third times greater than in Japan. Among other things, this comparison will be affected by the particular point in the economic cycle reached by each country. It should be noted that the United Kingdom's unemployment rate is falling while Japan's is rising.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how many the number of unemployed has risen since 1990; and when he expects the number to fall back to the 1990 level.

Miss Widdecombe: The extent of the available information is given in the following table. It has not been the policy of this or previous Governments to publish forecasts of unemployment, but since the beginning of last year seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment has fallen by 205,000. Since winter 1992-93 there has also been a fall in ILO unemployment. This fall has been reflected in the labour force survey from winter 1992-93 to summer.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment levels

(000s)

	1990	*Latest date*	*Change in level*
United Kingdom claimant unemployment	[2]1,624	[4]2,788	1,164
Great Britain ILO unemployment[1]	[3]1,871	[5]2,865	994

[1] From the ED LFS—Standardised unemployment levels according to ILO definitions.

[2] January.

[3] Spring.

[4] January 1994.

[5] Summer 1993.

Labour Statistics (Lewisham)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons in receipt of unemployment benefit within *(a)* the parliamentary constituency of Lewisham, East and *(b)* the borough of Lewisham have been unemployed for (i) more than six months, (ii) more than 12 months and (iii) more than two years; and what are the comparable figures for (1) men and (2) women for each month since February 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: A count of the numbers of people claiming unemployment-related benefits, by duration, is available on the unadjusted basis only. Information for the months of January, April, July and October can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Astra Training

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements were made for the existing Government employees to be compensated for their accrued service when Astra Training was floated as a private concern.

Miss Widdecombe: At the time of the Skills Training Agency privatisation in 1990, Ministers were concerned to ensure that proper arrangements were made to preserve staffs' terms and conditions of employment when they moved to the private sector. The provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations were applied in full so as to ensure continuity of terms and conditions at the time of sale. As the regulations do not cover the transfer of pension rights—which, for civil servants, includes redundancy rights—separate arrangements were made for these. All purchasers of skillcentres, including Astra, were bound by the terms of sale to make pension provision broadly comparable to that applicable to the civil servants transferred to them. The terms of sale also provided that the staff would take with them a contractual right to redundancy compensation at civil service levels. Individual staff had a choice about how to deal with the pension entitlement they had earned as civil servants. They could leave their entitlement in the civil service scheme, to be drawn when they reached the normal retirement age; or they could opt to transfer the value of the pension earned in the civil service either to Astra's own pension scheme or to a personal pension scheme approved by the Inland Revenue. I understand that the vast majority of Astra staff chose the first option.

HEALTH

NHS Administration

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of total NHS expenditure has been spent on the employment of managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff within the whole of the NHS in each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(2) what was the cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff in NHS hospitals in each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(3) what was the total cost of employing managers, advisers, administrators and clerical staff by *(a)* the regional health authorities, *(b)* the district health authorities and *(c)* the family health service authorities in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available is shown in the tables. The figures need to be treated with caution. The number of managers has been deliberately increased since the mid-1980s—not just since the reforms—because the service was previously undermanaged. Much of the increase arises from the reclassification of existing staff, including many senior nurses, as managers. General and senior managers account for only 2 per cent. of the total national health service work force in England and 3 per cent. of the total NHS expenditure on salaries and wages. The number of administrative and clerical staff in clinically related posts has increased over the last few years in order to free clinical staff to concentrate their skills and experience on direct patient care.

Table 1: Proportion of total hospital and community health services expenditure on general and senior managers, G and SM, and administrative and clerical, A and C, staff

Year	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Total Revenue Expenditure £000s	14,709,704	19,733,405	20,756,848
G and SM Salaries £000s	251,474	383,837	494,111
G and SM Salaries as Percentage Proportion of Total	1·7	1·9	2·4
A and C Salaries and Wages £000s	1,187,029	1,383,434	1,499,557
A and C Salaries and Wages as Percentage Proportion of Total	8·1	7·0	7·2

[1] Provisional.

Table 2: Expenditure on general and senior managers

£000s

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Regional Health Authorities	24,142	46,922	59,106
District Health Authorities	223,221	277,179	286,487
SHAs	4,111	5,440	7,933
Total	251,474	329,541	353,526

[1] Provisional.

Table 3: Expenditure on administrative and clerical staff

	1990-91	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Regional Health Authorities	122,372	131,276	109,104
District Health Authorities	1,042,144	1,056,824	903,911
SHAs	22,513	26,757	29,805
Total	1,187,029	1,214,857	1,042,820

[1] Provisional.

Notes:

1. Total revenue expenditure is of health authorities and trusts including hospital, community health, patient transport, blood transfusion and other services.

2. Salaries and wages costs are the gross pay costs of directly employed staff including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

3. Accounts and financial returns of family health services authorities do not contain any breakdown of expenditure between staff groups.

4. Salaries and wages costs for general and senior managers in trusts were £54·3 million in 1991-92 and £140·6 million in 1992-93.

5. Salaries and wages costs for administrative and clerical staff in trusts were £168·6 million in 1991-92 and £456·7 million in 1992-93.

Source: Annual accounts—1990-91—and annual financial returns—1991-92 and 1992-93—of regional and district health authorities, NHS trusts and special health authorities in England.

Health Service Staff Cars

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year from 1990 the expenditure on staff cars for each *(a)* health authority and *(b)* NHS trust in England and Wales.

Dr. Mawhinney: Figures for expenditure on staff cars by regional, district and special health authorities and trusts in England are available only for 1991-92 and 1992-93. These are shown in tables which will be placed in the Library. Lease cars may be allocated to employees who have to travel regularly on national health service business where it is deemed to be in the interest of the service. Under these arrangements, the employee contributes towards lease costs according to the amount of private mileage done. A large proportion of the staff cars are used by midwives, community nurses, health visitors, doctors and other health professionals working in the community. This partly reflects the move away from hospital-based care as part of the care in the community programme.

There are no separate data available centrally on "pool cars" which are available for business use but are parked overnight on the employer's premises.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the reserve powers she has to intervene in national health service trusts; and when and how often she has used each power.

Dr. Mawhinney: The powers of my right hon. Friend Secretary of State to make directions to national health service trusts are laid down in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, schedule 2, paragraphs 6(1) and 6(2) and section 98(2) of the National Health Service Act 1977, as amended by the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. These powers have been invoked as listed. Copies of the directions will be placed in the Library.

Directions to NHS Trusts

March 1991—Appointments of Consultant Medical and Dental Staff to NHS Trusts

August 1991—Appointment of Speech Therapists

November 1991—NHS Treatment of Overseas Visitors

March 1992—Production of Accounts

March 1993—Income Generation—Hospital and NHS Pharmacy Contracts

May 1993—Appointments of the Professions Supplementary to Medicine to NHS Trusts

May 1993—Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985—Procedures to be operated in respect of complaints by hospital patients.

Psoriasis

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about new developments and research into causes and treatment of psoriasis; what is her estimate of the effect of these developments of the introduction of a limited list for treatment of this skin condition; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Current research is concerned with the immunology of psoriasis and the study of various immunological mediators and receptors. Research into treatment includes the possible use of genetically engineered antibodies to these mediators.

The selected list scheme will not discourage the development of new medicines. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service drugs will not reject drugs which offer a therapeutic benefit and meet a real clinical need.

Care Staff (Training)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure that care staff responsible for assisting people with learning difficulties, who may also have behavioural problems, receive appropriate training.

Mr. Bowis: The Department awarded grants totalling over £170,000 in 1992-93 to 1994-95 for projects to develop training courses and appropriate training materials for staff working with people with learning difficulties who also have behavioural problems. The Department's advisory group on behavioural disturbance and mental health services developments for people with learning disabilities will also be considering what, if anything, further needs to be done to ensure staff receive appropriate training.

Hammersmith Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement concerning the future of Hammersmith hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's announcement on 10 February, *Official Report*, columns 458-72.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received concerning the future of Hammersmith hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: By 28 February 1994, the Department had received 91 inquiries about the future of the Hammersmith hospital.

Limb Defects

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what work the Medical Research Council is undertaking into the clusters of babies born with limb defects as described in the Department's press release of 11 February; which local health authorities are undertaking investigations of their own; and when she expects the results of these inquiries.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *418*.

In response to some reports of unusual occurrences in babies born with limb defects, local investigations and detailed case determination are taking place in the Northern regional health authority area; the Isle of Wight; Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; and in Hastings. The results of these investigations should be known in a matter of weeks.

In addition, progress is being made on the initial analysis by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of limb reduction defects to scrutinise the geographical pattern. To provide further, more detailed, information on the national perspective, I have asked the expert steering group of the small area health statistics unit—SAHSU—to examine the feasibility of a SAHSU study to look in more detail at the geographical distribution of limb reduction defects and to report as soon as possible.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will reply to the hon. Member for Hartlepool's letter to her of 3 February, concerning clusters of babies born with limb defects.

Mr. Sackville: I replied to the hon. Member's letter today.

Physiotherapy Merseyside

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to intervene in respect of the proposed cuts in in-patient and out-patient physiotherapy services in *(a)* Countess of Chester hospital and *(b)* elsewhere in the Mersey region.

Mr. Sackville: None. It is for health authorities to ensure that a comprehensive range of health services is available for their residents, within available resources. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of Mersey regional health authority, for information on the plans for physiotherapy services within the region.

Pathology

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many fundholding practices in the most convenient area including Hemsworth constituency are analysing their own pathology specimens;

(2) what was the cost of each pathology analyser in practices in Wakefield;

(3) how many specimens have been tested by each pathology analyser in Wakefield in each month since its installation;

(4) what is the normal throughput of specimens per pathology analyser in hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: This is a local matter. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the local health authority and family health services authority, Mr. Brian Hayward and Mr. David Travis respectively, for details. Information on the normal throughput of specimens per pathology analyser in hospitals is not available centrally.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money the Health Education Authority receives from the Exchequer.

Mr. Sackville: The Health Education Authority's total allocation in the financial year 1993-94 was £36·184 million of which £3 million was in respect of value added tax refunds and income generated by the authority.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation her Department has made of the health effects of reprocessing, other than of radioactive material, at Sellafield.

Mr. Sackville: The health effects of reprocessing at the Sellafield site are a matter for the Health and Safety Executive, or where effects might extend beyond the site boundary, for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has advised on the mutagenicity of chemicals used at the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Sellafield site in 1991 and its advice is published in its annual report for 1991, copies of which are in the Library.

Sheffield (Sale of Trust Land)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken to comply with requirements of the NHS Acts with regard to the sale of trust land in the Sheffield health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: The sale of national health service land is a matter for the health authority or NHS trust concerned.

Ovarian Cancer

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide funds for research into ovarian cancer.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, MRC, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In 1992-93, the latest year for which figures are available, the MRC spent £318,000 on research directly into ovarian cancer. This figure would rise considerably if a proportion of the council's spend on metabolism, molecular structure, genes and chromosomes, the immune system and other areas of basic medical research, that may yield results relevant to cancer, were included.

Maternity Wards (Nappies)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent of the practice whereby pregnant women about to enter NHS maternity wards are asked by hospital staff to bring a supply of nappies with them.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Renal Dialysis

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources remain to the end of the financial year for accommodating patients requiring renal dialysis in the Sheffield health authority area.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Trent regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Sir Michael Carlisle, for details.

Disabled People (HIV)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her assessment of the availability [illegible] HIV prevention initiatives for *(a)* people with physical disabilities and *(b)* people with mental disabilities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Since the beginning of the HIV public education campaign, initiatives have been taken to devise and sponsor educational material for groups not effectively reached by the national campaign, including those with physical impairment or learning difficulties. There is a considerable range of material available to meet different needs produced by the Health Education Authority and specialist voluntary organisations. Health and local authorities are specifically encouraged to assess the needs of their local communities for sexual health education and develop targeted projects. The guidance for the 1994-95 AIDS support grant, LAC(94)3, and the healthy alliances scheme both emphasise the importance of work for people with disabilities of any sort. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Embryos

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the correspondence between herself and the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington regarding embryos two or three years ago; and if she will make a statement regarding the situation at the Cromwell hospital, Tyne and Wear about the selling of eggs for cash.

Mr. Sackville: Copies of the correspondence between departmental Ministers and the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington over the past two years will be placed in the Library.

HIV/AIDS

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action is taken by her Department when reports under the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 reports reveal a consistent lack of activity in any of the target audiences for HIV prevention;

(2) what use is routinely made of information collected through reports under the AIDS (Control) Act 1987.

Mr. Sackville: The AIDS (Control) Act reports serve a useful function in indicating trends in the spread of infection, the development of services and resources employed locally. The information collected assists in establishing whether policy priorities are being addressed. Reports are scrutinised by the Department and if gaps are revealed in any area of activity, this information together with any available research findings is used to inform the guidance issued annually to health authorities on future purchasing plans. Copies of the latest guidance, EL(94)19, are available in the Library.

Health Services (Relocation)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been issued by her Department to health authorities regarding the appropriate relocation of services which it has been decided should be moved from the purchaser to the provider level; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Hospitals (Video Surveillance)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to issue guidelines formally on the use of covert video surveillance in hospital settings in suspected cases of *(a)* intentional suffocation by parent of baby or child, *(b)* Munchhausen's syndrome by proxy and *(c)* non-accidental injury; what consultations she has had with (i) the Association of Directors of Social Services, (ii) the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts and (iii) the Royal College of Paediatricians on this procedure and protocols relating to its use.

Mr. Bowis: There are currently no proposals for the Department to consult professional organisations formally or to issue guidelines on the use of covert video surveillance in hospitals for the investigation of suspicions of abuse of children. The Department has recently commended to the chairmen of all area child protection committees the high level of inter-agency collaboration demonstrated by Staffordshire child protection committee in the production of a joint working protocol on covert video surveillance in hospital.

Complaints System

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the response she has received following consultation by the Wilson committee on the review of the national health service complaints system; when she expects the committee to report; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Professor Wilson's review committee invited evidence from interested organisations and individuals last August. We understand that about 250 submissions of evidence were received by the review committee.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to receive the review committee's report shortly. We will carefully consider its conclusions.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to meet representatives of the tobacco industry to discuss the strengthening of the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Department of Health officials met representatives of the Tobacco Manufacturers Association to discuss the strengthening of the voluntary agreement on tobacco products' advertising and promotion and health warnings on 23 February.

Smoking

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money is spent by Government on programmes to reduce smoking by children under 16 years of age.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94, £2,650,000 was allocated to the Health Education Authority's teenage smoking programme.

Additionally, adult anti-smoking programmes and life style programmes such as "Look After Your Heart" contain material designed to encourage parents to set a good example.

Schools are required to provide education about the dangers of smoking. They allocate resources accordingly from the funding devolved to them. Expenditure on health education programmes in schools and on local authority enforcement of the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 is not available centrally.

Under the current general practitioner contract arrangements many health professionals are working towards "The Health of the Nation" target for teenage smoking. No separate details of costs are available.

Year of Older People

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about those aims and objectives of the European year of older people which have been taken forward beyond the end of 1993.

Mr. Bowis: We are continuing to pursue policies designed to promote the health and well-being of older people and to encourage their full participation in society. This is in line with the aims and objectives of the year.

An evaluation exercise has recently commenced, which will help to identify the key achievements of the year and its implications for future work.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those responsible for making appointments of *(a)* chairs and *(b)* members of the boards to each of the national health service bodies, as listed in "Public Bodies 1993".

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 February 1994]*: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is responsible for the appointment of chairmen of regional, district and family health services authorities and chairmen of national health service trusts. She is also responsible for the appointment of chairmen and non-executive members of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and the National Health Service Supplies Authority.

My right hon. Friend is also responsible for the appointment of non-executive members of regional health authorities and up to three non-executive directors of NHS trusts.

The appointments of all non-executive members of district health authorities and family health services authorities, and two of the non-executive directors of NHS trusts, are the responsibility of the appropriate regional health authority.

Chairmen and members of the Prescription Pricing Authority, the Special Hospitals Services Authority and the Health Education Authority are also appointed by my right hon. Friend, although there is provision in regulations —SI 1987 No. 6—that one member of the Health Education Authority be appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

In addition, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health appoints the chairman and non-executive members of the National Blood Authority, NBA. A committee of the NBA, comprising the chairman, chief executive and non-executive members of the NBA, appoints the executive members.

The chairman and non-officer members of the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority, UKTSSA, are appointed by my right hon. Friend. The officer members are appointed by the UKTSSA.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State appoints the chairman and all members covering England to the Mental Health Act Commission, MHAC. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales appoints those members of the MHAC covering the Principality.

The chairman and members of the Dental Practice Board are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; the vice chairman is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Cannabis

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of pharmaceutical companies have cannabis in stock for medical needs.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

In the absence of any medical use for cannabis recognised by the Medicines Control Agency no pharmaceutical companies are licensed to hold stocks for that purpose.

EDUCATION

Nursery Education

3. **Mr. George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement listing the five local education authorities that spent least on providing full and part-time places for children in nursery schools, units and classes in each of the last three years.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not compiled centrally.

16. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of three and four-year-olds have a full-time place in a nursery school or class.

Mr. Robin Squire: Some 26 per cent. of three and four-year-olds were in maintained nursery schools and classes in England in January 1993. Children of this age may also attend infant classes; if these are taken into account the total proportion of three and four-year-olds in some form of maintained schooling is 51 per cent. The majority of four-year-olds attended full-time while the majority of three-year-olds attended part-time.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children aged three to five years are currently in nursery or other educational provision; at what annual cost; what percentage of the age group is represented in this figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: As at January 1993 there were over 656,000 children in England aged under five in full-time and part-time education in maintained nursery schools and nursery and infant classes in maintained primary schools. This figure represents 51 per cent. of three and four-year-olds. If children in independent and special schools and playgroups are included, the proportion rises to over 90 per cent. In 1991-92, the latest year for which accurate outturn data are available, local education authorities in England spent some £1,085 million on under-fives provision.

21. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has received a large number of representations on nursery education in recent months.

Vyners School, Ickenham

17. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he has made in considering the difficulties faced by parents in Uxbridge and Hillingdon in sending their children to Vyners school Ickenham as a result of the upgrading of the A40 to motorway standard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: I understand that Vyners school is heavily over-subscribed and would like to expand. It is for the school to make a case for capital funds to provide additional school places within the next capital bidding round.

From April I expect the Funding Agency for Schools will have responsibilities over the supply of school places in Hillingdon. I shall shortly be writing to my hon. Friend about the implications.

Physical Education

18. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many hours of physical education he intends there to be in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: This is a matter for head teachers and school governors to determine. My right hon. Friend is prohibited in law from prescribing how much time should be spent on physical education or any other national curriculum subject.

Music Teaching

19. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the teaching of music as part of the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received no recent representations. My right hon. Friend expects to receive advice from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in April about new statutory requirements for music in the light of Sir Ron Dearing's recent review of the national curriculum.

Literacy Skills

20. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many programmes to improve literacy skills of young children are receiving financial support from his Department.

Mr. Forth: The improvement of the literacy skills is one of the Government's top priorities for education. The national curriculum order for English will put more emphasis on basic skills in reading and writing. Action programmes supported by the Government include:

The reading recovery programmes, and other literacy programmes in inner-city areas;

Support to the volunteer reading help organisation to help it expand its network;

Support for the family literacy initiative, designed to help parents improve their own literacy skills and at the same time support the development of their children's literacy.

Education (16-year-olds)

22. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the United Kingdom participation rate in education for 16-year-olds; and what comparable data he has for other European Union countries.

Mr. Boswell: The latest available comparisons, which are for 1990, show that some 94 per cent. of 16-year-olds in the United Kingdom took part in some form of education and/or training. This compares well with the position in other EU countries for which data are available, where participation by 16-year-olds ranges from 99 per cent. in Germany to 71 per cent. in Spain.

Teacher Training Agency

23. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from universities or scientific societies on his proposals for funding of educational research through a teacher training agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received some 100 representations from universities, higher education colleges and scientific societies on this issue.

Our proposals would maintain the present links between teaching and research, safeguard the independence of research and continue to ensure that research funding takes account of quality assessments. There will of course be an opportunity to debate the proposals during the passage through Parliament of the current Education Bill.

University Income

24. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of university income comes from *(a)* Government grant, *(b)* overseas students, *(c)* other tuition fees, *(d)* Government-funded research and *(e)* privately funded research and consultancies.

Mr. Boswell: The latest published figures, subject to rounding, show that in 1991-92 universities in Great Britain received 35 per cent. of their recurrent income from Exchequer grant, 5 per cent. from overseas students' fees, 20 per cent. from other tuition fees, 9 per cent. from research grants and contracts from the research councils and other public bodies, 10 per cent. from other research grants and 20 per cent. from other sources. Comparable data are not available for the former polytechnics and colleges.

Speech Therapy

25. **Ms Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultations he is having with professional organisations of speech therapists and others in order to clarify who is responsible for speech therapy provision for school-age children.

Mr. Forth: Existing guidance issued by the Department already sets out the responsibilities for the provision of speech therapy for school-age children. However, we have received many comments on this issue during the consultation on the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. In the light of these, my officials will be considering with the Department of Health and other interested organisations whether it is possible to clarify further, in the final version of the code, responsibility for the provision of speech therapy.

Sixth Forms

26. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to encourage more schools to develop the use of sixth forms.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend published guidelines on 16 February setting out the criteria against which he will judge proposals for new school sixth forms.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the new sixth forms to which he has given approval in *(a)* grant-maintained schools and *(b)* local authority schools since April 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire [pursuant to his reply, 25 February 1994, *Official Report, 505*]: Since April 1992, my right hon. Friend has approved five proposals for new sixth forms in LEA-maintained schools, rather than two, as stated in my previous answer. The schools concerned are:

Ullswater Community College, Cumbria;
Martin Kemp-Welch School, Dorset;
Wymondham School, Norfolk;
St. Peter's RC Comprehensive School, Solihull;
a new school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years in Halifax, Calderdale.

Surplus School Places

27. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest estimate he has for the amount of money being tied up in maintaining surplus school places; and what steps he is taking to reduce the number of surplus places.

Mr. Forth: In 1991, when the Department carried out a detailed survey, there were 1·3 million surplus school places. The premises-related costs of maintaining this number of school places are estimated at around £300 million. The scope for realising savings in practice, however, depends on local circumstances.

We are discussing with individual authorities the scope for rationalisation in their areas. From 1 April this year the Education Act 1993 gives the Secretary of State the power to require authorities to bring forward proposals to take spare places out of use.

Rural Students (Grants)

28. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review guidance and departmental funding for discretionary grants for higher and further education students from rural areas.

Mr. Boswell: It is for local education authorities to determine their own policies for discretionary awards in the light of local needs and priorities.

School Governors

29. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with school governor organisations about their autonomy.

Mr. Forth: None. Subject to meeting any statutory requirements laid upon them, school governing bodies have discretion to make their own decisions.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what surveys have been made by his Department as to the number of hours per month spent by school governors on school matters for which they now have responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A survey commissioned by the Department in 1992 included data on time spent by governors of LEA-maintained schools. The median time individual governors spent on their school governing responsibilities was between 10 and 20 hours per term. The median time spent by chairmen was between 30 and 40 hours per term. The Government very much welcome the commitment shown by governing bodies in carrying out their important responsibilities.

Schools (Capital Works)

30. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current estimate of outstanding capital works in schools in England.

Mr. Forth: Information from the 1991 NAO report on school buildings suggests that some £2 billion, at 1990 prices, was required to deal with the outstanding capital needs of school buildings. In 1994-95, Government support for capital and repair work at maintained schools will total over £600 million, much of which will go towards improving the school stock.

This comes on top of total Government support between 1991-92 and 1993-94, including support for sixth form colleges up to 1993-94, amounting to almost £2 billion.

National Curriculum

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the teacher unions and associations to the Dearing report on the national curriculum and testing.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met representatives of the National Union of Teachers on 24 January and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers on 23 February. We stand ready to discuss the implications of the Dearing report with the four other teacher associations should they wish.

Legal Practice Courses

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students took the legal practice course in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: Information on the number of students taking a legal practice course is not available centrally. Numbers taking the Law Society final examination and the Bar vocational course are shown below:

Law society final examination

	Numbers
89	3,545
90	4,120
91	5,002
92	5,559
93	5,677

Source—The Law Society

Bar vocational course

	Numbers
89-90	819
90-91	871
91-92	1,059
92-93	1,016

Source—Council of Legal Education

Approved Reading Lists

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he plans to include approved reading lists in the national curriculum for the teaching of English literature in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority is currently reviewing all 10 subjects of the national curiculum, including English, following Sir Ron Dearing's report on the national curriculum published in January. The authority is due to submit advice on a revised national curriculum to my right hon. Friend by the end of March. Proposals will be published in early May for consultation and my right hon. Friend will make final decisions, including on whether there should be reading lists in English, towards the end of the year, in the light of the consultation and of further advice from the authority.

Student Unions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had from the principal of King's college, London, Professor Arthur Lucas, about the role of student unions in universities.

Mr. Boswell: Professor Lucas wrote to the Department on behalf of King's college, London on 26 October 1993, in response to consultations on the proposed reform of student unions announced by my right hon. Friend to the House on 1 July, *Official Report*, columns 1120-21.

Chief Inspector of Schools

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column 257, concerning the selection board appointed to recommend a person to fill the post of Chief Inspector of Schools, England, which persons on that board have had any occupational experience in *(a)* a school, *(b)* further or *(c)* higher education; and which of these have been for more than a year a member of the governing body of a maintained school or an education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: None has had substantial occupational experience in schools, higher or further education and none has been a member of a governing body of a maintained school or an education authority. Mr. Kalms has been a governor of a city technology college for several years.

Further Education Corporations

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what age limits are *(a)* recommended and *(b)* required for membership of further education corporations; and for what reasons these age limits have been adopted.

Mr. Boswell: The instrument of government, which is set out in regulations—SIs 1992, Nos. 1957 to 1963—prescribes that, with the exception of student members, the minimum age for membership of a further education corporation is 18. This lower age limit reflects the nature of the corporation's responsibilities. A student member under the age of 18 is precluded from voting on any question concerning proposals for the expenditure of money or for entering into any contract. The instrument of government prescribes a maximum age of 70 for appointment as a member of a corporation, with the exception of any member who was an initial member of the corporation or any member who is appointed by the Secretary of State or where the corporation itself determines by an absolute majority that a person over 70 should be appointed. The upper age limit was included at the request of colleges who were keen to draw on the experience of those with current or recent involvement in business, industry and the professions.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Boswell: The information required is as follows:

Body	*Number of appointments*
Education associations	No appointments have yet been made. Section 218(3) of the Education Act 1993 provides for the appointment of not less than five members, one of whom shall be the chairman
The nine regional advisory committees of the Further Education Funding Council	Total number of appointments—102
Further Education Staff college	16 appointments
Fulbright Commission	Six appointments
Funding Agency for Schools	13 appointments
The Royal Ballet school governing body	Two appointments
School Curriculum and Assessment Authority	15 appointments
The Student Loans Company Ltd.	Three appointments made jointly by the Secretaries of State for Education and Scotland
University Commissioners	Five appointments
Yehudi Menuhin school governing body	Two appointments

Publicity

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent by his Department on publicity material to teachers in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Robin Squire: Expenditure by the Department on publicity material for teachers in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 follows:

	£
1990-91	254,511
1991-92	230,597
1992-93	179,314
[1]1993-94	202,706

[1] Estimated.

Figures for 1989-90 and earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Students (Mandatory Awards)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if his Department will consider changing policy regarding parental contribution in relation to the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations where a student is irreconcilably estranged from the parents.

Mr. Boswell: The Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations already allow for the parental contribution to be waived in certain circumstances, for example, where the student has been in the care of a local authority. Where a parent fails to provide information on which an assessment of a student's resources can be based, or refuses to make the assessed contribution, tuition fees will nonetheless be met as part of the student's mandatory award and his right to a student loan is unaffected. Students in financial hardship may apply for help from their institutions' access funds. The accelerated shift in the balance of resources from grant to loan which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 30 November 1993, *Official Report*, column 929, means that students are becoming progressively less reliant on the parental contribution for the means to support themselves.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Emphysema

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications to date have been made for the new industrial benefit for sufferers of emphysema; and how many have been rejected.

Mr. Scott: As at 20 February, about 24,200 valid claims had been received for the prescribed disease D12, chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Of the claims so far decided, about 16,700 have been disallowed.

Child Poverty

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children in each region are currently living in poverty.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 21 Janaury at column *900*.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the conformity of the methods of seeking information from employers used by the Child Support Agency with the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Burt: The Data Protection Act 1984 allows an employer to disclose information provided for under other legislation. Regulations 2(2)(c) and 3(1)(d), (e), (f), (h) and (j) of the Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992 require employers of either an absent parent or a parent with care to give information to the agency which will allow an absent parent to be identified and traced, and to provide information for a child support maintenance assessment to be made, collected or enforced. It is, therefore, proper for the agency to write to employers to obtain this information. I am satisfied that the agency's procedure meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Income Support, Nottinghamshire

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates will be affected by his decision to limit the availability of means-tested income support benefit for the unemployed to only six months from April 1996; and how many of these will be *(a)* in Nottingham city and *(b)* in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Burt: Job seeker's allowance will replace unemployment benefit and income support for unemployed people from April 1996. Claimants will receive means-tested JSA for as long as they satisfy the entitlement conditions.

Poverty

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current criteria for the definition of poverty used by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Burt: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys does not define poverty.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *694-96*, if he will place in the Library the results of market research relating to the campaigns listed; how many calls were monitored to the winter warmth line; how many requests were received for the year of the elderly leaflet and campaign pack; and what was the telephone response and take-up response of leaflets in each applicable campaign.

Mr. Scott: The winter warmth line run by the Benefits Agency received 5,564 calls.

There were 1,379,000 requests for the year of the elderly campaign packs and leaflets.

I am prepared to consider on their merits any individual requests to place digests of relevant findings from market surveys in the Library.

The Contributions Agency is willing to place the results of its customer satisfaction survey in the Library.

The telephone responses and take-up responses of leaflets in each applicable campaign are as follows:

Campaign	*Telephone responses to date*	*Leaflet take-up to date*
DSS		
Council Tax Benefit	37,366	3,972,379
Child Support: changes regulations	5,401	68,337
Pension Law Review Committee	1,787	13,248
Personal Pensions	5,893	214,313
Disability Awareness	[2]—	[2]—
State Pension Age	654	3,524
Working with Benefits	82,632	82,632
Family Credit	[1]101,970	134,632
Disability Working Allowance	13,596	37,900
Child Support Agency		
Introduction of Child Support Agency	40,300	348,474

[1] Cumulative since October 1992.

[2] Not yet run.

Benefits Agency 1993-94 Campaigns and Promotions	*Form of Response*	*Number of responses*
Prescribed Industrial Diseases	Coupon (phase one)	6,040
12-Bronchitis and/or Emphysema in Coal Workers	Leaflets issued	473,000

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes have been made in entitlement to and the method of calculating severe disablement allowance since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Severe disablement allowance was introduced in November 1984 to replace non-contributory invalidity pension. SDA is a non-means-tested benefit, paid at a basic rate, with dependency additions. In December 1990, three age-related additions were introduced to concentrate additional money on those who became disabled early in life. In April 1992, the residence and presence conditions were eased in line with the then newly introduced disability living allowance. In December 1993, changes were made to the transitional regulations to allow women who may have qualified for NCIP, but for the household duties test, to qualify for SDA, even though they did not make a claim for SDA. The upper age limits for claiming and supplying medical evidence are being equalised for men and women, following a challenge to the rules in the European Court of Justice—case C328/91.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are his plans regarding the proposed medical test of incapacity in relation to severe disablement allowance;

(2) under what circumstances *(a)* existing and *(b)* new claimants of severe disablement allowance will undertake the proposed medical test of incapacity.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 11 and 21 February at columns *498* and *45*. New claimants will have to fulfil the requirements of the new objective medical incapacity test. In practice, we expect that there will be sufficient evidence in the majority of cases to show that the claimant fulfils the requirements of the new test without any further investigation.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *694–96*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each campaign listed.

Mr. Scott: The budgeted and cost to date of each campaign listed are as follows:

Campaign	*Budget (£)*	*Cost (£)*
DSS HEADQUARTERS		
Change in legislation		
Council tax benefit	460,000	456,000
Child support: changes in regulations	325,000	117,000
Pension law review committee	145,000	55,000
State pension age	95,000	93,000
Personal pensions	220,000	63,000
Disability		
Disability working allowance	1,200,000	1,054,000
Family Credit		
Working with benefits	3,700,000	3,679,000
Family credit	385,000	387,000
BENEFITS AGENCY		
Prescribed industrial disease 12 bronchitis and/or emphysema in coal workers	350,500	336,000
Severe cold weather payment	80,000	76,000
Year of the elderly	582,000	490,000
CONTRIBUTIONS AGENCY		
Phone book advertising	150,000	89,391
Mailing to employers	2,390,000	[1]—
Exhibitions	74,000	44,229
CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY		
Introduction Child Support Agency	850,000	803,000

[1] Exercise not completed.

Cerebral Palsy

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many experts on cerebral palsy in the membership of the advisory panel on assessment of incapacity there are.

Mr. Scott: Five members of the assessment panel have particular expertise in, and knowledge of, the wide range of disabilities exhibited by people with cerebral palsy, and the limiting effects these disabilities may have on body and mind function. In addition, around one third of the panel's membership are experts in the spectrum of disabilities and needs associated with disordered neuromuscular function, developmental decay, mobility and locomotion problems, intellectual and sensory dysfunction which may feature in one or more combinations in people with cerebral palsy.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider extending the 56-day period for qualifying for disability working allowance to assist claimants in securing a job; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so.

Social Fund

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the computer error involving the loss of £44·5 million from his Department's social fund has yet been traced and rectified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 February 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the computer fault which affected the Social Fund.

I have assumed that your question refers to the recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Social Fund Account for 1992-93. You will be aware that this highlighted a difference between the amount of loans outstanding shown in the Social Fund Account, and the corresponding figure from the local microcomputer system. The main cause of this problem has been traced to a fault in the computer program which adds up individual loan balances on the microcomputer system. This resulted in certain categories of loans (amounting to an estimated £44·5 million) being excluded from the statistical report of total loans outstanding at the end of each month.

The Comptroller and Auditor General confirms that there was no evidence that this fault has led to a cash loss; individual loan records have not been affected. He also acknowledges the considerable progress made by the Benefits Agency in resolving these accounting problems.

The Agency is currently introducing a new Social Fund computer system which will be fully operational by May 1994. This new system has been designed to provide a fully integrated national network, resolving the weaknesses of the original microcomputer system by capturing all categories of loans outstanding.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long it takes the Child Support Agency to undertake a review of a maintenance assessment; and what is the target length of time.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Jon Owen Jones, dated 28 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question about the processing of reviews of child maintenance by the Child Support Agency.

Where either parent experiences a change of circumstances (for example an increase in salary) or at the annual review stage, the assessment is reviewed. You have asked for a breakdown of the time taken to perform such a review. Information on clearance times is being collected but, because of the relatively low volumes it is too early for reliable information to be available. At this stage we are, therefore, unable to estimate how long it should take to complete a review.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money the Child Support Agency will recover in the financial year 1993-94; how much money has so far been recovered by Child Support Agency in this financial year; and how much money the Child Support Agency will recover in 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 28 February 1994:

I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the amount of money the Child Support Agency will recover.

The Agency has been set a target to recover £530 million in benefit savings in the financial year 1993-94. For the period from April 1993 to December 1993, £214·5 million was recorded as recovered. This figure does not represent the total amount of savings that will be recovered during this period, as some will be calculated retrospectively.

Implementing the policy changes will have an effect on the Agency's achievement this year. Whilst it is too early to be precise about the impact, it is clear that there will be a shortfall against the target.

Figures are not available for how much money the Agency will recover in 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97, although it has been estimated that in the long run around £900 million a year will be recovered.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many absentee fathers who have not contributed maintenance have been traced by the Child Support Agency;

(2) what is the number of fathers whose whereabouts have been reported by mothers, but from whom the Child Support Agency has not attempted to seek maintenance payments;

(3) what proposals he has regarding fathers whose whereabouts are known to the Child Support Agency, but in respect of whom no action has been taken.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Jim Cunningham, dated 28 February 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the Child Support Agency.

You asked how many absent parents who have not contributed maintenance have been traced by the Agency. To the end of December 1993, the Agency had issued maintenance enquiry forms to 344,000 absent parents. Figures were not kept on the proportion of these cases in which maintenance was not already being paid. We estimate, however, that about 50 per cent. of cases taken-on by the Agency were not already receiving maintenance. To the end of December 1993, the Agency's specialist tracing sections had successfully traced over 15,000 absent parents.

You also asked for the number of absent parents whose whereabouts have been reported by parents with care, but from whom the Agency has not attempted to seek maintenance payments. I am sorry that figures are not available in the form you request. By the end of December 1993, however, the Agency had issued 711,000 application forms to parents with care. In 20,500 cases the Child Support Officer had agreed that the parent with care had good cause not to give information about the absent parent. Apart from cases in this category, and any applications found to be ineligible under the legislation, the Agency is pursuing maintenance in all cases.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 2 March 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr Burden: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of legal aid in connection with actions by council tenants under section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and relevant predecessor legislation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not possible to identify actions specifically involving council tenants. Nor is it possible to identify actions taken specifically under section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act, or any relevant predecessor legislation, since the information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Where a private individual brings a prosecution under section 82 he would not qualify for legal aid. An individual defending an action may be granted criminal legal aid provided that it was considered to be in the interest of justice and his means are such that he requires assistance.

Costs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what variation is permitted within the laid-down guidelines regarding *(a)* awarded costs and *(b)* expedited costs in (i) civil and (ii) criminal cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Departmental targets for the payment of costs in criminal proceedings and recent performance against those targets were referred to in the answer I gave the hon. Member on 11 January 1994 at columns *66-68.* There are no permissible or formal levels of variation from target. The targets represent realisable but challenging aims for taxing authorities and are used as a means of monitoring and discussing levels of performance. Monitoring is undertaken regularly at various managerial levels in the court service and resources redeployed if necessary to meet fluctuations in workload.

Payment of costs in civil proceedings is a matter for the parties, rather than the courts. Where the court orders payment of costs within a specific period, it is open to either party to apply to vary the time for payment. Whether the application is granted, and on what terms, is a matter for judicial discretion and will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. Enforcement of the order to pay costs is also a matter for the parties to take forward.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in how many instances *(a)* costs and *(b)* expedited costs were paid within the standard laid down by charter; in how many cases payments were made (i) only after six months and (ii) only after a year or more in each of the past three years; how much money was involved in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information sought is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

M25

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of *(a)* construction, *(b)* maintenance and *(c)* improvements to the M25 in each year since construction commenced at both current and constant 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Key: *(a) Construction*

The cost of building the M25 was nearly £1000 million. It was constructed over a period of 14 years between 1972 and 1986 giving an average cost per year of £71·42 million. These are actual costs.

	£ million
(b) Maintenance	
1990-91	10·63
1991-92	30·73
1992-93	24·36
1993-94	[1]30·58
(c) Improvements	
1990-91	9·31
1991-92	14·82
1992-93	16·39
1994-94	[1]10·70

[1] Estimated spend at current prices.

Information on spend on maintenance and improvements is not collected for particular routes. The figures given have been collated from a number of different sources and some components have been estimated. Reliable information for the years before 1990-91 is not available.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each scheme relating to the M25 in his Department's current trunk roads and motorways programme with the total cost in each year since construction began up to estimated completion, at both current and constant 1992-93 prices, for *(a)* junction improvements, *(b)* increasing capacity and *(c)* other improvements.

Mr. Key: There are three M25 schemes in the roads programme which are currently under construction. The actual and estimated spend for these schemes are listed in the table:

	£ million
Junctions 15-16	
1992-93	7·1
1993-94	[1]22·9
1994-95	[1]5·3
Junctions 10-11	
1993-94	[1]1·5
1994-95	[1]33·5
Junctions 7-8	
1993-94	[1]1·0
1994-95	[1]30·0
1995-96	[1]15·0

[1] Estimated spend at current prices.

All three schemes are to increase capacity to dual four lanes largely within the highway boundary.

Speed Cameras

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to installing automatic roadside speed cameras as a means of reducing the number of road deaths.

Mr. Key: Automatic roadside speed cameras are already in use at sites with a history of speed-related accidents and are proving to be very effective at reducing deaths and injuries.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of evidence from abroad as to the effectiveness of the installation of automatic roadside speed cameras as a means of reducing the number of road deaths.

Mr. Key: The use of automatic roadside cameras in other countries was one of the factors that led to the change in road traffic law in 1991 permitting their use in Britain.

However, it is difficult to translate overseas experience to Britain because of the different social attitudes and enforcement practices.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the British Medical Association urging the installation of automatic roadside speed cameras as a means of reducing the number of road deaths.

Mr. Key: There is no record of any formal representation from the BMA about the introduction of speed cameras.

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will commission a study of the installation of automatic roadside speed cameras as a means of reducing the number of road deaths.

Mr. Key: Such a study has already been commissioned. The Transport Research Laboratory is monitoring the effects of speed cameras on both speed and accidents. Early results from the pilot project in west London suggest that accidents have fallen by 25 per cent. and the number of people killed or seriously injured by over 40 per cent.

Roads, Warwickshire

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *118*, what traffic surveys have been carried out to establish demand for a means of access from the M45 to the A5 in Warwickshire.

Mr. Key: None.

Malaysian Airlines

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) to what extent and on what occasions since the beginning of 1985 Ministers or representatives of Government Departments have been involved in discussions with the Government of Malaysia, and the Malaysian airline MAS, about increasing the availability of slots for that airline at Heathrow airport;

(2) to what extent and on what occasions since the beginning of 1985 his Department has been involved in discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority about increasing the availability of slots for the Malaysian airline MAS at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Norris: No discussions have been held with any of these parties concerning the availability of slots at Heathrow airport. Slot allocation is a matter for the independent co-ordinator at the airport.

Governmental talks concerning air services arrangements at which both MAS and British Airways were represented were held with the Malaysian Government in July and September 1985, March and August 1989 and March 1993. In 1985 liberal air service arrangements were concluded involving increases in capacity and amendments to routeing and traffic rights for both sides. For the outcome of the 1989 talks I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 15 Febraury. No further rights were agreed at the talks in 1993 and no dates for further discussions have so far been agreed.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Shares

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax regime applies to payments from share dealings in the United Kingdom received by a person who is resident in the United Kingdom for less than 90 days per year.

Mr. Dorrell: All purchases of shares completed within the United Kingdom attract stamp duty. Gains realised on the disposal of shares are liable to capital gains tax if the holder is either actually resident or ordinarily resident within the United Kingdom.

Alcohol and Tobacco

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the maximum fine for evading duty of £20,000 on imports of wine and tobacco.

Sir John Cope: In the magistrates court the maximum penalty for evading duty is the greater of £5,000 or three times the value of the goods. In the Crown court the penalty is unlimited and offenders can be imprisoned. The word "fine" is not used in the Customs and Excise Acts. A penalty is to all intents and purposes the same as a fine.

Staff Transfers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the rules or procedures concerning bridging loans for permanent transfer expenses and assistance to staff facing serious financial hardships.

Mr. Dorrell: Departments are responsible for setting the rules on the expenses that may be paid to members of staff who permanently transfer to another office and who move their homes as a result. The framework of principles under which Departments can determine those rules are set out in the transfer section of the "Civil Service Management Code", a copy of which is in the House Library.

Food Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what instructions have been received by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise from commission auditors in respect of the examining of food exports entered at any particular port; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Commission auditors produced a report following their visit to United Kingdom Customs in January 1993. Although satisfied with the number of examinations carried out on food exports, they were not satisfied with the depth and rigour of examinations. After considering the auditor's report, Customs issued more detailed guidance to staff on the standards to be observed when carrying out CAP examinations.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the reasons for the practice of Her Majesty's Customs requiring 5 per cent. of goods exported under the common agricultural policy and clearance through ports have to be examined by completely offloading the goods from the container; what ports this applies to; what consultations have been held with food exporters in this and what delays are imposed by it; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* In a move to combat fraud against Community funds, all EC Customs authorities are required under Council regulation 386/90 to examine a minimum of 5 per cent. of goods on which a claim to common agricultural policy export refunds is made. This procedure applies to all ports.

Officers must satisfy themselves as to the description, quality and quantity of the goods by checking representative parts of the load. Goods need be offloaded from the container only when they are packed in such a way that officers cannot otherwise gain access to all parts of the load. In their 1993 report, Commission auditors criticised Customs for failing to carry out export examinations in sufficient depth.

To guard against the risk that export refunds might in future not be reimbursed from EC funds customs recently reviewed their guidance to officers on the standard of examinations. This has led to the prospect of more goods being offloaded for examination than was the case last year. If exporters wish to reduce the likelihood of goods being examined at ports, they may apply for authorisation for local export control, under which the 5 per cent. examinations are undertaken at the exporter's own premises.

Consultation with trade representatives on procedures for the control of CAP export goods takes place on a continuing basis. I have agreed to meet trade representatives to discuss their concerns over the more rigorous examination procedures.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what charges are made by customs at Felixstowe and other ports for mandatory examination of food passing through the ports under the common agricultural policy; and how many sailings have been missed at Felixstowe because of this requirement since its introduction.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* Customs make no charges at Felixstowe, or any other ports, for mandatory examinations. The question of recovery of costs incurred in customs examinations is between the port authority and the exporter. Up to 11 February, six consignments are said to have missed their boat at Felixstowe in 1994 because of Customs examinations. In each case customs had notified that the consignment was required for examination within four hours of receipt of the documents. Subsequent delays in production of the consignment to customs—in one of the cases amounting to seven days—may have contributed to missed sailings.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recommendations EC auditors made on their recent visit to examine the process of mandatory examination of food exports under the common agricultural policy; what representations he has made about these recommendations; and how he intends to implement them.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* As part of the European Community fight against fraud, Commission auditors check that member states are properly carrying out their obligations under Community regulations. If they are not satisfied they may prevent the reimbursement from Community funds of refunds paid by member states to exporters. In the case of the United Kingdom, the auditors made it clear following their 1993 audit that significant disallowance would follow if customs' examination standards were not immediately improved.

I am advised that the auditors' findings in the United Kingdom were reflected elsewhere in the Community and, as a result, the Commission has reminded all member states of the standards that should be achieved. Customs have reviewed their guidance to officers in order to improve the quality and depth of CAP export examinations.

Brecqhou

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the United Kingdom tax arrangements for business and commerce conducted in Brecqhou; and what tax regime exists for its residents.

Mr. Dorrell: United Kingdom-resident individuals or companies conducting business and commerce in Brecqhou are liable to United Kingdom income tax or corporation tax on profits earned from such activities.

No direct taxes are imposed on Brecqhou on either residents or non-residents. The only taxes are a nominal charge on the value of property and import duties, chiefly on liquor and tobacco.

Equipment Thefts

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of the equipment stolen from his Department in the last three years for which information is available; and what was the approximate value of each item.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 February 1994]:* The list provides the information which is available within each of my Departments. The values given are approximate and are not the replacement value.

Government Actuary's Department

No equipment stolen in the last three years.

Office of Her Majesty's Paymaster General

No equipment stolen in the last three years.

Her Majesty's Treasury

	£
Approximate value	
Mobile Telephone	350·00
6 Answerphones	77·00 each
14 Dictaphones	120·00 each
2 Standard Telephone Handsets	20·00 each
3 Large Desk Staplers	66·00 each
3 Portable Computers	500·00 each
4 Scientific calculators	11·50 each
4 High energy Light Bulbs	36·00
Typist chair	80·00
Video Player	400·00
Fan	32·90

Royal Mint

No equipment stolen in last three years.

Department for National Savings

	£
Approximate value	
Pair of Digital Scales	35·00
Feature Telephone	40·00
Ordinary Grey Telephone	8·00
3 Time Delay Humidistats	50·00

National Investment and Loans Office

No equipment stolen in the last three years.

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise[1]

1991-92

- 27 Personal Computers
- 10 Portable Computers
- 2 Lap-Top Computers
- 15 Printers
- 5 Fax Machines
- 2 Photocopiers
- Answerphone
- Call Logger
- 4 Radio Handsets
- Total Value of goods=£77,725·28

1992-93

- 22 Personal Computers and Software
- 5 Printers
- 16 Keyboards
- 3 Fax Machines
- 2 Mobile Telephones
- Tape Streamer
- 2 PC Mice
- Monitor
- Camera Lens, Case
- 8 Radio Handsets
- Total Value of goods=£60,210·19

[1] No breakdown available for individual items.

Central Statistical Office

	Approximate value
11 Standard Telephone Handsets	£22·00 each
9 Facility Telephone Handsets	£60·00 each
Electric Stapler	£98.00

Inland Revenue and Valuation Office Agency

		Approximate value (£)
IT Equipment		
Panasonic Laser Printer		
OKI Dot Matrix Printer		
ICL CPU Board		
Drum Replacement Unit		
2 Equinox Processors		
2 Equinox Tape Streamer		
2 Ampex VDUs		
2 Ampex keyboards		
Security Badge		
	Total	20,000·00
Panasonic Laser Printer		1,400·00
Meridian Hard Disk Drive		1,000·00
Amstrad FX Fax Machine		600·00
VDU Security Badge		
Grundig Dictating Machine		
18 Calculators		
Stop Watch		
Stationery		
Electric Grundig Dictating Machine		
Blank Floppy Disks		
Training Section Video		
VDU		
Printer (PAYE)		
Printer (CODA) broken		
	Total	12,000·00
Compaq LTD/286		
MS DOS		
Lotus 123		
	Total	3,000·00
MS Mouse		40·00
Toshiba Laptop		
Paintjet Printer		800·00
HP Image Scanner		2,000·00
Compaq LTE 286 laptop		3,000·00
MS Mouse		40·00
Cannon Fax		440·00
Agenda Hand Held Computer Organiser		
Mouse Adapter Lead		
Compaq LTE 386 Laptop		3,000·00
Interface Card for HP Scanjet		
Desktop Expansion Base for Compaq LTE		350·00
Freelance Plus Software		
Compaq 386		
VGA Monitor		
Epson 1050		
Workstation		
HP Laserjet III		
VDU Keyboard		
VDU Keyboard		
	Total	3,179·00
Compaq LTE 386 laptop		
2 VDUs plus keyboards		
Printer		
Bull VDU plus keyboards		
	Total	3,000·00
Disk Drive		
Monitor		
Keyboard		
Floppy disks		
Mains Smoother		
	Total	630·00

		Approximate value (£)
2 × 1mb memory upgrade boards from Compaq laptop		400·00
2 Software packages		400·00
3 Microsoft Mice		120·00
Microsoft Mouse		70·00
Compaq Contura Notebook and Memory Expansion		1,600·00
2 Panasonic Laser Printers		1,500·00
HP95 Palm Top		3,500·00
ICL Mainframe terminal		900·00
ICL Mainframe terminal		900·00
Badge Reader		200·00
Smith Corona PWP7000 Word Processor		600·00
Zenith Bull PC		1,500·00
HP Laserjet 3 Printer		1,000·00
Mainframe Controller		5,000·00
Compaq 386		1,800·00
HP Laserjet 3 Printer		1,000·00
Epson Printer		3,300·00
Toshiba Portable PC		1,500·00
Circuit Board for HP Paintjet		100·00
Artemis Printer		3,000·00
Microsoft Mouse		99·00
Freelance Software Package and Discs		500·00
Hard Disk (84 Mbyte)		650·00
Canon Bubble Jet Printer		300·00
Compaq 2865 Portable PC		3,000·00
Canon Bubble Jet Printer		300·00
Microsoft Mouse		85·00
3 Floppy Discs		10·00
1 Bull Terminal		
3 Bull Terminal		
5 ICL Keyboards		
Fax Machine		
	Total	2,000·00
Microsoft Mouse		45·00
Norton Utilities		
Norton Disk Explorer		
Manual		
	Total	70·00
Compaq 386 LTE S/20		
MS DOS		
Smart 3.1		
	Total	2,000·00
3 Deskpro 3865/20 Model 60		
Deskpro 3865/20 Model 40		
CD ROM and Modem		
Prolinea 3/255		
4 Mice		
	Total	10,000·00
Nokia Terminal		900·00
Compaq Laptop LTE		1,800·00
ICL DRS 55/20 PC		
Infotec Fax Machine		
2 Panasonic Answerphones		
Portable PC		
	Total	6,000·00
Canon Printer		200·00
MS DOS		
MS Windows		
Word for Windows		
	Total	550·00
Compaq 386		
MS DOS		
Smartware 2		
Norton Utilities		
	Total	2,000·00
Biofolio Computer Art		150·00
ICL DRS Controller		2,000·00
HP Laser Jet 3		3,562·00
2 HP Laser Jet 4		3,000·00
Zenith Bull		
Compaq 386		
2 Mice		
	Total	3,500·00
3 Compaq Deskpro		
Mouse		
	Total	4,500·00
Canon Photocopier		
Compaq 386		
Epson Printer		
	Total	3,500·00
6 ICL Tech. 486SX (boxed)		6,250·00
Compaq 386		1,500·00
Wordstar		Redundant
1 ICL CS 386		1,200·00
Floppy Discs		120·00
3 ICL Processor		3,400·00
Amstrad Portable		900·00
Psion Organiser		320·00
ICL DRS 55/20		
7 ICL 486 Processor		
Infotec Fax Machine damaged		
	Total	8,000·00
6 ICL 4865/25 Processors		
6 ICL CS386 Processors		
	Total	12,000·00
12 ICL CS386 Processors		12,000·00
HP Laser Jet 3		
Compaq Prolinea 4/50		
	Total	2,650·00
Compaq 486 Lite Laptop		2,500·00
2 Compaq 486 Lite Laptops		5,000·00
Box of Floppy Discs		120·00
Development Tapes		50·00
Total value of equipment lost or stolen		100,287·00

General Equipment

26 Video Recorders (2 with remote control)
23 Microwaves
11 Cameras
29 Telephones
4 Mobile Telephones
34 Dictaphones
2 Electronic Typewriters
9 Televisions
13 Headphones

5 Photocopiers
11 Fax Machines
4 Dictation Machines
2 Word Processors
PC Computer with Printers
24 CPU (without keyboard or monitors)
VDU
4 Printers
3 Grundig Stenorette

Approximate value of known goods = £20,103·49.

EC Expenditure

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will produce a table to show the total expenditure of the EC institutions, including their predecessors and components parts, in pound sterling for each of the last 10 years and for that forecast for the current year and that planned for the next five years and the percentage annual increase in real terms for each of those years.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* Administrative expenditure for each of the Community institutions and the percentage annual increase in real terms for the last 10 years are as follows:

£ million

Administrative Expenditure of the Institutions (Commitments)

Institution	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Commission	612	664	763	846	970	1,049	1,152	1,293	1,445	1,734	1,833
(percentage annual increase in real terms)		(1·5)	(8·5)	(4·9)	(10·2)	(3·6)	(4·7)	(6·7)	(6·0)	(14·9)	(2·2)
Parliament	177	176	224	255	287	288	322	372	445	479	503
(percentage annual increase in real terms)		(–7·2)	(20·3)	(7·8)	(8·1)	(–3·9)	(6·9)	(9·8)	(13·4)	(3·1)	(1·5)
Council	98	116	136	145	153	176	211	264	262	272	291
(percentage annual increase in real terms)		(10·2)	(11·0)	(1·0)	(1·6)	(10·0)	(14·6)	(18·4)	(–5·7)	(–0·7)	(3·4)
Court of Justice	23	23	29	33	37	44	50	56	63	69	72
(percentage annual increase in real terms)		(–3·3)	(15·7)	(9·7)	(7·1)	(13·4)	(8·5)	(6·6)	(6·5)	(5·0)	(2·0)
Court of Auditors	13	14	17	19	20	21	41	25	28	30	32
(percentage annual increase in real terms)		(–0·8)	(15·3)	(7·6)	(3·8)	(–0·7)	(83·9)	(–41·9)	(6·4)	(3·5)	(4·0)

Notes:

1984-1992 figures taken from the annual Statements on the European Community Budget. 1993 and 1994 figures taken from adopted budgets, as amended.

All sterling figures converted at the rate of £1 = 1·3243 ecu, the rate notified in the Official Journal as prevailing on the last working day of last year (31 December 1993).

The Community budget is established on an annual basis. However, ceilings for six main categories of expenditure were included in the financial perspective agreed by the European Council at Edinburgh in December 1992. This included an overall ceiling, in 1992 prices, on administrative expenditure, which is as follows:

Appropriations for commitments

	Administration	
	£ million	*Percentage increase*
1995	2,703	—
1996	2,786	3·1
1997	2,869	3·0
1998	2,907	1·3
1999	2,945	1·3

Note: Converted at the rate of £1=1·3243 ecu, the rate notified in the *Official Journal* as prevailing on the last working day of last year (31 December 1993).

ENVIRONMENT

Council Tax

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many proposals to amend council tax valuations have been received by each valuation office in England; how many of these have been settled to date; what percentage this represents of the total; and what is the number and percentage of settled proposals which have involved an amendment to the original valuation banding.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 February, *Official Report,* column 967.

Details of the percentage of settled proposals which have involved an amendment to the original valuation banding and those which have been withdrawn by the proposer are not collected centrally.

Peat

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the membership of his Department's working group into peat and related matters and their occupations.

Mr. Baldry: The current membership of the working group into peat and related matters is as follows:

Mr. R. C. Mabey—DOE Minerals Division (Chairman)
Miss A. E. Ward—DOE Minerals Division
Dr. T. Simpson—DOE Minerals Division
Mr. R. Bunce—DOE Directorate of Rural Affairs
Mr. S. G. Fulton—Scottish Office Environment Department
Mr. P. Samuel—MAFF Land Use Planning Unit
Ms A. Corbishley—MAFF Horticulture Division
Dr. J. Blackman—MAFF Agricultural Development and Advisory Service
Mr. D. M. Ellis—Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Mr. S. Gorman—Cumbria County Council
Mr. S. Shorthose—Humberside County Council
Mr. R. Moon—Somerset County Council
Mr. D. Henderson-Howat—Forestry Authority
Mr. D. Stroud—Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Ms J. Heap—English Nature
Dr. B. Johnson—English Nature
Mr. R. Lindsay—Scottish Natural Heritage
Dr. M. Smith—Countryside Council for Wales
Mr. R. Woolmore—Countryside Commission

Dr. B. Wheeler—Department of Animal & Plant Sciences, University of Sheffield
Mr. R. Stockdale—Chairman, Peat Producers Association
Mr. R. Bond—Peat Producers Association
Mr. A. Robertson—Peat Producers Association
Mr. R. Sykes—DOE Minerals Division (Secretary)

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *733-34*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each public information campaign listed.

Mr. Baldry: Following is the information required:

Helping the Earth Begins at Home
The budget for this campaign is £6,383,520·65.
Actual contracts awarded to 25 February 1994 are £6,242,032·08.
Rent to Mortgage
The budget for this campaign is £411,434·23.
Actual contracts awarded to 25 February 1994 are £408,543·18.

These figures cover all TV, press and radio advertising costs and promotional items.

Chewing Gum

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the advice available and research undertaken into the removal of chewing gum from brick pedestrian precincts for local authorities.

Mr. Atkins: The Department has not issued any advice or undertaken any research into methods of removing chewing gum. This is a matter for local authorities in view of their responsibilities for street cleansing. I am aware, however, that Westminster city council is currently testing equipment aimed at dealing with this problem.

Upper Limb Disorders

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from the Health and Safety Executive regarding work-related upper limb disorders in the construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Groundwork

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what suggestions have been made during his Department's internal review of Groundwork as to how links between Groundwork trusts and existing environmental charities could be improved with particular reference to funding arrangements.

Mr. Atkins: As part of the Department's internal review of its sponsorship of Groundwork, officials are currently carrying out consultations with a number of Groundwork's partners and customers, including environmental organisations. The present funding arrangements for Groundwork will be considered as part of the review.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *732*, if he will provide a breakdown of spending of the grant-in-aid given to the Groundwork Foundation for each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93 using the same categories as he used in his previous answer.

Mr. Atkins: The table shows the breakdown of spending of the grant-in-aid allocated to the Groundwork Foundation for each year from 1988-89 to 1992-93.

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Foundation staffing and support costs	360,000	418,350	711,256	1,261,503	1,544,950
Trusts' running costs	1,039,000	1,170,025	1,292,407	1,622,319	1,521,017
Projects	54,000	70,000	76,353	390,721	1,145,766
Computer systems	0	0	0	283,772	199,037
Training	0	18,000	37,790	181,183	272,230
Total grant allocation	1,453,000	1,676,375	2,117,806	3,739,498	4,683,000

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he determines that a proposed Groundwork trust will not adversely affect existing environmental charities in the area.

Mr. Atkins: The proposal for Groundwork trust is worked up by local people in partnership. A steering group is formed comprising members of the local authority, business community and voluntary organisations and community groups in the area. The Groundwork Foundation gives guidance to the steering group working up a proposal and seeks to ensure that the trust will work in partnership with, and complement the work of, existing environmental agencies.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Groundwork trusts have paid money to other environmental charities to advance projects under Groundwork's remit.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. Groundwork trusts work in partnership with other environmental organisations and community groups in undertaking projects and will assist them in putting together the most appropriate funding package. Groundwork trusts may also themselves provide funding to assist other environmental groups.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what limits he sets on the spending of a Groundwork trust.

Mr. Atkins: None. The Department makes a contribution to the running costs of Groundwork trusts. Trusts may also apply for relevant grants for projects in competition with other organisations.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he gives to Groundwork trusts to help them avoid adversely affecting existing environmental charities.

Mr. Atkins: The Groundwork Foundation is responsible for managing the network of Groundwork trusts. One of the criteria the Department advises the foundation to adopt in considering the case for a new trust is that it will complement the work of existing local organisations. Once established, trusts are encouraged to work in collaboration with such organisations.

Art (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who appointed the members of the advisory group to which the Merseyside development corporation refers its public art initiatives; and how often they meet.

Mr. Baldry: The advisory group which provides informal advice on the Merseyside development corporation public arts initiative is drawn from a wide range of arts organisations on Merseyside. Representatives from these organisations have been invited to join the group by Mrs. Paula Ridley, MDC board member and chairperson of the group. The group meets four times a year.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the advisory group to which the Merseyside development corporation refers its public art initiatives, their qualifications and place of birth.

Mr. Baldry: The membership of the advisory group on Merseyside development corporation's art initiative is drawn from Merseyside art institutions. It is an ad hoc body with no statutory responsibilities and as such my Department does not keep records of names, qualifications and places of birth.

Housing Capital Receipts

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what housing capital receipts are held by each London borough council as at 31 March 1993.

Mr. Baldry: Information on total usable capital receipts held at 31 March 1993 is given in the table. No comparable information is available for housing receipts alone, since local authorities are not required to account separately for such receipts.

	£ thousands
Barking and Dagenham	21,587
Barnet	22,428
Bexley	4,560
Brent	1,269
Bromley	30,230
Camden	2,060
City of London	20,220
Croydon	nil
Ealing	10,059
Enfield	13,[illegible]74
Greenwich	nil
Hackney	17
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,317
Haringey	5,576
Harrow	17,221
Havering	7,450
Hillingdon	20,923
Hounslow	6,163
Islington	792
Kensington and Chelsea	2,486
Kingston upon Thames	1,960
Lambeth	804
Lewisham	2,200
Merton	nil
Newham	nil
Redbridge	8,372
Richmond upon Thames	14,631
Southwark	nil
Sutton	2,860
Tower Hamlets	4,194
Waltham Forest	4,077
Wandsworth	14,819
Westminster	22,787

Source: Local authority returns.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what authority the London Docklands development corporation funds voluntary organisations for three years only.

Mr. Baldry: The London Docklands development corporation has delegated authority from the Department to take their own decisions about support for individual voluntary sector projects which are consistent with their regeneration objectives. The Department's own policy is that such grants should not normally exceed three years in the first instance.

Local Government Finance

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the financial reserves held by each London borough council as at 31 March 1993.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information, as reported to the Department by the local authorities, is as follows:

Estimated General Fund reserves at 31 March 1993

	£ thousands
City of London	184,989
Camden	−146
Greenwich	1,583
Hackney	2,516
Hammersmith and Fulham	0
Islington	1,367
Kensington and Chelsea	12,401
Lambeth	−10,032
Lewisham	3,009
Southwark	7,225
Tower Hamlets	14,096
Wandsworth	32,064
Westminster	24,301
Barking and Dagenham	0
Barnet	14,835
Bexley	7,830
Brent	−1,235
Bromley	59,369
Croydon	29,939
Ealing	26,051
Enfield	16,084
Haringey	10,939
Harrow	21,242
Havering	15,387
Hillingdon	5,536
Hounslow	7,023
Kingston upon Thames	3,933
Merton	9,952
Newham	14,391
Redbridge	7,688
Richmond upon Thames	6,522
Sutton	7,982
Waltham Forest	6,726

Local Government (Gloucestershire)

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a decision on the Commission's report on the future of local government in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply of Tuesday 1 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), *Official Report*, column *643*.

Senior Regional Director, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to appoint the senior regional director for London; and what are the terms of reference and duties which he intends to give to that person.

Mr. Baldry: We hope to announce the appointment of the regional director for the Government office for London in the near future. The duties of the regional director will be those set out in my earlier reply to the hon. Gentleman, *Official Report*, 8 February, column *146*.

Council Tenants

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost to local authorities of actions by council tenants under section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the relevant predecessor legislation for each year since 1989.

Mr. Atkins: This information is not held centrally.

Hertsmere District Council

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking over allegations of corruption and irregular property dealings in Hertsmere district council.

Mr. Baldry: This is not a matter for the Government. Allegations of corruption by local authorities should be made to the district auditor or the police for them to investigate.

New Towns

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contributions have been made by the Commission for New Towns towards promotional activities in each local authority convered by a former new town development corporation since 1988.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Local authority area	*Contribution £ thousands*
1988-89	
Corby D.C.	100·0
Peterborough C.C.	80·5
West Lancashire D.C.	122·0
1989-90	
Easington D.C.	5·0
Peterborough C.C.	169·0
Warrington B.C.	6·0
West Lancashire D.C.	100·0
1990-91	
Easington D.C.	5·0
Halton B.C.	68·5
Peterborough C.C.	132·0
West Lancashire D.C.	50·0
1991-92	
Halton B.C.	158·5
Peterborough C.C.	100·0
Warrington B.C.	75·0
West Lancashire D.C.	25·0
The Wrekin	76·5
1992-93	
Halton B.C.	166·0
Milton Keynes B.C.	2,500·0
Peterborough C.C.	72·0
Warrington B.C.	75·0
West Lancashire D.C.	25·0
The Wrekin	170·0
1993-94	
Halton B.C.	165·0
Milton Keynes B.C.	1,450·0
Peterborough C.C.	40·0
Warrington B.C.	75·0
West Lancashire D.C.	25·0

Local Government Commission

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters responding to the draft and final report of the Local Government Commission were not considered by the commission as they were ruled to have arrived after the deadline for representations in relation to the commission's proposals for Humberside; in what circumstances letters sent in response to earlier consultations by the Local Government Commission in relation to Humberside were ignored after deadlines; and if he will give a breakdown of letters received in terms of support for the various options put forward by the commission in response to both the draft and final report in relation to proposals for Humberside.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the Local Government Commission and I have written to it today asking it to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Waste Shipments

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action is needed in the United Kingdom to implement Council regulation (EEC) No. 259/93, the waste shipments regulation.

Mr. Atkins: I announced on 7 February that the United Kingdom had ratified the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The waste shipments regulation, which comes into operation on 6 May, provides the legal framework for implementing the obligations of the convention in the European Community.

Most of the regulation is directly applicable throughout the Community, but domestic regulations are required to give full effect to a number of provisions. The Government have just issued a draft statutory instrument for consultation, accompanied by a draft circular giving guidance on the implementation of the EC regulation in the United Kingdom. Copies of both documents have been deposited in the Library.

Advertising Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *733-34*, if he will place in the Library the results of market research relating to the advertising campaigns; and how many coupon/telephone responses were received to each campaign in this financial year.

Mr. Baldry: My Department will place copies of market research relating to the "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" and rent-to-mortgage campaigns in the House of Commons Library.

Coupon/telephone responses for these campaigns in this financial year, to 25 February 1994, are:

Helping the Earth Begins at Home
Telephone—12,080
Coupon—19,520

Rent-to-mortgage
Telephone—7,486
Coupon—10,281

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 28 February 1994]*: Women accounted for 29 per cent. of all public appointments made by my Department in 1993 to non-departmental public bodies and nationalised industries.

Toxic Waste (Crime)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the plans for the National Criminal Intelligence Service to investigate the extent of organised crime within the toxic waste industry in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

There is currently no evidence to suggest that organised crime has infiltrated the United Kingdom's toxic waste industry.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service is in touch with relevant agencies elsewhere in Europe and the United States and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insolvency Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill [Lords] on referrals from the private sector to the Insolvency Service for investigations leading to prosecution under the proposed involvement of the private sector in mechanical processing work of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It is not apparent that the provisions of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Bill will have any affect on the possible involvement of the private sector in the work of the Official Receiver.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the Insolvency Service executive agency spent on consultants in total for each financial years since 1991-92 and in the current financial year to 31 January.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The total amounts spent on consultants employed by or engaged in work for the Insolvency Service were:

	£
1991-92	659,480
1992-93	698,930
1993-94[1]	790,800

[1] To 31 January 1994.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff were dismissed from the Insolvency Service executive agency in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993; and if he will give the reasons.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The following numbers of staff were dismissed during the relevant years:

	Number
1991	2
1992	5
1993	6

Dismissal was for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many private consultants were employed by the Insolvency Service in each financial year since 1991-92 and in the current financial year to 31 January.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The following numbers of private consultants were employed by or engaged in work for the Insolvency Service:

	Number
1991-92	16
1992-93	18
1993-94[1]	20

[1] To 31 January 1994.

Sizewell B

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the report of the pre-operational safety review team mission to Sizewell B will be published.

Mr. Eggar: Copies of the report of the pre-operational safety review team mission to Sizewell B have been received from the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and placed in the Library of the House. In October and November 1992, the team conducted a review of the operational safety arrangements at Sizewell B at the invitation of Her Majesty's Government, following a suggestion from Nuclear Electric, the operators of Sizewell

B. As I informed the House on 16 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *237*, the review team concluded that Sizewell B is a well-managed nuclear plant.

It is normal practice for a pre-OSART review to be in two stages. A follow-up visit, with a smaller team, took place on 14 to 18 February.

Oil Exploration

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will indicate the level of exploration drilling on the United Kingdom continental shelf last year and the number of those wells successful in locating hydrocarbons; and if he will make a statement on the trend revealed.

Mr. Eggar: Fifty-one exploration wells were drilled last year, a figure lower than in recent years but still comparing favourably with the late 1970s and early 1980s when levels were lower. Thirteen significant discoveries were made in 1993, giving a one in four success rate. The average since exploration began in 1964 is about one in 4·5.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects manufacturing output to exceed the levels of 1990.

Mr. Sainsbury: Latest official forecasts of manufacturing output were published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1994-95", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Foreign Ownership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *741*, what assessment he has made of the extent to which transfer of control of other firms from the United Kingdom to other countries will increase the living standards of the British people.

Mr. Sainsbury: The effects of any particular acquisition must be judged on a case-by-case basis. However, in general the Government believe that open markets will be beneficial to economic growth.

Klockner Werke Steel Plant

Mr. John Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations the Government have made to the European Commission on the decision of a public sector consortium led by the Bremen regional government to purchase and maintain the Klockner Werke steel plant.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following representations made by my officials on 4 November I raised our concerns regarding public sector participation in the restructuring of Klockner Werke directly with Commissioner van Miert on 9 December and wrote to him about them on 15 December.

European Steel Industry

Mr. John Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations the Government have made to the European Commission on the issue of declaring a state of manifest crisis in the European steel industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Fire Safety

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes it is proposed to introduce in relation to fire safety in the regulations in relation to children's nightwear; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 regulate for fire safety in children's nightwear. These regulations are being considered as part of the overall review of legislation under the deregulation initiative. I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) on 21 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *882*.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* A total of 239 public appointments were made by this Department in 1993. Forty-seven of these appointments—24·5 per cent.—were women. This Department is fully committed to equal opportunities for women in public appointments, and has set itself a goal to increase the number of women in DTI public appointments to 30 per cent. by 1996.

RECHAR 2

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the European Commission's proposals for RECHAR 2.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 February 1994]:* The European Commission announced on 16 February its intention to launch 13 European structural funds Community initiatives for the period 1994 to 1999. The resources allocated to these initiatives amount to 13·45 billion ecu.

One of the proposals is for a new RECHAR initiative for assistance to coalfield areas and 0·4 billion ecu has been allocated to it. I shall write to Commissioner Millan to seek a substantial share of the new RECHAR for the United Kingdom.

Public Bodies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names, occupations and employers of the chairpersons and members of all the executive and advisory non-departmental public bodies for which his Department is responsible.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 March 1994]*: There would be disproportionate cost involved in providing the names, occupations and employers of the chairpersons and members of all the Department's executive and advisory non-departmental public bodies.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Regional Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he will receive a copy of the Arts Council working party report into the funding of the regional orchestras.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the report, which was produced jointly by a group of council members and officers, will be considered by the Arts Council at its meeting on 2 March. The report is a working document for the use of the Council. My Department routinely receives information copies of Arts Council papers.

Conservation Legislation

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the outcome of his officials' discussions with the Department of the Environment in respect of their review of certain aspects of the legislation to protect ancient monuments, historic buildings and conservation areas, outlined on page 53 of the Government's White Paper, "Deregulation: Cutting Red Tape."

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend and I will be publishing in late spring or early summer the final version of planning policy guidance note 15, which will reflect the outcome of our review of various regulations affecting historic buildings and conservation areas, on which we consulted last year. I shall also shortly be issuing a revised Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order, which will clarify and simplify the procedures for the approval of certain minor works affecting scheduled ancient monuments.

Youth Organisations

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what are his current major initiatives involving youth and voluntary youth organisations in sporting or other fields.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council has commissioned Youth Clubs UK to develop a programme for the delivery of sport within a youth work setting. In addition, a number of youth organisations have received financial assistance from the Foundation for Sports and the Arts. The Arts Council's youth arts fund supports strategic national youth arts initiatives by the national umbrella youth arts organisations. The Department's heritage grant fund also part funds cathedral camps, which enable young people to carry out basic conservation work in our great cathedrals. Youth arts organisations also benefit under the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Oakwood Hospital

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he intends to de-list Queen's house and St. Andrew's house at Oakwood hospital in Maidstone.

Mr. Brooke: I have not received an application to de-list either Queen's house or St. Andrew's house.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what salaries the advisory group concerning public art initiatives of the Merseyside development corporation are paid; and who is the chairman.

Mr. Baldry: I have been asked to reply.

The advisory group which provides informal advice on Merseyside development corporation art initiatives receive no payment or expenses for their contribution.

The ad hoc group is chaired by Mrs. Paula Ridley, chair of the Tate gallery Liverpool and a trustee of the Tate gallery.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Malaysia

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what grant or other financial undertaking was made to Her Majesty's Government in respect of the Sepang airport project in Malaysia; what are the details of the undertakings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We told the Government of Malaysia in February 1993 that we would consider their request for grant finance from the aid and trade provision budget to help develop the new airport at Sepang. No financial undertaking has been given to Her Majesty's Government in respect of this project.

Middle East

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each project funded by the Overseas Development Administration in *(a)* Syria, *(b)* Saudi Arabia, *(c)* Oman, *(d)* Qatar, *(e)* Egypt, *(f)* Lebanon, *(g)* Israel, *(h)* the west bank and Gaza, *(i)* Iran and *(j)* Iraq over the last five years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: During the past five years we have not funded any projects through country programme allocations in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel, Iran and Iraq. My answer of 7 February 1994, to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), column *70*, gave details of the projects we have funded in Oman during this period. I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses lists of the projects that we have funded in Egypt and the occupied territories.

Arun III, Nepal

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the estimated cost, in pounds sterling, per unit kilowatt hour of energy to be generated by the Arun III project in Nepal;

(2) how many schemes were considered by the World bank and the Nepali Government prior to the selection of the Arun III 400MW dam scheme; and what was the estimated *(a)* cost and *(b)* output of each scheme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in touch with the World bank to see if it can provide the information requested. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the environmental impact statement for the Arun III project in the Library.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A copy of the summary environmental impact assessment has been placed in the Library of the House.

Consultative Group Meeting, Amsterdam

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom executive director of the World bank and the United

Kingdom were represented at the ninth consultative group meeting on the common fund for commodities in Amsterdam from 14 to 18 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither the United Kingdom nor the UK executive director of the World bank are represented on the consultative committee of the common fund.

World Economic Forum

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom was represented at the annual meeting of the world economic forum on 28 to 30 January in Davos; what instructions the Government gave to the representative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer attended the informal gathering of world economic leaders in Davos on 28 to 30 January as part of the world economic forum's annual meeting. It was not an intergovernmental meeting, but provided an opportunity for international economic policy makers to discuss longer-term trends in the world economy on an informal basis.

Malawi

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of current United Kingdom involvement in aid and development projects in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In response to a question from the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 7 February, column *67*, a list of our current bilateral aid projects in Malawi was placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he takes into consideration when deciding on United Kingdom involvement in aid and development projects in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Several factors are taken into account including needs, particularly of the poor; progress on economic reform and good government; capacity to implement projects well; and the activities of other donors.

International Bodies (Budget Contribution)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the annual budget contributions by the United Kingdom to *(a)* the International bank for reconstruction and development, *(b)* the International Development Association and *(c)* the International Finance Corporation for each of the past 10 years in (i) pound sterling and (ii) United States dollars.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is in the table.

United Kingdom contributions to the world bank
1984-93

	IDA	*IBRD*		*IFC*		*Other*
Year	*£ million*	*$ million*	*£ million*	*$ million*	*£ million*	*£ million*
1984	169·2	40·8	28·1	—	—	—
1985	124·3	5·3	3·8	—	—	—
1986	118·6	38·0	26·9	12·2	8·2	—
1987	133·0	28·7	20·2	6·1	3·8	0·3
1988	207·0	11·0	6·6	6·1	3·6	0·2
1989	169·5	19·8	12·6	6·1	3·7	0·1
1990	173·0	19·8	10·2	—	—	0·1
1991	145·9	19·8	11·7	—	—	0·6
1992	273·0	19·8	10·2	—	—	0·5
1993	187·3	19·8	12·9	21·0	14·1	0·4

Notes:

IDA—International Development Association.

IBRD—International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

IFC—International Finance Corporation.

Other—Contributions to various technical assistance activities (e.g. Foreign Investment Advisory Services (FIAS); Africa Project Development Facility (APDF); African Management Services Company (AMSCo); United Kingdom consultants trust fund including contributions paid by the Department of Trade and Industry).

Contributions to IDA and for technical assistance activities are in £ sterling. Subscriptions to IBRD and IFC are in United States dollars; the second column shows the £ sterling equivalent of payments made.

World Bank Group

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the final deficit or surplus balance has been for the World bank group for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Details of net income for members of the World bank group are in the table.

World Bank Group: Net Income
FY84-93 ($ million)

	IBRD	*IDA*	*IFC*	*MIGA*
FY84	600	(71)	26	—
FY85	1,137	(65)	28	—
FY86	1,243	15	25	—
FY87	1,113	106	54	—
FY88	1,004	142	101	—
FY89	1,094	88	197	2·8
FY90	1,046	316	157	2·6
FY91	1,200	165	166	2·2
FY92	1,645	716	180	0·5
FY93	1,130	(149)	142	1·1

Notes: Figures in brackets indicate a deficit.
FY=Fiscal Year (July-June).
IBRD=International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
IDA=International Development Association.
IFC=International Finance Corporation.
MIGA=Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency.

Nepal

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current number of hydro-electric plants in Nepal; how many megawatts each produces; what is the total estimated electricity need of Nepal; and what percentage of that need is expected to be produced by each of the existing hydro-electric plants.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The table shows the current list of hydro-electric plants on the interconnected system in Nepal.

Name	*Date in service*	*Number of units and size (MW)*	*Installed capacity (MW)*	*Rated capacity (MW)*	*Actual energy (Gwh/yr)*
Panauti	—	3 × 0·8	2·4	2·4	0
Trisuli	1962	7 × 3·0	21·0	18·0	114·6
Sunkosi	1973	3 × 3·5	10·5	8·6	56·7
Gandak	1979	3 × 5·0	15·0	9·4	43·8
Kulekhani I	1982	2 × 30·0	60·0	60·0	154·7
Devighat	1983	2 × 4·7	14·1	14·1	89·7
Kulekhani II	1986	2 × 16·0	32·0	32·0	95·0
Marsyangdi	1989	3 × 23·0	69·0	69·0	462·0
Andi Khola	1991	3 × 1·7	5·1	5·0	44·4
Sub-Total	—	—	229·1	218·5	1,060·9
Miscellaneous Small Hydro	—	—	7·0	7·0	23·2
Total	—	—	236·1	225·5	1,084·1

In addition, the latest available data indicate installed thermal capacity of about 55 MW. Reliable estimates of current demand levels are not readily available, but over the course of the last year load shedding has been an almost daily occurrence in Nepal, indicating regular shortages of power.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much overseas aid has been given to Mozambique each year since 1980, expressed in money terms, real terms on 1980 and as a real term percentage increase or decrease on the previous year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The figures are listed in the table:

Gross public expenditure to Mozambique 1980—1992-93

£000s

	Gross public expenditure	*Constant 1980 prices*	*Percentage change (year on year)*
1980	4,629	4,629	—
1981	5,379	4,827	+4
1982	1,924	1,606	–67
1983	1,805	1,431	–11
1984	4,182	3,169	+122
1985	8,366	5,997	+89
1986	7,424	5,153	–14
1987	23,836	15,764	+206
1987-88	20,747	14,043	—
1988-89	34,834	22,095	+57
1989-90	20,839	12,359	–44
1990-91	26,171	14,363	+16
1991-92	18,087	9,335	–35
1992-93	34,141	16,970	+82

Note: British Aid Statistics changed to reporting on a financial year basis from 1987.

Assisted Capital Projects

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish all Overseas Development Administration assisted capital projects over £5 million in value by country and purpose.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Consultants and Accountants

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contracts his Department has with Price Waterhouse; and what is their value.

Mr. Ancram: Current contracts with Price Waterhouse are:

Pilot market test of typing services.
Pilot market test of messengers.
Review of the existing financial systems within Estate Services Division (DHSS) and reporting on the necessary adjustments to satisfy market testing and possible agency status.
Efficiency scrutiny and evaluation of "Relate (NI)".
Option appraisal to identify best way forward for value for money audit work.
Follow-up of a number of value for money studies at selected hospital sites.
Assisting DHSS develop a strategic approach to personnel management.
Preparation-monitoring monthly financial position of a client company of IDB.
Financial company appraisal of Mivan Windows.
Preparation of a strategic plan for a Local Enterprise Agency.
Business review of Extern.

In order to safeguard commercial confidentiality, the value of the contracts cannot be disclosed.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the contracts that his Department has with *(a)* consultants and *(b)* accountants.

Mr. Ancram: The information required is not available from all Departments in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, current contracts under general headings are:

	Consultants	*Accountants*
Capital works	260	Nil
General management	195	34
Information technology	20	10
Privatisation	12	8
Next Steps	Nil	1
Others	59	3

Animal Health

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he has taken to ensure that imports of livestock do not erode the animal health status of the Province.

Mr. Ancram: Under the single market trade in live animals between member states is subject to common rules. Within these rules the Department of Agriculture is carrying out all the checks permitted on imported animals at the point of destination in Northern Ireland to ensure that the required trading conditions have been met.

Submissions have been made to the European Commission seeking additional trade guarantees against the introduction of a number of diseases from which Northern Ireland can claim freedom and for which there are no common trading rules.

Northern Ireland importers and the farming community have been made aware through media publicity and a leaflet and poster campaign of the potential disease risks associated with imported livestock.

Sheep Dip

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland farmers have been affected through the use of organo-phosphorus sheep dips.

Mr. Ancram: No cases of affected farmers have been reported.

Rural Areas

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect of the cuts in hill livestock compensatory allowances and rises in petrol, diesel and car tax on the drift of population from rural areas; and what proposals he has to support the rural areas.

Mr. Ancram: With increases in incomes in the less-favoured areas in recent years, assisted significantly by improvements in livestock premiums, much reduced interest rates and controlled inflation, there is no reason to believe that these measures will have any effect on the rate of population change in rural areas. Proposals for the specific support of rural areas are contained in the Northern Ireland structural funds plan (1994-99), which, following wide-ranging local consultation, is currently under consideration by the European Commission.

Potatoes

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for *Northern Ireland what* proposals he has to help potato producers in Northern Ireland to market their produce better.

Mr. Ancram: The Department has an ongoing programme of advice to both the seed and ware sectors of the industry. Officers are made available on secondment to trading organisations to liaise with farmers to improve the marketability of their ware potatoes. Officers work with farmers and wholesalers to improve the health, quality and general marketability of seed potatoes. The Department's ad hoc advisory staff, research and development facilities and market development staff are available and regularly used by growers.

Financial support may be available under the group marketing grant scheme, which is designed to encourage the development of commercially managed marketing groups for agricultural and horticultural produce.

Animal Health

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent bovine spongiform encephalopathy is now on the decrease; and when the ban on exports of bovines and beef can be lifted.

Mr. Ancram: Up to 24 February there have been 1,200 confirmed cases of BSE in Northern Ireland compared with approximately 120,000 in Great Britain. While the number of confirmed cases is continuing to rise, there has been a downturn in the rate of increase and in the proportion of younger animals in which BSE is confirmed.

Under European Community legislation it is prohibited to export from the UK live cattle over six months of age and bone-in beef from herds which had had a case of BSE. The EC scientific veterinary committee in conducting a scientific evaluation of BSE in September 1993 endorsed the Community control measures on BSE. There has been no change in this position. The lifting of the ban would be a matter for consideration initially by the European Commission which is keeping the position under review and has been made aware of the improving disease situation in the United Kingdom.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland has sought financial assistance from the EC veterinary fund to help with its animal health programme.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland submitted an application in 1991 for assistance from the EC veterinary fund in respect of expenditure on animal disease eradication. The application has been unsuccessful to date but the Department's bid remains active in 1994.

Foxes

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent forecast he has made of the fox population in Northern Ireland; and what consideration he has given to introducing a bounty cull on foxes.

Mr. Ancram: No recent forecast has been made of the fox population in Northern Ireland. The bounty scheme which ended in 1977 was shown to be having only a marginal effect on the number of foxes and there are no plans to reintroduce such a scheme.

Earth Tremors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each of the last four years, and for the current year to date *(a)* the location and *(b)* the Richter scale measurement of earth tremors that have occurred; and what structural damage was reported.

Mr. Tim Smith: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has placed the information requested in the Library of the House. The British Geological Survey has located 1,478 earthquakes in the United Kingdom and the offshore area in the period January 1990 to mid-February 1994. One of these tremors occurred in Northern Ireland on 19 October 1990 at Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, with a magnitude equivalent to 2·5 on the Richter scale. The tremor was caused by the sudden collapse of an abandoned salt mine. Other damage was minimal.

Electricity Supply

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made with his proposals to introduce an element of competition into the generation and supply of electricity in Northern Ireland; and what plans he has to refer the matter to the Monopolies Commission.

Mr. Tim Smith: As a result of the restructuring of the electricity industry and the sale of the four power stations in March 1992 to three independent companies, competition has been successfully introduced into the generation of electricity in Northern Ireland. The Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland is charged with the task of introducing arrangements to facilitate the development of competition in supply. The director general reported on his plans for this on 16 December 1993. Any question of a Monopolies Commission reference is a matter for the director general in the first instance. I am not aware that he considers there is any need for this at present.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Youth Initiatives

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his current major initiatives involving youth.

Mr. Maclean: We are currently taking action across a wide front. For example, we are promoting safer cities projects focusing on young people and crime; we are issuing fresh guidance on the cautioning of offenders; we are beginning a review of national standards for community penalties; and we have introduced legislation which will enable the courts to deal more effectively with persistent 12 to 14-year-old offenders, to sentence 15 to 17-year-olds to longer periods of detention in a young offender institution, and to order the detention under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 of younger children who have committed grave crimes. We are also supporting over £1 million worth of experimental work in the field of crime reduction, the aim being to reduce the propensity of young people to engage in criminal activity.

Field Sports

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he received from organisations and individuals prior to the drafting of clauses 52 and 53 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: During the past two years we have received numerous representations from right hon. and hon. Members; from members of the public; from field sports organisations including the British Field Sports Society, the Moorland Association, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the Association of Masters of Foxhounds, the Association of Masters of Harriers and Beagles; and from the British Horseracing Board.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research was undertaken by his Department to the drafting of clauses 52 and 53 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: No formal research was undertaken, although we received many reports of incidents which led to our conclusion that proposals along the lines of clauses 52 and 53 should be introduced.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which organisations and individuals he consulted prior to the drafting of clauses 52 and 53 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill.

Mr. Maclean: There was no formal consultation process, but Ministers met informally a number of right hon. and hon. Friends and representatives of field sports organisations, including the British Field Sports Society and the Moorland Association.

Racial Discrimination

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much the Commission for Racial Equality has expended on legal fees for cases of alleged racial discrimination over the last three years;

(2) how many cases of alleged racial discrimination, financed by the Commission for Racial Equality, have been brought over the last three years; and how many were *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The results of individual complaints cases taken up by the Commission for Racial Equality are as follows:

	Employment			*Non-employment*		
Results	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Settled on terms	101	74	[1]74	11	13	2
Success after hearing	19	24	[2]96	6	2	4
Dismissed after hearing	27	42	26	2	5	0
Total	147	139	196	19	20	6

[1] An additional 34 cases were favourably settled by Complaints Officers before any Legal Officers were involved. Figures were not collected on these settlements for previous years.

[2] The 1993 figure includes 78 individuel cases against one Yorshire textile company (Haggas) where claims of discrimination by night shift workers were upheld.

In 1991-92 the CRE spent £800,000 on legal and professional fees. The costs were £1,400,000 in 1992-93 and are expected to be in the region of £1,000,000 for the current financial year.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disturbances have taken place in prisons in England and Wales since January 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of disturbances which have taken place in prisons in England and Wales since January 1993.

An act of concerted indiscipline can be defined as the refusal by a group of inmates to conform to the normal rules and regulations of a prison.

An analysis of the incidents reported to the Prison Service Incident Management Support Unit in the period 1 January 1993 to 26 February 1994 reveals that there were 171 recorded incidents of concerted indiscipline.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of remand prisoners being held in police cells within the Greater London area on 26 February.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of remand prisoners being held in police cells within the Greater London area on 26 February 1994.

No remand prisoners were held in police cells in the Greater London area on that date.

Bail Hostels

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current occupancy rate for bail hostels in the west midlands; and what assessment he has made of the immediate consequence if two of the hostels in the west midlands were closed.

Mr. Maclean: The occupancy rate for approved hostels in the west midlands in January, the most recently available monthly figure, was 80 per cent. The probation committee has been asked to identify two hostels for closure, with a requirement to reduce expenditure by £400,000 a year. In doing so the committee will need to assess the options, taking account of local circumstances and the consequences of closure. I have not yet received such an assessment from the committee.

Police Emergency Services

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made as to the effect on expenditure on emergency police services of the introduction of the APCO 25 service;

(2) what liason has taken place with other Departments to calculate what savings might be made using the APCO 25 system for all emergency services.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office is in regular touch with a number of other Government Departments on all aspects of radio communications for the emergency services, including the benefits which might be gained from adopting a single standard for all services. Preliminary discussions have been held on the potential benefits of both the APCO 25 and TETRA standards, but final decisions on which of these offers best value for money will have to wait until the two standards have been finalised and products based on them are available.

Prison Escort Services

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the reasons for the use of private hire vehicles for transporting James Hurley and other persons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. John Spellar, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the reasons for hiring a private vehicle to transport James Hurley and other prisoners on 16 February.

A Prison Service secure cellular van would normally have been used for this escort, but it had been taken off the road on 15 February for emergency repairs to the heating system. The Metropolitan Police were approached for a replacement vehicle but they were unable to supply one. No other source for a cellular vehicle was available.

As on previous occasions when a cellular vehicle has not been available, a coach was hired from a private company with whom the Prison Service has a contract. The staffing level for a secure, cellular vehicle is normally one senior officer and two prison officers. The hired coach was staffed by an acting senior officer and four prison officers, the level of the escort having been increased because an open vehicle was being used.

Transgenic Animals

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many project licences were granted under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in 1990, 1991 and 1992 for the production or use of transgenic animals in scientific procedures;

(2) how many designated establishments are currently licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to produce or use transgenic animals in scientific procedures;

(3) if he will issue a statement on the terms used to define a transgenic animal when compiling the annual Home Office statistics of scientific procedures on living animals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Sixty-two project licences were current in 1990 for the use of production of transgenic animals; 89 in 1991; and 121 in 1992.

Forty-six establishments were licensed to breed or use transgenic animals in 1992. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

The Home Office statistics treat as transgenic animals those carrying genetic material from other species.

EU Integration Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on views expressed in the European Commission document "European Social Policy: Options for the Union" on the requirement for a successful integration policy.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Secretary of State for Employment will be sending a paper to the Commissioner for Social Affairs at the European Commission before 31 March. This paper will set out the Government's views.

Police Sirens

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department over what distance he estimates police sirens can be heard; and if he will introduce a lower volume option so that noise pollution particularly in built up areas and at night is reduced.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The distance over which a police siren can be heard is subject to a number of factors, including the time of day, air temperature and location. Most vehicles are fitted with a control for the siren to enable its volume to be reduced if circumstances permit.

Immigrants and Refugees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what longitudinal studies have been conducted on the economic performance of immigrants and refugees and the factors which contribute to their successful integration into the British labour market.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such longitudinal studies have been published, though some studies in progress will be able to address some of the questions raised by the hon. Member. Several Government Departments are collaborating in mounting the "Working Lives Survey", a major sample survey of people's experience of work. The Home Office contribution to this study is paying for an additional "booster" sample of 2,000 respondents from the main ethnic minority groups. Some of the ethnic minority respondents will be immigrants, although it will not be possible to distinguish between refugees and other immigrants. Results should be available during 1996.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *801-3*, if he will place in the Library the results of independent survey research, the other relevant measures which demonstrate response to advertising and the result of the independent audit on the buying efficiency of television advertising.

Mr. Howard: Research surveys contain commercially confidential information which it would not be right to reveal. I do not therefore propose to have them placed in the Library.

Nor could the results of the auditing of the buying efficiency of television advertising be revealed without seriously weakening the negotiating position of Central Office of Information agencies which act on behalf of Departments. I can, however, state the primary outcome of each campaign as measured by research, in relation to the objectives given in my answer on 16 February, columns *801-3*.

Electoral Registration

Awareness of the need to put one's name on a form or register rose from 64 per cent. to 72 per cent. (all groups of potential voters). Within that total, awareness of the need among 16-24 year olds rose from 33 per cent to 49 per cent. The total of ethnic minorities aware of the advertising was 44 per cent. and this will be the benchmark against which future figures will be measured. If those people saying they intended to register as a result of advertising did so, 93 per cent of all groups would be able to vote: 73 per cent. of 16-24 year olds; and 81 per cent. of ethnic minorities.

Smoke Alarms

In 1989 ownership of alarms was 31 per cent. of households. Research of the current phase of advertising cannot be completed until after the campaign has finished in March. However, the March 1993 phase had helped push the total to 63 per cent. and my Department is confident of reaching the 70 per cent. target this year.

Car Crime Prevention

Ninety per cent. of respondents recognised car crime prevention advertising after the September 1993 phase. Sixty-three per cent. said it would make them do more about car security compared with 57 per cent. after the February 1993 phase.

Special Constables Recruitment

As of 21 February 1994, there have been 8,410 enquiries, subsequently converting to 4,314 applications as a result of the 1993-94 campaign. Final conversion rates are not yet available.

Wymott Prison (Fires)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what implications arose from Crown immunity in relation to fire protection at Wymott prison and the fire at that prison last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Peter Pike, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking what implications arose from Crown immunity in relation to fire protection against Wymott prison last year; and if he will make a statement.

The main aspects of concern over the fires during the disturbances at Wymott prison last year were over the fires started deliberately in the covered walkways. The service-ducts in those walkways had all been insulated in accordance with the Building Regulations appropriate at the time. A review of all prisons of the same era is underway to establish the remedial work needed.

Fire Service

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what incidents would be considered by his Department to be covered by the term "special service incidents"; what information he has on the total cost to fire brigades for attendance at such calls for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Special service incidents are those attended by fire brigades for purposes other than fire-fighting purposes. It is not possible to distinguish between resources which are available for the purpose of fighting fires, and those which are available to respond to special service calls. As a consequence, it is not possible to provide information on the cost to fire authorities of attending special service calls.

British Citizenship

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department is conducting into the factors which influence individuals to make an application to become British citizens; and how the findings of that research could be used to amend current application procedures to encourage more long-term foreign residents to make an application.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A proposal for such research is under consideration, primarily as a contribution towards improving the forecasting of demand. It is unlikely to be directly relevant to the question of encouraging applications for British citizenship.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns *801-3*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each public information campaign listed.

Mr. Howard: The cost of phases of campaigns completed so far this financial year was:

	£
Electoral Registration (TV)	620,000
Smoke Alarm Installation (TV)	1,020,000
Crime Prevention (TV, radio, press, posters, promotions)	3,459,443
Special Constables Recruitment (press, posters)	800,000
Police Graduate Recruitment (press)	119,889
Passport Renewal (press)	70,000

The actual cost of those campaigns was as budgeted.

Further phases of car crime prevention and smoke alarms advertising are currently running at a budgeted cost of £1,820,842 and £1,000,000 respectively.

Convicted Child Abusers

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks are carried out to ensure that convicted child abusers are unable to work with, or set up, charities whose work brings them into contact with children.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Police checks may be carried out on those who have applied to work with certain national voluntary child care charities which are members of the Voluntary Organisations Consultancy Service, where the nature of the work involves substantial access to children. The current review by the Home Office of arrangements for access to criminal records for vetting purposes may result in checks being made more widely available to the voluntary child care sector.

Child Battery

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of years to be served in prison for those convicted in each region of child battery in 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the average number of years to be served in prison for those convicted in each region of child battery in 1993.

I regret to inform you that the information you have requested is not available. Child battery is counted as an assault offence in the offence classification and is not separately distinguishable.

Welsh Prisoners

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners from *(a)* Gwynedd, *(b)* Clwyd and *(c)* Powys are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in England.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Elfyn Llwyd, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners from *(a)* Gwynedd, *(b)* Clwyd and *(c)* Powys are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons in England.

The available information is for the county of the sentencing court and the latest provisional statistics are for 31 December 1993. On that date the numbers of prisoners held in Prison Service Establishments in England and Wales who had been sentenced by courts in Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys were 106, 205 and 39 respectively.

Prison Coach Escape

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners being transported and the number of prison officer escorts in the prison coach escape which took place on 17 February while on its way to Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on the number of prisoners being transported and the number of prison officer escorts in the prison coach escape which took place on 17 February while on its way to Wandsworth prison.

On 16 February, eight prisoners were being escorted on the National Escort by five prison staff.

A full inquiry into the escape of two prisoners from this escort is under way. One prisoner was recaptured shortly after by the police but the other remains at large.

Prison Officers

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers, and at which prisons, have been disciplined in each year since 1991 for the use of racially derogatory or insulting language under the terms of the "Code of Conduct for Prison Officers Race Relations Manual" published in 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Cummings, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking about the numbers of prison officers who have been disciplined for using racially derogatory or insulting language since 1991.

The Race Relations Manual to which you refer was published in 1991 as part of the Prison Service's commitment to equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination on improper grounds. It is not in itself a code of conduct, but a manual which consolidates all previous advice and guidance on race relations matters. The Manual makes it clear that the use of racially derogatory or insulting language towards prisoners is not acceptable.

In July 1993 a new code of discipline was introduced which cites "racial or sexual harassment or discrimination towards inmates, colleagues or members of the public" as specific examples of behaviour which may lead to disciplinary action. Since the implementation of the new code, no instances of disciplinary awards for this type of offence have been recorded. There was no requirement for all disciplinary cases under the pre-July 1993 code of discipline to be reported centrally, but we are aware of the following two cases since 1991, each concerning one officer.

Prison	*Result*	*Date*
Highpoint	Dismissal	February 1992
Leicester	Written reprimand	November 1992

Directorate of Telecommunications

Dr. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the reasons for declining to insert a clause in the sale agreement for the privatisation of DTELS requiring the purchaser not to change staff terms and conditions without their prior agreement;

(2) what consideration he has given to offering staff of DTELS a five-year deal protecting the severance and redundancy terms after the organisation is privatised; and what were the reasons for his decision.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The unions representing DTELS staff requested a Government guarantee for the protection of staff redundancy money in the event that the new owner of DTELS become insolvent. They also asked that the new owner should undertake not to vary staff severance terms without consent and that anyone dismissed for refusing consent would be automatically entitled to redundancy payments.

It is Government policy that there should be a clean break on privatisation. Any argument for special treatment therefore has to be examined on its merits, judged against the perceived risks to the business. In DTELS' case, although it has competitors, it has a strong market position, a reliable and stable customer base and a good record on contract renewal. It was concluded, therefore, that there should be no redundancy money guarantee.

Staff redundancy terms are protected on transfer by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. While it was not a condition of sale, shortlisted bidders were asked whether they were prepared to give an undertaking as requested by the unions on any future variation of severance entitlements. The preferred bidder, National Transcommunications Ltd., has confirmed that it will fully meet its TUPE obligations. It has assured us that in the period after sale, subject to its strategy and business needs, it will not be seeking to discuss and agree changes to staff terms. It also accepts that any variation in terms would require negotiation and staff, in respect of which it sought to enforce change, would need to have given consent.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding conditions at Blakenhurst prison in Redditch and alleged action of ill-treatment of prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Richard Burden, dated 2 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions asking what representations he has received regarding conditions at Blakenhurst prison and alleged action of ill treatment of prisoners.

I am aware that you have written to the management contractor at Blakenhurst raising the case of one of your constituents who is held there. As at any prison many of the concerns that are raised by prisoners, their relatives or their representatives are dealt with by the prison management. Prisoners also have access to the Board of Visitors, and they can also make representations to persons and bodies outside the prison, including of course their Members of Parliament.

I should also explain that, at contracted prisons such as Blakenhurst, a Prison Service Controller is appointed with a statutory duty under the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to keep under review, and report to the Secretary of State on, the running of the prison. In fulfilling this function he completes monthly reports to officials; and reports and investigates any particular matters drawn to his attention or of which he becomes aware. This would include any allegations of mistreatment of prisoners and complaints about the conditions at the prison. Many of these issues would be resolved at establishment level.

If there is any particular issue of concern to you please do not hesitate to let me know.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners and staff were involved in the disturbance at Blakenhurst prison on 24 February; what was the duration of the incident and the extent of injuries and damage; what plans he has to hold an inquiry; and when the chief inspector of prisons will inspect Blakenhurst;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report*, columns *446-52*, regarding assaults in prison establishments, what steps were taken at Blakenhurst to improve prison-staff relations and discipline at the prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answers 1 March 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 2 March 1994:

HM Prison, Blakenhurst

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director-General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about Blakenhurst prison, concerning prisoner and staff relationships and the disturbance on 24 February.

Both the controller and the Director General are satisfied that relationships between staff and prisoners and discipline at Blakenhurst are generally good and, as would be expected with a new prison, are improving with greater experience. As at other establishments the director and his staff are always looking to maintain and improve them and to ensure that any breaches of prison rules that do occur are dealt with appropriately.

Your question was presumably prompted by the level of assaults at Blakenhurst. New prisons tend to record more assaults. In line with experience at other new prisons the number of assaults at Blakenhurst now appears to be on a downward trend, although that trend is likely to be affected by the adjudications which are being undertaken following the disturbance on 24 February, about which you also asked.

The Director General has appointed an inquiry team, headed by the Prison Service Area Manager for Mercia, which has already started its investigation into the incident.

A total of 111 prisoners were in the particular houseblock where the incident occurred but not all were involved in the subsequent events. The inquiry will seek to establish, amongst other things, the individual involvement of prisoners. 36 staff were involved in the incident which lasted from 1430 until 2122. Minor injuries were caused to staff and prisoners. Current estimates indicate that approximately £25,000 of damage was caused to the houseblock.

Unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of State, it is for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons to decide when he wishes to inspect a prison. However, we have been informed that the Inspectorate will commence an inspection of Blakenhurst on 23 May.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number and percentage of severe disablement allowance recipients who are in receipt of other income by source and average amount of such other income.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information is in the table.

The number and percentage of severe disablement allowance recipients in receipt of the following benefits, and the average amount of the other benefit in payment

Benefit	*Claimant*[1]	*Average amount*[2] £	*Percentage*	*Partner*[1]	*Average amount*[2] £	*Percentage*
Income Support (IS)[3]	186,000	56·11	61·6	11,000	52·83	3·6
Housing Benefit (HB) without Income Support[4]	9,000	23·75	3·0	4,000	19·43	1·3
Community Charge Benefit (CCB) without Income Support[4]	14,000	4·43	4·6	6,000	4·57	2·0
Attendance Allowance (AA)[5]	82,000	Not available	27·2	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

[1] With the exception of AA, all figures quoted are in respect of benefit units. A benefit unit may be a single person or a couple, both of whom may be in receipt of SDA. AA is paid to an individual.

[2] With the exception of AA, the average amount quoted refers to the benefit unit rather than the individual. In the case of AA benefit is paid to the individual.

[3] The IS figures also include cases where HB and/or CCB are in payment. Source: income support statistics quarterly sample inquiry, May 1993.

[4] There is considerable overlap between HB and CCB, many cases receiving both benefits. Source: Derived from the housing benefit and community charge benefit management information system sample and the income support annual statistical inquiry. The inquiries are 1 per cent. samples of HB/CCB and IS cases in May 1992.

[5] The information refers to cases where AA is combined with SDA and paid to the individual, and there is therefore no information on partners. The average amount of AA in payment to SDA recipients is not available. Source: 1 per cent. sample of claimants to SDA on 4 April 1992.

Notes:

1. Information on other benefits which may be in payment with SDA is not available.
2. The statistics are for Great Britain.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the number of claimants and *(b)* the amount spent on (i) invalid care allowance and (ii) carers' premium in each year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the tables. The information on expenditure on the carer's premium gives data only on the weekly expenditure and in view of the fluctuating caseload should not be used to estimate annual expenditure.

Invalid care allowance (ICA) beneficiaries[1]

	Numbers
1979	6,349
1980	6,648
1981	7,098
1982	8,005
1983	8,847
1984	9,494
1985	10,284
1986	30,587
1987	91,392
1988	109,334
1989	120,816
1990	133,912
1991	159,324
1992	188,717
1993	230,313

ICA Expenditure[4]

	[3]*£ million*
1978-79	4
1979-80	4
1980-81	5
1981-82	6
1982-83	8
1983-84	10
1984-85	11
1985-86	13
1986-87	104
1987-88	184
1988-89	173
1989-90	184
1990-91	208
1991-92	285
1992-93	366

Income support beneficiaries with carer premium

	Numbers
1991	[2]28,000
1992	[2]62,000
1993	[3]85,000

Carer premium average weekly expenditure

	£ million
1991	0·3
1992	0·7
1993	1·0

[1] Invalid care allowance unit 100 per cent. count. Allowances current at a point in time between mid-December and mid-January. ICA was

extended to include married women with effect from 22 December 1984.

[2] Income support statistics annual inquiries, May 1991-92—1 per cent. sample.

[3] Income support statistics quarterly inquiry, May 1993—5 per cent. sample. Figures rounded to the nearest thousand. Carer premium introduced October 1990.

[4] Departmental report.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for the appointment of trustees to the Maxwell Pensioners Trust, The Maxwell Pensioners Charitable Trust, the Motability 10th Anniversary Trust, The Far East (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund and Queen Mary's Roehampton Trust. He also appoints the pensions ombudsman, the social fund commissioner and the chief executives of the Department's agencies.

Child Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how long on average it takes the Child Support Agency to make payment of maintenance once an assessment has been completed, broken down by area CSAC;

(2) what is the average time taken by the Child Support Agency to pursue defaults of maintenance by absent parents.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 28 February 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions about the payment of child maintenance and pursuit of defaulters.

The average time taken to make a payment is dependant on the method of payment and the frequency as agreed between the absent parent and the Agency's account controller. It is not therefore currently possible to give reliable data on average times broken down by CSAC.

The Child Support Computer system records individual case records, and automatically flags individual maintenance defaulters to be pursued. For that reason, average times across the Agency are not currently available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Exporters

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the answer of 14 February, *Official Report,* column *586,* what compensation has been negotiated for fish exporters for loss of business and dislocation of orders due to action by French fishermen.

Mr. Jack: The compensation available under French law from the French regional authorities relates to direct and substantiable losses. We have secured the assurance of the French Government that such claims will be paid, and the Fisheries Departments will assist all operators in a position to mount claims which are arguably in this category to submit and pursue them with the relevant authorities. Our policy has been to minimise indirect losses not covered by these arrangements, by making it very clear to the French authorities that we require them to ensure that legitimate trade can go ahead. We have also reactivated the arrangements set up last year for police protection to be provided on arrival in France upon pre-notification of arrival arrangements, via the Fisheries Departments, to the French authorities.

Animal Exports

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live animals were exported in 1993.

Mr. Soames: Because of delays following the introduction of the Intrastat system, details of the total numbers of live animals exported in 1993 are not yet available. It is not possible to say when they will become available, but when they do I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action her Department is taking to investigate alleged irregularities by Ministry veterinary officers and other officials in relation to the enforcement of regulations controlling the export of live animals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on 16 February 1994, at column *847.*

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* columns *1056-58,* if she will publish *(a)* the take-up rate of publications ordered relating to "At the Farmer's Service", *(b)* the number of calls monitored relating to the pesticide poisoning of wildlife campaign, *(c)* the numbers attending seminars relating to the IACS—integrated administration and control systems—scheme and *(d)* the results of the quantitative assessment of the animal welfare campaign.

Mr. Jack: The take-up, to date, of publications ordered relating to "At the Farmer's Service" is 16,500 complete sets and 19,000 individual sections; *(b)* 1,070 calls have been received relating to the pesticide poisoning of wildlife campaign; *(c)* the attendance at seminars relating to the IACS scheme was 3,510; and *(d)* over 21,000 animal welfare leaflets have been distributed via exhibitions at major livestock events.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* columns *1056-58,* if she will place in the Library the results of market research relating to each of the campaigns listed.

Mr. Jack: Executive summaries of market research relating to the campaigns listed will be placed in the Library.

Deregulation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will identify for each of the proposals put forward to Government by the business deregulation task forces, and represented by numbers 96 and 99 in the publication "Deregulation Task Forces: Proposals for Reform" *(a)* which the Government have already taken action on, *(b)* which are under further consideration and *(c)* which are not being considered further.

Mr. Jack: In relation to proposal 96, we argued consistently in Brussels during the discussions on reform of the common agricultural policy that a premium scheme for male beef animals with payment in two stages based on age would be very complex to run. Since the reformed new scheme has only recently been agreed, any fundamental changes are likely to be for the longer term. The food, drink and agriculture task force's recommendation will be looked at carefully when such major changes are considered.

Regarding proposal 99, the Government are considering whether a quicker and simpler system for paying forestry grants could be introduced. This is in line with a Environment Select Committee recommendation made last year. The Government are also considering whether there is scope for more self-regulation by the forestry industry.

Less-favoured Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis the calculations of average subsidies per hill sheep farm in England were made in her press statement of 30 November and of her answers of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 737, which indicated an average subsidy receipt for English less-favoured area farms; and if she will account for the difference.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The average quoted in the press statement of 30 November related to the estimated average direct subsidy which would be paid to full-time farms classified as severely disadvantaged area specialist sheep farms in England in 1993-94. This is consistent with the tables which were prepared for the autumn review and copies of which were placed in the Library of the House.

The figures contained in the written replies relate to the total number of farms in England with at least 50 per cent. of their land in the less-favoured areas classified as LFA cattle and sheep farms and an estimate of the total direct livestock subsidy payments on beef and sheep in the less-favoured areas in 1994. These payments will of course include those to the large number of very small farms and to farms not classified as SDA specialist sheep.

Hill and Upland Farms

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information is available from the data collected in connection with *(a)* the integrated administration and control system and premium claims, *(b)* the annual farm census and *(c)* the farm business survey of the number and proportions of (1) all hill and upland livestock farms and (2) hill and upland livestock farms drawing over two thirds of their standard gross margins from sheep, cattle or cattle and sheep, falling into (i) four to 11, (ii) 12 to 15, (iii) 16 to 28, (iv) 29 to 39, (v) 40 to 69, (vi) 70 to 98, (vii) 99 to 199 and (viii) 200 and over British size units; and if she will provide a breakdown of the average net income according to all sources available to the Ministry of farms of each of categories (1) and (2) in each size band;

(2) what is the average size of *(a)* all hill and upland livestock farms and *(b)* all upland hill and livestock farms of four British livestock size units and over, according to (i) the integrated administration and control system and premium claims, (ii) the annual farm census and (iii) the farm business survey.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The current system of farm size classification uses economic size units based on 1988 standard gross margins rather than British size units which were based on 1980 SGMs. The readily available information from the agricultural census and the farm business survey, based on ESUs, is given in the table. Economic size and type of farm are not recorded on the forms used for IACS or hill livestock compensatory allowance claims. Properly weighted estimates of net farm income for the non-standard farm type covered by columns (1) to (3) of the table cannot be provided without disproportionate costs.

LFA livestock farms in England: holdings and net farm income by ESU size group

ESU size group (a)	*Farms partly or wholly in the LFA with any beef cattle and/or sheep (b)*			*Farms classified as cattle and sheep (LFA) farms (c)*		
	Number (June 1992)	*Proportion*	*Net farm income (1992-93) £000*	*Number (June 1992)*	*Proportion*	*Net farm income (1992-93) £000*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
< 8	5,204	29	—	4,590	39	—
8 < 16	2,359	13	—	1,909	16	3·1
16 < 28	2,476	14	—	1,752	15	9·4
28 < 40	2,041	11	—	1,171	10	12·0
40 < 60	2,508	14	—	1,184	10	19·8
60 < 100	2,383	13	—	910	8	24·1
100 < 200	992	5	—	298	3	—
200 + and over	127	1	—	28	0	—
All sizes	18,090	100	—	11,842	100	13·7
Average over all sizes	36	—	—	24	—	—
Average over 8 ESU	49	—	—	37	—	—

(a) The relationship between ESUs and BSUs is not straightforward. However, averaged over all farm enterprises in England two ESU are approximately equal to one BSU.
(b) Breeding and others.
(c) Farms mainly or wholly in the LFA with more than two thirds of their total SCM in cattle and sheep except farms classified as dairy.

Herring Gulls

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to whom the single licences were issued in 1990, 1991 and 1992 for the killing of a total of 3,332 herring gulls; and what reasons were given for the application.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* These licences were issued to a council in Yorkshire to remove eggs, nests and adult birds for the purposes of preserving public health.

Bullfinches

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the single licences issued in 1991 and 1992 which resulted in a total of 989 bullfinches being shot; to whom the licences were issued; which premises were involved; and what inspections of the premises were made by her Department before the licences were issued.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* The Ministry issues a general licence each year to allow commercial fruit growers in those areas most affected by bullfinches to kill or take these birds during the period of greatest damage in order to protect their crops. This general licence, which has been approved by English Nature, the statutory conservation agency, is valid from 1 November to 30 April each year and for 1991 and 1992 it was limited to the counties of Essex, Kent and Suffolk; the districts of East and South Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdon in the county of Cambridgeshire; and the district of Stratford-on-Avon and the parishes of Brandon and Bretford, Monks Kirby and Sherbourne in the county of Warwickshire.

Growers using the licence are not inspected by the Ministry but they are required to send the Ministry a report of the number of birds killed or taken under the authority of the licence. The locations of the farms reporting action under the licence are shown.

County	*Number of returns* 1991	1992
Kent	9	14
Suffolk	1	1
Cambridgeshire (part)	1	1

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Appeals (Operation Jackpot)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General what was the average length of time in those cases for which the appeals have already been held relating to Operation Jackpot between the investigator reporting a case to the Crown Prosecution Service as involving a possible miscarriage of justice and the hearing of those cases in the Court of Appeal.

The Attorney-General: As the necessary information is not at present to hand, I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General what representations the Crown Prosecution Service has received from the Police Complaints Authority with regard to criminal prosecutions or disciplinary proceedings against police officers arising out of Operation Jackpot in those cases where the appeals have been heard; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General what assessment he has made of the reasons for the delays in hearing those appeals before the Court of Appeal of defendants which have now been heard in cases relating to Operation Jackpot.

The Attorney-General: There are a number of factors which may affect the progress of individual cases. Not all apply in every case. They are (i) the time it takes for the officers to complete their investigation and prepare a report; (ii) review by the prosecution of the material; (iii) the time it takes to list a case in the Court of Appeal; (iv) listing the case for determination of any issues relating to disclosure; (v) preparation of the appeal by the defence.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General if the Crown Prosecution Service has received or considered any representations from the Metropolitan police in relation to those appeals which have been heard relating to Operation Jackpot.

The Attorney-General: In the course of the review, the Crown Prosecution Service consulted the officer conducting the inquiry and his views were considered.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if the Crown Prosecution Service has considered the potential consequencies for the careers of individual police in relation to its approach to those appeals which have been heard relating to Operation Jackpot;

(2) if the Crown Prosecution Service in deciding its approach to appeals which have been heard in cases relating to Operation Jackpot has taken account of possible criminal prosecutions of, or disciplinary action against, the police officers concerned.

The Attorney-General: No. The approach of the Crown Prosecution Service has been to examine all the evidence, including any evidence tending to suggest that police officers may have committed criminal offences or breaches of discipline, to determine whether the Crown could properly seek to sustain the conviction.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

18. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Governor of Hong Kong to discuss future relations with the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I look forward to seeing the Governor of Hong Kong during his next visit to the United Kingdom from 30 March to 9 April. This will be an opportunity to take stock with the Governor, following the welcome decision of the Hong Kong Legislative Council to pass the first electoral Bill and the publication of the Bill on the remaining electoral issues.

European Union

20. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to improve communications between the United Kingdom and other European Union member states.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: At last December's European Council my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary discussed how improved physical and information links throughout the Community could increase the Community's growth and competitiveness. The European Council agreed that the Commission, assisted by a group of personal representatives of heads of government would co-ordinate work on trans-European network projects. The Council also asked for a report on information networks to be prepared by a group of prominent persons who would represent industry and users.

Yugoslavia

22. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his European counterparts to discuss developments in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will next meet his European Union counterparts at the Foreign Affairs Council on 7 March, when developments in the former Yugoslavia will feature on the agenda.

29. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings he has had with other Foreign Ministers regarding the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary meets his European Union colleagues regularly to discuss Bosnia. He also maintains close contact on the issue with other Foreign Ministers, including those of Russia and the United States. European Union Foreign Ministers are next due to discuss Bosnia at the Foreign Affairs Council on 7 March.

38. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to obtaining a peace settlement in Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom's contribution to both the humanitarian effort and the efforts to obtain a peace settlement has been second to none. We have taken a lead within the European Union efforts to encourage a negotiated settlement, and are working intensively with other interested countries to build on the Sarajevo ceasefire.

We welcome and support closer United States and Russian engagement on international efforts to secure a settlement.

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of Bosnia to discuss the latest position in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina at the European Union meeting with the Bosnian parties on 29 November 1993.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from UNPROFOR and NATO on the situation in the Bihac pocket as concerns reports of a resumption of hostilities between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Government forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We receive regular reports on the situation in Bosnia from UNPROFOR through the United Nations. These include the Bihac pocket, where fighting has been reported between both Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Government and Bosnian Government and local Muslim forces.

Poland

23. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is proposing to take to strengthen the links between the United Kingdom and Poland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our relations with Poland are already close and friendly. There are strong and growing commercial links. I believe the one problem between us, the air services dispute, is close to resolution. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary hopes to visit Poland later this month.

Bosnia

24. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current policy respecting Bosnia.

30. **Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The continuing ceasefire in Sarajevo, and the recent ceasefire agreement between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croat forces, are welcome steps towards an end to the fighting. We also welcome the agreement between the Bosnian and Croat Governments initialled in Washington yesterday. This is an important step towards a formal negotiated settlement in Bosnia. We are now working intensively with other interested countries to build on these developments. We still believe that a negotiated settlement between the parties is the only way to end the killing.

39. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on the situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is a continuing process of informal consultation between Security Council members, including permanent Security Council members, and with other partners. The most recent formal meeting of the Security Council took place on 14 February.

European Community Enlargement

25. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards enlarging the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: On 1 March, Sweden, Finland and Austria reached political agreement with the European Union on their terms of entry. European Ministers also made progress in the negotiations with Norway. There are still difficult institutional questions to be resolved among the present member states before formal agreement can be completed. But we remain committed to concluding the negotiations at the 7-8 March Foreign Affairs Council.

Air Strikes

26. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of air strikes to enhance international security.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Air strikes cannot enhance international security by themselves. However, in certain circumstances, as in the case of the UN/NATO operation to end the bombardment of Sarajevo, readiness to undertake air strikes can play a useful role as part of a strategy to bring about a peaceful resolution of conflict.

Middle East

27. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister to discuss the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans at present to meet the Israeli Foreign Minister, but we expect to continue to have regular contacts with Mr. Peres to discuss the middle east peace process.

34. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit the middle east to monitor the peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During his visit to the region from 3 to 7 January, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had useful discussions with key players in the peace process. There are no plans at present for a further visit.

Tuzla

28. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his Department's plans for the relief of Tuzla.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: UNHCR convoys are supplying aid to Tuzla by road from Belgrade and Zenica.

We welcome the announcement in Moscow yesterday that the Bosnian Serbs have agreed to allow Tuzla airport to be opened to humanitarian supplies in the near future.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took the lead at the NATO summit in proposing that NATO urge the United Nations to draw up plans to open Tuzla airport to humanitarian supplies. UNPROFOR has drawn up these plans, which include the possibility of calling for NATO close air support if necessary. These have our full support. As a first stage the Nordic battalion of UNPROFOR is to take possession of Tuzla airport from the Bosnian Government within the next few days. We have offered up to 15 specialists to help to operate the airport.

Iraq

31. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his United Nations Security Council partners on the subject of policy towards Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraq is discussed regularly by the Security Council. We remain determined that Iraq must comply fully with all its international obligations as set out in Security Council resolutions.

Kashmir

32. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the British high commissioner to India and the British high commissioner to Pakistan on the recent allegations of brutality by the Indian security forces against men and women in the Indian-occupied area of Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We receive regular information from Her Majesty's High Commissioners in New Delhi and Islamabad about allegations of human rights abuses by the security forces in Kashmir. We remain concerned that abuses continue to take place.

Malawi

33. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards the establishment of a multi-party democracy in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Good progress has been made and the United Kingdom is giving substantial assistance to the transition process. Multi-party elections are to be held on 17 May and voter registration began on 21 February. Political exiles have been allowed to return, and opposition parties legalised. The National Consultative Council is overseeing the transition to multi-party democracy, including the drafting of a new constitution and bill of rights.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has recently made to, or received from, opposition parties in Malawi about the creation of a multi-party democracy in Malawi;

(2) what representations he has recently made to, or received from, the Government of Malawi about the creation of a multi-party democracy in Malawi;

(3) what representations he has received from, or made to, individuals, organisations or political parties in other African countries about the creation of a multi-party democracy in Malawi.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Since the referendum in Malawi last June, we have maintained a regular dialogue with all the parties, including the ruling Malawi Congress party, which will be contesting the multi-party elections on 17 May. Most recently my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey met members of all parties during her visit from 27 to 29 January.

We have responded to requests for help by allocating £270,000 towards the United Nations' electoral assistance project, including the provision of constitutional and boundaries experts. We have had no recent representations from other African countries over Malawi.

Norway

35. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of negotiations for Norwegian entry into the EC.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Accession negotiations are continuing with Norway after the marathon ministerial session which started on 25 February. Although there are still some difficult issues to be resolved, we remain committed to concluding the negotiations at the 7-8 March Foreign Affairs Council.

Kuwait

36. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Kuwaiti Government about delays in dealing with claims against Kuwaiti nationals who sought refuge in the United Kingdom following the Iraqi invasion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No representations have been made to the Kuwaiti Government on such matters. Claims against foreign nationals formerly resident in the United Kingdom should be pursued by claimants through such legal means as are available.

Sudan

37. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom last raised the issue of the civil war in Sudan at the United Nations Security Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not ruled out recourse to the United Nations Security Council but would not want to pursue this option unless we were confident that this would be constructive. We deplore the latest outbreak of fighting in the south, and condemn the bombing by the Sudanese air force of civilian targets. On 21 February we and our European Union partners issued a declaration to this effect, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in Mozambique and the United Kingdom's contribution to it.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are concerned about delays in implementing the general peace agreement in Mozambique, especially the assembly/demobilisation of forces. The parties must address these delays urgently so that the elections can take place on schedule in October 1994.

The United Kingdom has made a crucial contribution by training 540 Mozambican instructors to train the unified Mozambican army. We shall continue, in the United Nations and elsewhere, to actively support the Mozambican peace process.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the total cost of United Kingdom aid and assistance to Government and Renamo political and democratic training in Mozambique;

(2) what assistance he is giving to Renamo in respect of democratic training and the development of political structures.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made no direct contribution to democratic training in the development of political structures in Renamo or to political and democratic training in Mozambique. We have, however, provided from diplomatic wing funds £18,000 worth of office equipment for Renamo's office in Maputo, and small amounts for three other parties—PCN, PPPM and UNAMO.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the Nyanga training phase of the formation of the new Mozambique defence force.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British Army instructors trained 540 instructors for the new unified Mozambican army, FADM, from October to December 1993. The latter have now returned to Mozambique, where they will train the main infantry battalions of FADM. A small British Army training team is assisting them. Formation of FADM is a crucial part of the peace process.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact or communication he has had with representatives of Renamo since October 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Renamo leader met my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey during his visit to London on 22 February 1993 and had talks with officials. Our ambassador in Maputo has travelled to the Renamo base in Mozambique several times and my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey met Mr. Dhaklama there on 10 December 1993. We continue to maintain regular contacts with Renamo officials in Maputo, and our ambassador met Mr. Dhaklama there on 27 February.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to, or received from, parties involved in the demobilisation process in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom is a member of all four commissions set up under the general peace agreement between the Government of Mozambique and Renamo and responsible for overseeing implementation of the peace process. We are active in these commissions to help move the process, including demobilisation, forward. In addition, our ambassador regularly meets both senior Mozambican officials and members of the Government of Mozambique as well as Renamo leaders.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the approximate cost of United Kingdom military aid to Mozambique, in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe, each year since 1980, expressed in money terms, real terms in 1980, and as a real term percentage increase or decrease on the previous year.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am unable to give the figures for United Kingdom military aid to Mozambique: these figures are confidential between the Governments concerned.

NATO Information Service

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current NATO information service budget; what are the comparable figures in real terms within each of the past three years; what are its main uses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: NATO's information budgets for the present and past two years, at current exchange rates, are:

1992	£3,522,505
1993	£3,855,186
1994	£3,757,339

Allowing for an estimated inflation rate over the period of between 2·7 and 4 per cent., there was a real budget increase of 6·4 per cent. in 1993 over 1992, and a real decrease of 5·2 per cent. in 1994 over 1993. Over the whole period the budget increased in real terms by 0·8 per cent.

NATO organises and sponsors multinational information programmes on various aspects of the alliance with the objective of explaining the aims and achievements of the alliance to public opinion in NATO member countries, and improving public understanding and knowledge of the alliance in the countries of central and eastern Europe. Activities directed towards these ends are: visits to NATO by groups from NATO and co-operation partner countries, seminars, speaking tours, workshops, conferences in NATO and co-operation partner countries, the publication of the bi-monthly "NATO Review" and other publications designed to support NATO objectives, film, television and photographic coverage of NATO events and general support for the media in their coverage of NATO developments.

Libyan Students

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Libyan students were studying in the United Kingdom at the most recent date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: According to information provided by the institutions, there were 520 Libyan students at United Kingdom higher and further academic institutions in the public sector in 1991-92—the latest year for which there are figures.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British students were studying in Libya in each of the past five years and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not maintain records of United Kingdom students studying in other countries. However, we believe that currently there are few, if any, United Kingdom students studying in Libya.

South Africa

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relationship with South Africa.

Mr. Hurd: We fully support the efforts to achieve a peaceful transition to non-racial democracy in South Africa. We have stepped up our help for the process and will be making a major contribution to election monitoring. We keep in close touch with all sides at the highest level and remain prepared to help South Africa's transition to democracy in any way South Africans feel can be useful.

HEALTH

Cannabis

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) in what form cannabis is made available on prescription;

(2) what guidelines are available to general practitioners and consultants on the medicinal application of cannabis and as to how patients may obtain it;

(3) in what circumstances cannabis may be prescribed to patients.

Mr. Bowis: The availability of cannabis is covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. Under section 7 of that Act it is unlawful for a medical practitioner to prescribe it to a patient. There are no guidelines for general practitioners or consultants on its application. If it were shown that there were indications for the use of cannabis in specific medical conditions, we would look at it carefully and would not rule it out as a prescribed drug. The supporting data would need to be presented to the Medicines Control Agency for assessment with a view to licensing the preparation. A drug called Nabilone, which contains the main active ingredient of cannabis, is already licensed in the United Kingdom for the treatment of nausea in patients with cancer. A doctor may prescribe Nabilone for other conditions on his own responsibility.

Pathology

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of expertise and training is required of hospital staff who analyse pathology specimens.

Mr. Sackville: The expertise and training required of staff who undertake the analysis of specimens varies according to the type of analysis being undertaken and other factors.

Home Visits

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she plans to introduce to educate patients not to demand unnecessary home visits from doctors; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Department of Health officials are working with the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association on a further development of the "Help Us To Help You" campaign which will encourage the responsible use of general practitioner out-of-hours service by patients.

Depo-Medrone

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what new advice has been issued by her Department to national health service doctors regarding possible side effects of using the drug Depo-Medrone in epidural therapy;

(2) what discussions have taken place between her Department and the relevant medical professional bodies about the use of the drug Depo-Medrone; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she has taken to ensure that national health service staff are aware of the recommendation from the manufacturers of the drug Depo-Medrone that epidural administration of the drug may cause meningitis and arachnoiditis;

(2) what steps she is taking to investigate the risks of epidural administration of the drug Depo-Medrone; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Officials of the Department have had discussions with representatives of the Pain Society and the British Society of Rheumatology. We are aware that the clinical affairs committee of the British Society of Rheumatology has issued a statement to its members on epidural injection of Depo-Medrone, a copy of which will be placed in the Library. The statement advises that, because of the risks attached, if a doctor wished to use Depo-Medrone, individual informed consent would have to be obtained in view of the potential serious complication; and that it was desirable to use steroid preparations other than Depo-Medrone. We are considering what further action by the Department may be desirable in the light of this statement.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice has been issued by the Committee on Safety of Medicines on the epidural administration of the drug Depo-Medrone;

(2) what advice has been issued by the Medicines Control Agency on the epidural administration of the drug Depo-Medrone.

Mr. Sackville: No specific advice has been issued by the Medicines Control Agency or the Committee on Safety of Medicines. Depo-Medrone is not licensed for epidural administration. The data sheet produced by the manufacturer and authorised by the licensing authority carries a clear warning that Depo-Medrone should not be used for epidural administration.

Financial Information Project Ltd.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state in respect of the £300,000 loaned by West Midlands regional health authority to the company FIP *(a)* on what date the loan was made, *(b)* what percentage interest per annum is being paid by FIP and by what percentage this interest differs from that payable on an unsecured loan; *(c)* who are the directors of FIP and *(d)* whether FIP is a public or a private company.

Dr. Mawhinney: The loan of £300,000 to Financial Information Project Ltd. by West Midlands regional health authority was made in January 1992. The loan is subject to indexation based on changes in the health service price index. Unsecured loans do not attract a "standard" rate of interest. Treasury loans to the public sector via the national loans fund or the Public Works Loan Board currently attract interest rates of 5 per cent.—for loans between one and two years—or 5⅜ per cent., for loans between two and three years. Focus Information Systems Ltd. is the new name for the company previously known as FIP Ltd. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Health Management Trust and has no directors. The trustees of HMT are: Mr. A. J. Bloore (Chairman), Mr. J. Overton, Mr. S. Sargeant, Mr. C. C. Ashton and Mr. A. J. Mills (director of finance at Warwickshire health authority). HMT is a registered charity.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for health what level of funding was made available to trusts in each region in each year since 1991-92; and what these figures are as a percentage of the total NHS provider unit funding.

Mr. Sackville: Trusts are no longer funded directly but earn their income through contracts to provide healthcare services. The table shows the total contract income of trusts by regional area, by amount and percentage of total national health service provider contract income.

Region	*1991-92[1] Trust income[3] (£ million)*	*Per cent. of total provider income[3]*	*1992-93[1] Trust income[3] (£ million)*	*Per cent. of total provider income[3]*	*1993-94[2] Trust income[3] (£ million)*	*Per cent. of total provider income[3]*
Northern	106	9	366	29	637	49
Yorkshire	299	23	643	45	1,320	89
Trent	148	9	547	30	1,338	69
East Anglian	37	5	130	16	624	75
North West Thames	179	13	768	52	1,196	79
North East Thames	363	21	801	44	1,346	72
South East Thames	180	12	501	30	1,269	76
South West Thames	264	23	388	28	805	59
Wessex	68	7	369	32	771	70
Oxford	20	2	175	20	506	56
South Western	483	39	946	74	1,215	92
West Midlands	107	6	316	16	876	41
Mersey	402	42	711	70	973	94
North Western	159	10	460	27	672	37
England	2,815	15	7,121	36	13,548	67

[1] Estimated outturn.
[2] Forecast outturn at Quarter 3.
[3] Income includes non-NHS income and income generation.
Source: NHS Management Executive Management Accounts.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trusts there were in each region in each year since 1991-92; and what are those figures as a percentage of the total number of health provider units.

Dr. Mawhinney: The table shows the total number of operational national health service trusts in each region in each year since 1991-92. The information required to calculate these figures as a percentage of the total number of health provider units is not available centrally for the years 1991-92 to 1993-94. The information for 1994-95 is shown in the table.

Region	*Number of Operational Trusts in 1991-92*	*Number of Operational Trusts in 1992-93*	*Number of Operational Trusts in 1993-94*	*Number of Operational Trusts in 1994-95*[1]	*Number of Operational NHS Trusts in 1994-95 as a percentage of total health provider units*[2]
Northern	3	9	19	34	94
Yorkshire	3	9	23	26	96
Trent	3	13	29	41	91
East Anglian	2	5	15	18	100
North West Thames	4	18	27	29	[3]85
North East Thames	6	14	24	27	87
South West Thames	7	10	17	27	81
South East Thames	1	9	20	31	96
Wessex	4	11	21	26	100
Oxford	1	6	15	24	100
South Western	9	18	22	23	100
West Midlands	4	10	24	47	90
Mersey	8	16	23	25	100
North Western	2	8	13	34	97
Special Health Authorities	0	0	0	5	62
TOTAL	57	156	292	417	92

[1] Numbers are based on the approval to date of 135 applications for Fourth Wave Trust status. They do not include the remaining 9, Fourth Wave Trust applications, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has yet to make a decision on.
[2] The decisions on the 9 remaining applications for 4th wave Trust status will determine the status of 7 directly managed units and 1 Special Health Authority. Since these decisions are still outstanding these units have been classed as "units not operating as NHS Trusts in 1994-95" for the purpose of calculating these percentages.
[3] Includes Teddington Memorial NHS Trust. Although established as an NHS Trust, it is not due to become fully operational until 1 April 1995, following a shadow period of 2 years.

Publicity (Costs)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by her Department on publicity to doctors, in each year since 1979-80.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance from the Department is issued to ensure that the national health service provides high-quality, effective and efficient health care. Funds are supplied from the Department's central funding. Separate costs of issuing guidance, circulars and letters to individual groups within the national health service cannot be identified.

Care in the Community

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she is holding with the Royal College of Psychiatrists about the release of psychiatric patients with a history of violent behaviour under the care in the community programme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The royal college, and other professional bodies, have been fully consulted about the steps we have taken to ensure that psychiatric patients are not discharged from hospital before they are ready to leave and that they are cared for safely, whether in hospital or the community. These steps include the proposed new power of supervised discharge, new guidance on the discharge of mentally disordered people from hospital and their continuing care in the community, and the introduction of supervision registers for people with severe mental illness who may present a significant risk to themselves or others.

We shall be bringing forward legislation to introduce supervised discharge at the earliest opportunity. The new guidance on the discharge and continuing care of mentally disordered people was circulated for consultation in January and will be issued in definitive form as soon as we have taken account of the comments received, and of the relevant recommendations of the Ritchie inquiry. Separate guidance issued on 16 February, HSG(94)5, requires health authorities to have contracts in force by 1 April 1994 which ensure that supervision registers are established and maintained.

We remain in close contact with the college on these and related matters.

AZT

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans her Department has to allow the introduction of the drug AZT to *(a)* mothers-to-be and *(b)* other patients suffering from HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Sackville: Zidovudine, AZT, is currently licensed in the United Kingdom for the following indications.

> the management of patients with advanced HIV disease, such as those with the acquired immune deficiency

> syndrome (AIDS) or AIDS-related complex (ARC).
>
> in adult patients with HIV infection.
>
> in early symptomatic patients with CD4 counts of less than 500/mm^3, or in asymptomatic patients with markers indicating risk of progressive disease including repeated CD4 counts of less than 200/mm^3, or with CD4 counts between 500/mm^3 and 200/mm^3 which are rapidly falling.
>
> HIV-infected children over the age of 3 months who have HIV-related symptoms or who are asymptomatic with markers indicating significant HIV-related immune suppression.

Applications for the licensing of any further indications will be considered by the Medicines Control Agency according to established procedures.

NHS Staffing Levels

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has received on how there could be a reduction of 200,000 NHS jobs without a reduction in services to patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received no such advice. The substantial progress that is being made on the creation of a more flexible work force has, among other measures, enabled more patients to be treated within the national health service than ever before.

Norwich Union Healthcare

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has examined the content of broadcasts made by paid officers of NHS trusts promoting Norwich Union Healthcare; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I am aware that some national health service staff have appeared in broadcasts aimed at publicising collaborative ventures with private insurers to facilitate the more effective use of NHS paybeds. Paybeds generate valuable income for improving services for all patients.

Asthma

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many special consultants there are in asthma practice in London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Consultants in respiratory medicine and paediatric consultants with a special interest in asthma are not recorded separately. The number of consultants in thoracic medicine in London is 11·0 whole time equivalent, as shown in the annual medical and dental census.

The hon. Member may wish to contact the director of public health medicine in each of the four Thames regional health authorities for more information.

Lewisham and Southwark Health Authority

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total annual budget of the Lewisham and Southwark health authority for the most recent available year.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for South East Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Barker, the chairman, for details.

Consultancies

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by each health authority in London on consultancy fees during the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Dentistry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have been recruited by each health authority in England in each of the last three years; and how many dentists are currently employed by each of England's health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of salaried dentists employed by each family health services authority is shown in the table.

Number of salaried dentists as at 18 February 1994

England

Family health services authority	*Number of dentists*
England	91
Cleveland	—
Cumbria	1
Durham	—
Northumberland	—
Gateshead	—
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	—
North Tyneside	—
South Tyneside	—
Sunderland	—
Humberside	—
North Yorkshire	—
Bradford	—
Calderdale	—
Kirklees	—
Leeds	—
Wakefield	—
Derbyshire	2
Leicestershire	—
Lincolnshire	—
Nottinghamshire	—
Barnsley	—
Doncaster	—
Rotherham	—
Sheffield	—
Cambridgeshire	4
Norfolk	3
Suffolk	—
Bedfordshire	—
Hertfordshire	—
Barnet	—
Brent and Harrow	—
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	—
Hillingdon	—
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	9
Essex	3
Barking and Havering	—
Camden and Islington	—
City and East London	8
Enfield and Haringey	—
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	—
East Sussex	—
Kent	5
Greenwich and Bexley	7
Bromley	1
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	30
Surrey	3

Family health services authority	*Number of dentists*
West Sussex	1
Croydon	—
Kingston and Richmond	—
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1
Dorset	—
Hampshire	—
Wiltshire	1
Isle of Wight	1
Berkshire	—
Buckinghamshire	3
Northamptonshire	—
Oxfordshire	—
Avon	—
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	3
Devon	—
Gloucestershire	1
Somerset	—
Hereford and Worcester	—
Shropshire	—
Staffordshire	—
Warwickshire	—
Birmingham	—
Coventry	—
Dudley	—
Sandwell	—
Solihull	—
Walsall	—
Wolverhampton	—
Cheshire	—
Liverpool	2
St. Helens and Knowsley	—
Sefton	—
Wirral	—
Lancashire	1
Bolton	—
Bury	—
Manchester	—
Oldham	—
Rochdale	—
Salford	1
Stockport	—
Tameside	—
Trafford	—
Wigan	—

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional revenues she has made available to health authorities in *(a)* London and *(b)* England to enable them to respond to patients needing emergency national health service dental treatment.

Dr. Mawhinney: The costs of emergency dental services provided under arrangements made by family health services authorities are met centrally from the general dental services fund.

Health Authority Publications

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the publications produced by each health authority in London during the current financial year; and what were the costs involved in each publication.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Member may wish to contact the chief executives of the regional health authorities for details.

Children's Rights

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the United Kingdom's initial report to the United Nations committee on the rights of the child will be published; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I am pleased to announce that the United Kingdom's initial report on implementation of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child was submitted to the United Nations committee on the rights of the child today. The report is also published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office today. Copies have been placed in the Library. A distribution of copies will be made shortly to the large public libraries, local authorities, health authorities and national health service trusts and to a selection of voluntary child care organisations. Similar distributions will take place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The report details how United Kingdom law, policy and practice meet the provisions of the convention. It reveals a positive record in the United Kingdom on the treatment of children, as well as detailing the safeguards that exist, and which we are constantly seeking to improve, to ensure children's rights to special consideration and protection are met.

Transitional Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the needs of carers are accounted for in the formula used to distribute the special transitional grant.

Mr. Bowis: In 1993-94 the distribution of the grant is based predominately on personal social services standard spending assessments. These include factors which are intended to reflect needs for community care expenditure in the round, including the needs of carers. In 1994-95 the grant will be based exclusively on PSS SSAs.

Youth Initiatives

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her current major initiatives involving youth and voluntary youth organisations.

Mr. Bowis: The Children Act gives local authorities responsibility to support children in need and their families wherever possible, and to provide services for young people. Standard spending on children's services for 1993-94 has increased by 32 per cent. since 1990-91.

The Department is funding a programme of grants to the voluntary sector exceeding £8 million to help them develop family support services, day care services, services for the young homeless and young people leaving care, and initiatives to divert young people from crime.

We are also encouraging and supporting organisations which provide information and services for young people in the fields of mental health, drug prevention and HIV/AIDS.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on press and public relations and on publications for issue to the public by *(a)* her Department, *(b)* health authorities and *(c)* NHS trusts, in 1992-93; what were the figures for *(a)* and *(b)* in 1982-83; and what is her estimate of changes in this expenditure in the current year.

Mr. Sackville: The information available centrally is for 1992-93 and relates to the Department of Health and health authorities only. Estimates of changes in expenditure for 1993-94 are not available. Information for 1992-93 is as follows:

Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's Information Division

	£ million
Manpower and running costs	1·749
Publications for issue to the public	4·622
Provisional health authority expenditure on public relations functions taken from the annual financial returns of regional health authorities, district health authorities is	5·350

Note: Information on publications for wider issue to the public is not available centrally.

Mental Health Services, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) from what part of the budget for 1994-98 the extra £10 million allocated for community-based mental health services in London will be found;

(2) how the extra £10 million allocated for community-based mental health services in London will be spent.

Dr. Mawhinney: The extra £10 million for community-based mental health services in 1994-95 forms part of the total £85 million available for primary and community developments in the London initiative zone in 1994-95. Decisions on how the resources will be allocated will be taken by the London implementation group and the Thames regional health authorities in the light of development plans and proposals received from local health authorities and national health service trusts.

Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many community psychiatric nurses have been employed in the national health service in each year since 1983.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table. The figures show that there has been an increase in the number of nurses working in community psychiatrics between 1983 and 1992 of 194·4 per cent.

Community psychiatric nursing—England at 30 September 1983 to 1992
Whole-time equivalent

	Numbers
1983	1,430
1984	1,880
1985	2,310
1986	2,530
1987	2,770
1988	3,080
1989	3,380
1990	3,600
1991	3,750
1992	4,210

Notes:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten and exclude agency staff.
2. The figures include both qualified and unqualified nurses working in the community psychiatric nursing area of work. We are unable to identify nurses with a community psychiatric nursing qualification.
3. Previous published figures included 10 whole-time equivalent senior nurses in error.

Smoking

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the full cost of producing printing and distributing the action plan document on reducing smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of production and printing was £35,321. It is not possible to give an accurate figure for the cost of distribution.

Supervised Discharge

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he plans to introduce legislation to provide supervised discharge.

Mr. Bowis: At the earliest opportunity.

Limb Defects

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is now being taken to investigate clusters of babies born with limb defects; what form the inquiry will take; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) on 1 March at column *678*.

Doctors' Performance

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to put forward a Bill to widen the scope of the General Medical Council's disciplinary remit to introduce a new procedure on professional performance; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We are considering proposals put forward by the General Medical Council about new performance procedures to deal with cases where a doctor's pattern of professional performance is seriously deficient but does not amount to serious professional misconduct.

Administrative Staff

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many managerial and administrative staff have been employed by each family health services authority in each region since 1989;

(2) if she will publish a table showing the total number of staff employed by family practitioner committees *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region in 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The information available is shown in the tables. Family health services authorities manage the introduction of general practitioner fundholding, the monitoring of GP prescribing and the development of clinical audit in primary care—all initiatives introduced since 1989 aimed at improving the effectiveness of patient care and value for money. In 1992-93 FHSA administrative expenditure represented only 2·5 per cent. of the £6·5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on the FHS.

General and Senior Managers (G and SM) and Administrative and Clerical (A and C) staff in Family Health Services Authorities (FPCs in 1989) by region in England, September 1989-92 (whole-time equivalent)

	1989		1990		1991		1992	
Region	*G and SM*	*A and C*	*G and SM*	*A and C*	*G and SM*	*A and C*	*G and SM*	*A and C*
Northern	0	270	30	290	40	310	80	340
Yorkshire	0	310	60	350	100	340	90	350
Trent	0	320	60	350	50	460	100	510
East Anglia	0	180	30	180	40	230	70	200
North West Thames	0	420	30	240	70	470	80	480
North East Thames	0	400	40	340	60	430	60	500
South East Thames	0	370	50	340	70	270	130	380
South West Thames	0	290	50	340	10	90	70	370
Wessex	—	230	40	230	40	270	30	270
Oxford	—	180	50	260	40	230	50	240
South Western	0	260	30	270	40	300	40	320
West Midlands	0	480	90	590	100	530	100	540
Mersey	0	180	20	150	40	300	50	260
North Western	10	460	70	430	70	440	100	490
England Total	30	4,360	640	4,350	790	4,650	1,040	5,240

Sources of data:

Figures for 1989 and 1990 are from the Department of Health Non Medical Workforce Census.

For 1991 and 1992 figures are from the Department of Health form KM49.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10, with "0" denoting less than 5 and "—" denoting zero.
2. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Staff in Family Practitioner Committees by Region in England at 30 September 1989 (whole time equivalents)

Region	*Numbers*
Northern	280
Yorkshire	320
Trent	320
East Anglia	190
North West Thames	430
North East Thames	420
South East Thames	370
South West Thames	300
Wessex	230
Oxford	190
South Western	260
West Midlands	520
Mersey	190
North Western	480
England Total	4,510

Source of data:

Department of Health Non Medical Workforce Census.

Note:

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 and may not add due to rounding.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Archbishop of Canterbury

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list, for each of the last five years, how much money has been given towards running the Archbishop of Canterbury's office or his charitable activities.

Mr. Alison: The following sums were paid by the Commissioners towards the running costs of the Archbishop of Canterbury's office. These include staff salaries, clergy and lay, travel and subsistence and general administrative costs. The commissioners do not contribute to the archbishop's charitable activities.

	£
1989	544,000
1990	676,000
1991	811,000
1992	882,000
1993	911,000

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Cabinet Office *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising;

(2) if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Office of Public Service and Science and his agencies *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising;

(3) if he will list all television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Central Office of Information *(a)* in the current financial year and *(b)* planned for 1994-95, showing for each one the objectives and mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of the advertising.

Mr. David Davis: I have been asked to reply.

Television, radio and newspaper advertising and other promotional campaigns with a budgeted cost in excess of £10,000 conducted by the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service and Science and its agencies, in the curent year are listed. In addition, newspaper advertising is used for recruitment. The Central Office of Information conducts no television advertising, newspaper advertising, radio advertising or other promotional campaigns on its own behalf. The budget for 1994-95 will be finalised shortly.

Campaign aims and objectives	*Mechanism for assessing effectiveness*
OPSS	
Publicity for 1993 charter mark winners to highlight the achievements of the 93 winners and encourage other organisations to measure their performance against the charter mark criteria.	Assessed through market research.
Promotion of the 1994 charter mark scheme to encourage as many public service organisations as possible both to assess their performance against the criteria and to take part in this year's competition.	Analysis of applications received and market research.
Charterline advertising to raise awareness of the service and to assess, during the pilot service, the effectiveness of different forms of advertising.	Analysis through qualitative and quantitative research.
HMSO	
Promotion of publications, videos and IT product range.	Analysis of coupon responses, orders received directly and sales.
Promotion of HMSO's status as a British Standards Institution agent.	Analysis of sales.
Strengthening of awareness of HMSO in central and local government, the health service and public utilities.	Market research before and after campaign, plus analysis of coupon responses.
Civil Service College	
Promotion of courses and other activities to ensure that enough customers are attracted to meet its financial and other targets.	Results are assessed by customer response.

Correspondence

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will publish a table indicating the average length of time Government Ministers take to respond to letters from hon. Members;

(2) what are the targets for the time taken for Government Ministers to respond to letters from hon. Members.

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) on 23 March 1993, columns *551-52*, showing the volume of correspondence from hon. Members to Ministers and agency chief executives in 1992, the targets set for reply and the percentage of replies sent within target. The corresponding 1993 figures will be published shortly.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Waldegrave: I make appointments to the complaints task force and the technology foresight steering group. There are seven members of the complaints task force, including the chairman. The technology foresight programme has 13 members and three advisers.

I am responsible for appointing the chief executives of the following executive agencies: Chessington Computer Centre; Civil Service College; Occupational Health Service; Recruitment and Assessment Services; Central Office of Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I am responsible for appointing the non-executive directors of the HMSO board.

EDUCATION

Voluntary Youth Organisations

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are his current major initiatives involving voluntary youth organisations.

Mr. Boswell: The Department is providing grants of some £8·6 million over the three years to 1995-96 to 60 national voluntary youth organisations. In addition, the Department is providing support to regional and local voluntary youth bodies through the youth work development grants scheme and through a partnership scheme with the London Boroughs Grants Committee.

Technology Colleges (Sponsorship)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the amount of sponsorship by each sponsor for each of the technology colleges announced on 28 February.

Mr. Robin Squire: The value of sponsorship pledged by the main sponsors for each of the 12 technology colleges is listed in the table.

School/sponsor	*Value £ thousands*
Chalvedon Grant Maintained School	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
Fairfield Catering	37·0
Roy Millard Associates	15·0
SIMS Centre	5·0
PMD Associates	4·0
Chatham Grant Maintained Grammar School for Girls	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
GEC Marconi Avionics	20·0
Clifton Reed Consultants	15·0
Research Machines	10·0
Klick Technology	7·5
Data Collection Systems	5·0
Architects Joint Partnership	3·0
Collingwood Grant Maintained School	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
GTi Educational Systems	25·0
Oracle Corporation (UK)	15·0
Motorola	10·0
Deacon's Grant Maintained School	
Perkins Group	49·0
Database and Apricot Computers	27·0
Greater Peterborough TEC	20·0
Pearl Assurance	3·0
George Spencer Grant Maintained School	
Sir Harry Djanogly	79·0
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0
Midland Bank	1·0
Glyn Grant Maintained School	
ADT Group	100·0
Harraby Grant Maintained School	
Carnaud Metal Box	25·0
Cavaghan & Gray	25·0
Talk-Tel Communication	20·0
Cumbria TEC	10·0
Kemnal Manor Grant Maintained County High School	
Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust	50·0
Architects Joint Partnership	12·5
Ballast Nedam Construction	12·5
Klick Technology	12·5
Research Machines	12·5
Saffron Walden Grant Maintained County High School	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
Acorn Computers	30·0
Messrs. Wilby and Burnett	5·0
St. George's Grant Maintained Technology School	
Mr. Reg Brearley	100·0
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0
St. Peter's Collegiate Church of England Voluntary Aided School	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
Database and Apricot Computers	20·0
Lucas Aerospace	22·0
Dixons Wallcoverings	5·0
Unilab	5·0
Saintbridge Grant Maintained Technology School	
Garfield Weston Foundation	50·0
Systems Integrated Research	25·0
Chartwells	15·0
Denford Machine Tools	35·0
AT Poeton (Gloucester Plating)	2·5
Permali (Gloucester)	2·5
CM Downton	2·5

Assisted Places

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made as to how many of those pupils currently covered by the assisted places scheme would have entered private education without the support offered by the scheme.

Mr. Forth: Very few. Over 80 per cent. of parents covered by the scheme have annual incomes below the national average and about 40 per cent. have incomes so low that the pupil is entitled to a free place. Such parents could not afford to meet school fees themselves.

Education (Lewisham)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the Further Education Funding Council's budget supports institutions in Lewisham.

Mr. Boswell: The Further Education Funding Councils' recurrent funding allocations to institutions for 1993-94 covered the period 1 April 1993 to 31 July 1994 and amounted to £3·201 billion. Allocations to institutions in the London borough of Lewisham amounted to £24 million, or about 0·7 per cent. of the total.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for each grant-maintained *(a)* primary school and *(b)* secondary school in (i) Lewisham and (ii) London for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the lists.

Total budget for each Grant Maintained School in:

	Total budget (£)
(i) Lewisham	
(a) Primary Schools	
Turnham Primary with nursery GM School	1,046,106
(b) Secondary Schools	
There are none	
(ii) London	
(a) Primary Schools	
All Saints (Carshalton) CE School	284,425
Barnehurst Infant GM School	401,814
Barnehurst Junior GM School	472,137
Charville Primary School	858,178
Corpus Christi RC Primary School[1]	240,009
Crofton Junior School	1,177,722
Dollis Junior School	761,032
Dormers Wells First School[1]	233,829
Dormers Wells Middle School[1]	223,095
Ethelburga Primary School	439,828
Friars Primary School[1]	140,512
Grange Park Infant School	555,895
Grange Park Junior School	578,793
Hayes Park Infant School[1]	126,479
Hayes Park Junior School[1]	158,727
Hillbrook Primary School	925,909
Hillside Infants School	251,830
Hillside Junior School	287,213
Holy Innocents Roman Catholic School	488,590
Oak Farm Infant School	568,784
Oak Farm Junior Mixed School	729,645
Oakington Manor Primary School	727,025
Oxidge Primary School	503,369
Selsdon Primary School[1]	342,959

	Total budget (£)
St. Andrews CE Primary School	154,619
St. Andrews RC Primary School[1]	278,195
St. Annes RC Primary School[1]	194,144
St. Anthony's RC Primary School[1]	218,552
St. Bedes RC Infant School[1]	234,617
St. Bernadette RC Junior Mixed School	146,022
St. Charles RC Primary School[1]	281,613
St. Francesca Cabrini GM School	985,427
St. James the Great RC Primary School[1]	232,350
St. Josephs RC Infant School[1]	151,523
St. Josephs RC Junior School[1]	191,390
St. Laurence CE Junior School	289,306
St. Lukes CE Primary School[1]	172,076
St. Matthews CE Primary School[1]	94,607
Stanley Park Infants School[1]	144,741
Stanley Park Junior School[1]	165,482
Wood End First School	720,628
Wood End Middle School	576,885

(b) Secondary Schools

	Total budget (£)
Abbotsfield School	1,950,200
Abbs Cross School	1,880,323
Albany School	1,854,018
Alperton High School	1,842,781
Archbishop Tenison School	1,687,063
Ashmole School	1,560,002
Beaverwood School for Girls	2,523,313
Beverley School	1,081,348
Bexley Erith Technical GM School	1,020,078
Bishop Douglass RC School[1]	782,607
Bishop Thomas Grant School	2,909,556
Bishopshalt School	2,551,075
Brentside High School	2,637,138
Broomfield GM School	1,743,264
Bullers Wood School for Girls	2,748,877
Burntwood School	4,487,358
Cardinal Hinsley High School	1,227,373
Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School	2,729,542
Chadwell Heath High School	2,112,265
Charles Darwin School	2,738,262
Cheam High School	2,736,790
Chingford School	1,441,363
Claremount High School	3,454,916
Convent of Jesus and Mary GM High School	2,697,063
Coopers School	3,110,095
Copland Community School and Tech School	3,217,865
Drayton Manor High School	3,219,216
Dunraven GM School	3,753,813
Edenham School	2,573,840
Elliott School	3,870,951
Enfield Grammar School[1]	743,425
Finchley Catholic High School	1,507,554
Graveney School	5,244,434
Greenford High School	2,916,472
Gumley House Convent School	2,634,950
Gunnersbury Catholic School for Boys	2,551,931
Harlington Community School[1]	825,192
Haydon School	3,136,670
Hayes School	3,284,877
Hendon School	3,028,952
Highams Park School	2,959,096
Holy Cross Convent School	1,769,791
Jews Free School	2,228,040
John Paul II RC School	1,633,050
Kelsey Park School	2,488,746
Kingsbury High School	5,344,018
La Retraite RC Girls GM School	1,929,728
La Sainte Union Convent School	1,856,608
Langley Park School for Boys	2,966,972
Mellow Lane School	2,707,249
Mill Hill GM High School	3,476,578
Newstead Wood School for Girls	2,119,866
Nonsuch High School for Girls	2,407,563
Northolt High School	2,925,776
Northwood School	2,465,238
Notre Dame High School	1,071,845
Queen Elizabeth GM School for Boys	2,796,642
Queens Park Community School	2,532,850
Queensmead School	2,680,510
Raines Foundation School	3,432,149
Ravens Wood School for Boys	2,589,922
Richard Challoner School	1,692,418
Riddlesdown GM School	2,939,118
Sacred Heart of Mary Girls School	1,138,361
Sacred Heart RC School[1]	579,657
Salesian College	1,653,473
Salvatorian College	790,326
Southfields School	3,645,574
St. Catherines RC School for Girls	1,028,617
St. Columba's RC Boys School	1,761,471
St. Gregorys RC High School	1,932,523
St. Ignatius College	1,569,158
St. James Catholic High School	942,535
St. John Rigby School	2,542,122
St. Josephs College	1,649,960
St. Martin in the Field High School	1,196,551
St. Mary's and St. Joseph's GM School	1,709,573
St. Mary's CE High School	1,721,788
St. Michaels Catholic Grammar School	1,083,517
St. Michaels School	1,094,571
St. Olave's and St. Saviours Grammar School	1,729,329
St. Philomena's Catholic High for Girls	2,098,339
Stratford School	2,158,996
Sutton Grammar School for Boys	1,556,234
Swakeleys School	1,959,550
The Coopers Company and Coborn School	3,443,500
The Douay Martyrs School	2,669,865
The Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls	2,823,045
The Frances Bardsley School for Girls	2,877,329
The Hayes Manor School	1,933,220
The John Fisher School	1,840,742
The Latymer School	1,859,059
The London Nautical School	1,680,058
The London Oratory School	4,559,637
The St. Thomas the Apostle GM College	1,212,528
Thomas More GM School	976,222
Triffin School	2,289,250
Uxbridge High School	2,199,164
Vyners School	2,099,170
Wallington High School for Boys	1,670,559
Wallington High School for Girls	1,882,587
Wilsons School	1,855,838

The amount shown for total budget includes Annual Maintenance Grant, Special Purpose Grants for Restructuring Development, Premises, VAT, Transitional Grant, Section 11 Grant and Capital Grants payable to the Schools in 1993-94.

[1] Became GM in January 1994 hence AMG amount included is provisional.

EMPLOYMENT

Banking and Financial Services

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the figures from his Department's *Employment Gazette* showing the total number of people employed in banking and financial services, standard industrial classification 8, in Greater London in the latest quarter and the equivalent quarters of 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Miss Widdecombe: The information can be obtained from the NOMIS database and table 1.5 of the *Employment Gazette*, both of which are accessible from the Library.

Paid Annual Leave

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table showing entitlement to paid annual leave in each EU country.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A table showing statutory annual leave entitlement and public holidays in all EU countries was published in an article in the September 1993 edition of *Employment Gazette*—"Working time and holidays in the EC: how the UK compares".

The article also presents "Labour Force Survey" results on paid annual leave entitlement actually received in practice by United Kingdom employees. Fully representative, comparable, data on actual paid annual leave entitlement in other EU states are not available.

Labour Statistics (Lewisham)

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were signed off from the Lewisham and Catford jobcentres without reason being given after a Restart interview during 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from P. J. Walsh to Mrs. Bridget Prentice, dated 2 March 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of people who were signed off without a reason being given after a Restart Interview at Lewisham and Catford Jobcentres.

Unfortunately, the information you request is not available. Statistics on people who leave the register after a Restart Interview are collected only where we can demonstrate that the sign off was the direct result of the interview. Undoubtedly this somewhat underestimates the total effectiveness of Restart Interviews but the alternative would be to include numerous people who would have left the register anyway. The figures I can, therefore, give you are in the attached table.

These figures reflect only the direct results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview.

I hope this is helpful.

	Lewisham jobcentre	*Catford jobcentre*
Number of Restart Interviews carried out in 1993	5,040	5,137
Number of people placed into jobs	122	161
Number of people who took up other benefits	38	8
Number of people who signed off as a direct result of Client Adviser Action	146	21
Number of people who started on the following ED programmes:	1,576	1,605
Jobclub		
Restart Courses		
Jobplan Workshops		
Job Review Workshops		
Training for Work		
Community Action		
Work Trials		
Business Start-Up Scheme		
Job Interview Guarantee		

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average level of awards in cases where industrial tribunals have recommended the reinstatement of an employee dismissed by their employer and this has not been implemented by the company concerned in the last year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The average total award of compensation where an order for reinstatement or re-engagement was not complied with was £13,602 in the 12 months ended 31 March 1993.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to review the operation of current employment legislation relating to industrial tribunals in respect of the enforcement of reinstatement decisions.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to ensure that awards by industrial tribunals are based on a realistic estimate of loss of earnings.

Miss Widdecombe: The level of awards, including those relating to loss of earnings, is for industrial tribunals to decide, subject to any financial limits which may apply. These limits are reviewed annually and the results of the latest review will be announced in due course.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy that Tai Cymru devotes its budget primarily towards ensuring there are sufficient houses available to rent;

(2) what assessment he has made of Tai Cymru's policy of insisting that housing associations build houses for sales as well as for rent, with particular reference to its effect on homelessness in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I expect that Housing for Wales will market some 10 per cent. of its programme for low-cost home ownership in 1994-95. That will help ensure that more people who wish to and can afford to progress by stages to full home ownership have the chance to do so—and thus avoid being constrained to a lifetime of renting alone. It will also mean that the rented social housing stock, now accounting for about 15,000 lettings per annum, can be managed more flexibly to provide for those in greatest housing need.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds for local authority areas were approved by Tai Cymru to be spent by housing associations in Wales in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Local authorities are not funded by housing associations.

Doctors (Home Visits)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he plans to introduce to educate patients not to demand unnecessary home visits from doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The charter for patients in Wales urges patients to take greater responsibility for their own health and to treat health service workers with proper consideration. Health departments and the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association are working together on an initiative to reinforce this message. The "Help Us to Help You" campaign, which we intend to introduce in Wales in April/May 1994, will encourage the responsible use of GP out-of-hours services.

Railway Lines

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions there have been between the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office over the future of socially necessary railway lines; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: From April socially necessary services will be a matter for the Franchising Director. Welsh Office officials have already discussed Welsh issues with him.

Planning Commission

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what encouragement or directive the Welsh Office has given to local authorities in Wales to make provision of public transport, walking and cycling facilities and traffic management a condition of planning permission, where appropriate.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Guidance on the appropriate use of planning conditions is given in Welsh Office circular 1/85. Planning Policy Guidance Note 6, "Town Centres and Retail Development", encourages local authorities to promote effective traffic management in town centres.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many public interest immunity certificates he, or his predecessors, have been asked to sign in each year since 1979; how many he or his predecessors declined to sign; and if he will make a statement of his policy on signing public interest immunity certificates.

Mr. Redwood: There have been no requests to Welsh Secretaries for public interest immunity certificates to be signed since 1979. The signing of such certificates depends on the facts of each case.

Aberconwy (Strategic Development)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how the allocation to Aberconwy borough council out of the strategic development scheme for 1994 was reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Strategic development scheme allocations for 1994-95 were determined by a number of factors which were common to bids from all authorities.

A strategic approach was positively encouraged and bids forming part of an acceptable local strategy received priority. Associated factors taken fully into account included value for money, jobs created, voluntary sector input, sustainable economic development and private sector investment.

Within this framework the merits of Aberconwy borough council's bids were assessed against those of competing bids from other authorities for finite resources.

Officials have arranged to meet officers of the council on Friday 4 March 1994.

National Curriculum (Implementation)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been expended in preparation of paperwork, reading materials, instruction manuals and files for the implementation of the national curriculum in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1988, the Welsh Office has spent £20·1 million in respect of the national curriculum in Wales on the development and issue of national curriculum orders, related assessment materials, and guidance for teachers.

Barlands Quarry, Bishopston

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce his decision on the public inquiry held at the Guildhall, Swansea on 8 July 1993 regarding Barlands quarry, Bishopston.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: A decision will be issued as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Dornoch Academy

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the report of the recent inspection of Dornoch academy by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: This report was prepared as part of general policy advice from officials to the Secretary of State about the proposals for self-governing status submitted by the Dornoch academy school board. It will therefore not be published.

Assisted Places

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the income scale which will apply to the assisted places scheme in Scotland in school session 1994-95.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: For school session 1994-95, I propose to lay regulations before the House in due course providing for progressive parental contribution for one assisted pupil in relation to family income as follows:

Part of relevant income to which the specified percentage applies	*Parental contribution (percentage)*
That part (if any) which exceeds £9,450 but does not exceed £10,275	9
That part (if any) which exceeds £10,275 but does not exceed £11,115	12
That part (if any) which exceeds £11,115 but does not exceed £12,781	15
That part (if any) which exceeds £12,781 but does not exceed £15,341	21
That part (if any) which exceeds £15,341 but does not exceed £18,685	24
That part (if any) which exceeds £18,685	33

The relevant income scale is open ended, but the remission can, of course, be given only where the parental contribution is less than the school tuition fee.

Agricultural Science Agency

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the performance of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency against its targets for 1993-94 and the setting of targets for 1994-95.

Mr. Lang: The agency is on course to meet the key performance targets for 1993-94 which I set out in my answer of 31 March 1993, column *319*.

For 1994-95 I have set the agency the following key performance targets:

fulfilment of the Service Level Agreement with the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department within the running costs voted to the Agency for 1994-95;

recovery of full economic costs for charged services;

formal consultation with all major customers on the quality of the work done by the Agency in 1994-95;

completion of 90 per cent. of all scientific tests and analyses within the timescale set by customers; and

secure national quality management accreditation for the analytical chemistry and pesticide usage work of the Agency.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many convictions were obtained against bankrupts and company directors for each of the last five years in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not held centrally on whether persons convicted are bankrupts or company directors.

Earth Tremors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each of the last four years, and for the current year to-date *(a)* the location and *(b)* the Richter scale measurement of earth tremors that have occurred; and what structural damage was reported.

Mr. Stewart: The British Geological Survey has located 1,478 earthquakes in the United Kingdom and its offshore area in the period January 1990 to mid-February 1994. For seven of these earthquakes, reports have been received of minor damage to properties—none of these has occurred in Scotland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has placed the relevant BGS reports covering the information requested in the Library of the House.

Employment Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what number and percentage of women aged 16 to 60 years were employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in each Scottish constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Stewart: Information in exactly the form requested is not available. The number of female full-time and part-time employees in employment in each Scottish constituency is available from the censuses of employment carried out in 1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1991. This information is on the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what number and percentage of men aged 16 to 65 years were employed in each Scottish constituency in each year since 1979.

Mr. Stewart: Information in exactly the form requested is not available. The number of male employees in employment in each Scottish constituency is available from the censuses of employment carried out in 1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1991. This information is on the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information.

Population Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each age group were (i) in full-time education, (ii) on Government training schemes, (iii) employed, (iv) self-employed, (v) ill or disabled, (vi) unemployed, (vii) retired or (viii) in any other category in each year since 1979 in each Scottish constituency.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

Computer Discs

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce early legislation making illegal the production, manufacture and distribution of computer discs containing sexually explicit material.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is already an offence, under section 51(2) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, for any person to publish, sell or distribute or, with a view to its eventual sale or distribution, make, print, have or keep any obscene material. The definition of material includes any "disc or other kind of recording (whether of sound or visual images or both)". For the avoidance of doubt, a Government amendment has been tabled to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to ensure that computer transmissions are covered by section 51. The need for further legislation will be assessed in the light of the recently published report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on computer pornography.

Kyle and Carrick District Council

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions and on which dates he or any of his Ministers have met the Conservative group on Kyle and Carrick district council in a ministerial capacity.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 February 1994]:* I expect to meet the Conservative group on Kyle and Carrick district council, among others, on 4 March 1994. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) met the same group on 16 July 1993. No other such meetings have taken place.

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the board of the National Museum of Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

Mr. Robert Smith *(Chairman)*
Professor Lalage Bown OBE
Mr. Ronald Cramond CBE
The Countess of Dalkeith
Sir Nicholas Fairbairn QC MP
Sir Alistair Grant
Mr. Alexander Grant Gordon CBE
Dr. Hugh Ingram
Professor Peter Jones
Dr. Derek Pringle CBE
Dr. Anna Ritchie
Professor Christopher Smout
Sir John Thomson, GCMG

All members were appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The information is as follows.

Hon. Lord Prosser QC *(Chairman)*
Professor Gordon Benson
Miss Kirsteen Borland
Mr. William A. Cadell
Mrs. Kathleen Dalyell
Dr. Deborah Howard
Mr. Gerald Ogilvie-Laing
Mr. Allen S. Matheson
Professor Tom Ridley
Mr. Robert R. Steedman
Professor Robin G. M. Webster
Mr. H. Roland Wedgwood

Urology Services (Ayrshire)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much it cost Ayrshire and Arran health board to re-run the tendering process for the area urology contract between the North Ayrshire and Arran and South Ayrshire NHS trusts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps the Ayrshire and Arran health board has now taken to ensure that bids for contracts within its area will be considered on a comparable basis; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement listing the individual members of Ayrshire and Arran health board's evaluation committee;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report,* column 962, how many copies were produced by Ayrshire and Arran health board of its 1992-93 annual report and its financial review 1992-93; what criteria were applied by the health board in distributing these; and what arrangements the health board has made to enable the population within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area to be made aware of the contents of the report and the financial review;

(5) what was the involvement of Alan Clark Associates in the preparation and publishing of Ayrshire and Arran health board's annual report and financial review 1992-93; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what procedure is used by Ayrshire and Arran health board to consider tenders for health services; which bodies and committees within the health board are involved in this process; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what assessment Ayrshire and Arran health board has made of the facilities within the health board that are available for supplying urology services; what assessment has been made of the effect of the planned new day surgery unit at the Ayr hospital on this provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally. These are matters for Ayrshire and Arran health board.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what involvement Ayrshire and Arran health board had in the decision of the South Ayrshire trust to build new day surgery facilities at the Ayr hospital; how this decision related to the award of the area urology contract to the South Ayrshire trust; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether Ayrshire and Arran health board orginally envisaged the day surgery unit opened at Crosshouse hospital on 4 October 1993 supplying urology services as part of its remit; when the proposals were drawn up; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when the South Ayrshire Trust decided to invest in new day surgery facilities at the Ayr hospital; whether these plans were considered for inclusion in the original specification of the Ayr hospital before it was put out to tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* The board agreed with the decision to have day surgery units, but the precise services to be provided were not decided when the decision of principle was taken. Day surgery plans were not included in the original specifications of the Ayr hospital.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report,* column *84,* (1) who made representations to the NHS management executive concerning the award by Ayrshire and Arran health board of the area urology contract to the North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trust which necessitated a re-running of the tendering exercise;

(2) what information was provided, and by whom, which led the NHS management executive to conclude that the bids from the North Ayrshire and Arran and South Ayrshire trusts had not been prepared on a comparable basis; and what adjustments were made to the bids to ensure that this was the case.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Following representations from the chairman of the South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS trust, the then chief executive of the NHS management executive asked Ayshire and Arran health board to explain the background to its decision to award the area urology contract to the North Ayrshire NHS trust. From the information subsequently provided, it appeared that the tender from the North Ayrshire trust was based on marginal costs whereas that of the South Ayrshire trust was based on full economic costs. The health board accepted the NHS ME's view and decided that the two trusts should be invited to re-submit bids based upon a detailed specification.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what current facilities within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area are available to be used for urology services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Urology services within the Ayrshire and Arran health board area are provided from 46 in-patient beds and operating theatre sessions at the Ayr and Ballochmyle hospitals together with out-patient clinics at Ballochmyle and Ayrshire central hospitals.

Ayrshire and Arran Health Board

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the South Ayrshire national health service trust or the North Ayrshire and Arran national health service trust offer contractual incentives to general practitioner fundholders within Ayrshire and Arran health board to secure contracts for treating their patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* No. Both NHS trusts have confirmed that they do not offer any contractual incentives to GP fundholders.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which procedures are used by Ayrshire and Arran health board to make the NHS trusts within the health board aware of long-term service needs.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Ayrshire and Arran health board's revised local health strategy, published in October 1993, sets out its strategy for the promotion of health and purchasing of health services for its residents over the next 10 years. The three NHS trusts within the board area were specifically consulted about the board's plans prior to publication.

Contracting Procedures

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the NHS management executive has ordered a tendering process for NHS contracts to be rerun; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* There has been only one occasion on which the NHS management executive felt that the tendering process for an NHS contract should be re-run.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* An extensive search of departmental records and inquiries of past and serving officials has identified no such occasion.

Family Mediation Scotland

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding has been awarded to Family Mediation Scotland for the next three years in relation to grant applications under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* Family Mediation Scotland was awarded a grant of £56,000 per year for three years from 1992-93. The organisation is free to apply for a further grant after 1994-95.

Mossend Freight Terminal

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of effect on the level of freight traffic over the Kingston bridge of the opening of the Mossend freight terminal.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* Issues relating to roads outwith the trunk network are the direct responsibility of the local roads authority, which in the case of the Kingston bridge and the M8 within Glasgow is Strathclyde regional council. My right hon. Friend has consequently undertaken no such assessment.

European Ferry Link

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what feasibility study has been carried out on the effect on Scottish trade levels with eastern Europe of the introduction of a direct ferry link from Scotland to the mainland of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* I understand that a study has been carried out on behalf of Scottish Enterprise with a view to establishing the feasibility and likely impact of a direct ferry service between Scotland and mainland Europe. The study team was not given a specific remit to consider the effect on trade levels with eastern Europe, but I understand that the direct impact of such a service alone would be likely to be minimal.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what feasibility study has been carried out into the effect of transport costs to Scottish industry if Rosyth was developed as a direct ferry link to Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* I understand that a study has been carried out on behalf of Scottish Enterprise with a view to establishing the feasibility and likely impact of a direct ferry service between Scotland and mainland Europe. The study did not focus specifically on Rosyth; the choice of ports between which a service would operate would be for any potential operator to determine.

The study concluded that the introduction of a direct ferry service would give only a minor direct cost advantage to transport operators. The major benefit to Scottish industry would be in terms of the increased flexibility which the availability of alternative routing would provide.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what feasibility study has been commissioned into developing ferry links from Rosyth to the continent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1994]:* I understand that a study has been carried out on behalf of Scottish Enterprise with a view to establishing the feasibility and likely impact of a direct ferry service between Scotland and mainland Europe. The study did not focus specifically on Rosyth; the choice of ports between which a service would operate would be for any potential operator to determine.

The study highlighted difficulties which might arise from the seasonal nature of tourism traffic to Scotland, but concluded that such a service was potentially viable. Scottish Enterprise is currently exploring the possibility of attracting an operator.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the national health service management executive in Scotland monitors the financial terms of the contracts awarded by national health service trusts to general practitioner fundholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* No. Health boards are responsible for monitoring the terms of the contracts awarded by national health service trusts to general practitioner fundholders. For that purpose general practitioner fundholders are required to lodge copies of all their contracts with their health board.

DEFENCE

Yugoslavia

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding catering arrangements for British troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Hanley: Every effort is made to ensure that the standard of catering for British troops in Bosnia is as close as possible to the high standard they would receive at their parent locations. To ensure that this is so, sufficient fresh food for 30 days' rations is held in theatre and is resupplied weekly. All troops receive a standard British breakfast and a choice of dishes for lunch and dinner.

The United Nations has recently indicated that it would like to bring the British force into the United Nations ration supply system. Tomislavgrad has been chosen as the site for a two-week trial beginning on 1 April. As a convoy staging area with constant fluctuations in the number of personnel requiring food, Tomislavgrad should present a thorough examination of the United Nation's ability to maintain the quantity and quality of rations demanded by the British contingent.

Low Flying

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has of the number of low flying training exercises held since 1 October 1993 in airspace over, *(a)* Orkney and Shetland, *(b)* Edinburgh, Pentlands, *(c)* Thanet, South and *(d)* Huntingdon.

Mr. Hanley: Central records of all low flying exercises in the United Kingdom are not held. However, central records are held of major low flying exercises where advance notice has been given to Members of Parliament whose constituents may see a change in the pattern of air activity. Since 1 October 1993 one major exercise involving activity in the areas listed has been notified in this way. Exercise Northern Crusade is taking place between 1 and 13 March and involves Hercules aircraft flying in the Huntingdon area.

EH101

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the export potential for the EH101 helicopter, following ministerial visits to the middle east.

Mr. Aitken: The EH101 helicopter has substantial export potential worldwide, including the middle east. The Defence Export Services Organisation is working closely with the manufacturer in identifying and pursuing opportunities.

Redundant Properties

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provisions his Department is making to ensure the future protection and maintenance of redundant historic buildings.

Mr. Hanley: Redundant historic buildings are secured in a wind and weathertight condition during the period when they are out of use pending the earliest possible disposal to new owners for suitable alternative use.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the consequences on local economies of the programme of closure and disposal of redundant properties.

Mr. Hanley: My Department's primary reason for disposing of redundant properties is to ensure that the most cost-effective use is made of available resources. When a site is, however, identified for disposal, local planning authorities are consulted to establish what other use might be made of the property in question. We do, of course, give as much assistance as possible to individual employees who might be affected by any closure.

Dartmouth Royal Naval College

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the security review at Dartmouth Royal Naval college; who commissioned it; who tendered for it; when it was comissioned; how many staff were engaged in it; what was relevant experience; what were the principal recommendations; which recommendations have been implemented; and what was the actual cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Hanley: My Department commissioned an internal study in 1989 to review security arrangements at a number of establishments in the light of the terrorist threat. The study team consisted of five MOD security specialists and their principal recommendations affecting BRNC Dartmouth involved enhancement to security manpower, improvements in internal communications and a number of other physical security enhancements. All these recommendations have been implemented, at a total capital cost of approximately £140,000, plus extra running costs of approximately £960,000 per annum.

RAF Training

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long it takes to train RAF skilled airframe and engine fitters; and how many years' experience is required before they reach the rank of sergeant and flight sergeant.

Mr. Hanley: The trades referred to are now known as engineering technician airframe and engineering technician propulsion. Trade training is by a combination of some 131 weeks of various technical courses and a period of one to two years of productive service.

Promotion to sergeant and flight sergeant is by selection on merit to fill establishment vacancies. There is an intervening rank of chief technician for which promotion is also by selection on merit. The length of time taken to achieve promotion to these ranks varies from year to year depending on the number of establishment vacancies and the level of competition.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of RAF skilled people working in training and support roles who will be required immediately to join active duty squadrons in the event of a war.

Mr. Hanley: It would not be appropriate to comment on the detailed reinforcement capability of the armed forces.

UK Airspace (Defence)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft and squadrons were designated for the air defence of United Kingdom airspace in the years 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1994.

Mr. Hanley: The number of RAF aircraft and squadrons, excluding in-use reserves or those on operational conversion units, based in the United Kingdom for the air defence of United Kingdom airspace were:

	1969		*1979*		*1989*		*1994*	
	Aircraft	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*
Lightning F3/F6	60	5	24	2	—	—	—	—
Phantom FG1	—	—	22	2	29	2	—	—
Phantom FGR2	—	—	30	3	16	1	—	—
Phantom F4J	—	—	—	—	10	1	—	—
Tornado F3	—	—	—	—	35	3	80	6
TOTAL	60	5	76	7	90	7	80	6

Strike Duty

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft and squadrons were designated for strike duty in the years 1969, 1979, 1989 and 1994.

Mr. Hanley: The number of aircraft and squadrons, excluding in-use reserves or those on operational conversion units, designated for strategic and sub-strategic nuclear use against land and surface maritime targets were:

	1969		*1979*		*1989*		*1994*	
	Aircraft	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*	*Aircraft*	*Squadrons*
Canberra B(I)6	11	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canberra B(I)8	36	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Buccaneer	45	3	50	4	24	2	—	—
Vulcan B2	64	8	48	6	—	—	—	—
Sea Harrier	—	—	16	2	24	3	—	—
Jaguar GR1/1a	—	—	60	4	—	—	—	—
Tornado GR1/1a/1b	—	—	—	—	114	10	96	8
Total	156	15	174	16	162	15	96	8

A decision was taken in 1992 to withdraw the capability of Sea Harriers to deploy tactical nuclear weapons.

One-stop Shop

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider setting up a one-stop shop to deal with all ex-service people and veterans.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has no plans to establish such a service as we believe that it would only add an unnecessary layer of administration and would not result in a better service than is already available to ex-service people and veterans through the health and social security services.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 3 March 194

ENVIRONMENT

Listed Buildings

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will consider issuing statutory guidelines to local authorities to limit enabling development to those listed buildings with negative equity;

(2) what plans he has to provide guidelines to local authorities in dealing with planning applications involving enabling development which contravene policies incorporating protection for the countryside, registered parks and gardens and the setting of listed buildings.

Mr. Baldry: The term "enabling development" is not found in the Planning Acts and there are no plans to give it any statutory significance or make any specific reference to it in guidance.

City Grant

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the schemes given city grant in the north-west region in the last two years with the amounts in each case; and what were the amounts of any clawback of grant.

Mr. Baldry: The schemes in the Department of the Environment's north-west region for which the provision of city grant was approved since April 1992, and the approved level of grant, are set out in the table. None of these schemes has yet reached the date for determining the level of any clawback. The urban development corporations offer their own grants analogous to city grant; schemes funded in this way are not included.

Project	*Approved Grant (£)*
Blackburn	
Enamel Street housing	735,782
Farmers Market site offices	672,717
Hornby Hotel	127,439
Bolton	
Sunnyside Mills housing	1,413,441
Burnley	
Holy Trinity Church flats	300,000
Manchester	
Broughton Street cash and carry warehouse	249,835
Sherborne Street housing	835,700
Blackett Street units	425,000
Express Offices redevelopment	1,972,000
Lever Street offices	350,000
Jackson Crescent student flats	575,000
Energy Street housing	520,000
Louisa Street housing	774,093
Kelbrook Road units, phase 1	151,000
Kelbrook Road units, phase 2	370,000
Oldham	
Cromford Street units	121,877
Park Road flats/units	1,012,316
Greengate Industrial Estate, phase 2	1,306,000
Preston	
Avenham Terrace housing	101,170
Queens Mill housing	291,440
Rochdale	
Perseverance Mill units	475,000
HQ Co-op Retail Building	3,000,000
Smallbridge Business Park	216,000
Salford	
Deva Centre offices	2,770,000
Hamilton Garden housing	380,717
Griffin Court offices	220,000
Liverpool Road industrial units	196,981
Albion units	1,550,000
Wigan	
Gordon Close housing	130,605
Kent Street mixed development	280,863
Platt Lane units	147,405

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary aof State for the Environment what is the current situation regarding the city grant application made in respect of the Foleshill gas works site.

Mr. Baldry: English Partnerships has made a proposal to British Gas, the site owners, under which a grant could be offered for a first phase of development on the Foleshill site. English Partnerships has also suggested a possible joint venture for the development of a second phase.

Pollution, Lewisham

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the levels of atmospheric pollution and the levels of nitrous oxide and black smoke emissions in the Lewisham area in each year since 1985.

Mr. Atkins: Annual average concentrations of black smoke and nitrogen dioxide in Lewisham is given in the table. No monitoring data on levels of nitrous oxide in the Lewisham area is available. However, Lewisham was included in both the 1986 and 1991 national nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube surveys. Black smoke is monitored in areas of the United Kingdom at risk of exceeding the limit value of the European Community directive on smoke and sulphur dioxide—89/427/EEC. The site in Lewisham was closed in 1989 since concentrations of these pollutants were not at risk of exceeding the directive limit values.

Annual emissions of smoke and nitrogen dioxide between 1985 and 1991 are given in the Department of the Environment's 15th edition of the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Annual average concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and black smoke at Ladywell Baths, Lewisham High Street, Lewisham, London

Year	*Black smoke (ug/m^3)*	*NO_2 (ppb)*[1]
1985	12	—
1986	15	26
1987	17	—
1988	23	—
1989	—	—
1990	—	—
1991	—	32

[1] Parts per billion at 20°C and 1013 millibars pressure.

CIPFA Employees

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the grade and present duties of each member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy employed in his Department; and if he will cross-refer each post to his Department's latest MINIS report.

Mr. Gummer: Three members of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy are employed in the Department of the Environment. They are Mr. P. Rowsell, grade 5, listed as head of finance and local authority expenditure and resources division in page 28 of part 1 of MINIS 14; Mr. D. Weatherly, SEO in construction division 5—page 38 of part 6 of MINIS 14 dealing with prequalification systems and the consultants register; and Mr. J. Gauld, SEO in management audit services division—page 32 of part 5 of MINIS 14 where the division is shown under its former name of finance management audit.

Council Tax

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to review the council tax transitional relief scheme;

(2) what plans he has to change the rules governing transitional relief following the letter of 18 February from the hon. Member for Woolwich;

(3) what estimate he has of the number of cases where persons in a higher property band pay less in council tax than someone in the same district or borough in a lower property band but in otherwise similar circumstances as a result of transitional relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* We have no plans to change the rules governing transitional relief. I have written to the hon. Member about the application of the transitional relief scheme in Greenwich.

King's Cross Conference

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to respond to the invitation he has received from the Metropolitan police, local churches, and local authorities, to attend the conference on King's Cross due to be held on 8 March.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* Following an invitation from the leaders of Camden and Islington councils, my office telephoned the conference organisers on 18 February to say that, because of other commitments, I would be unable to attend.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Attorney-General whether the common law duty of a Minister of the Crown to sign public interest immunity certificates rests upon the contents of *(a)* an individual document or *(b)* the class of document; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to him on 3 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *833,* and to the extract from the "Supreme Court Practice 1993" which I have already placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Criminal Proceedings

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make it his policy that the identities of all witnesses as to fact in a criminal investigation which leads to proceedings by way of complaint or indictment are disclosed to an accused person facing trial in a sheriff court or the High Court of Justiciary;

(2) if he will make it his policy to accept the principle of full disclosure of evidence to the defence in criminal cases.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, disclosure of the case for the prosecution is achieved by providing the defence with a list containing the names and addresses of witnesses who may be called to give evidence. The defence is then entitled to obtain statements from these witnesses. In summary cases, copies of all police witness statements are given to the defence on request.

An experiment in the provision of some civilian witness statements is being conducted in Paisley. In cases prosecuted on indictment, the accused will also have a list of productions served on him. The production will be lodged in court prior to the trial diet, and they may be examined by the accused or his represenative prior to the trial.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate confirms that the policy of the Crown in Scotland is to disclose to the defence any information which supports the defence, even though it may be damaging to the prosecution case. Procurators fiscal are also instructed to provide assistance to the defence if it is necessary to enable witnesses for the defence to be traced. The overall aim is to ensure that the true facts of any case are laid before the judge or jury.

Health Service Contracts

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding contact between Dumfries and Galloway health board, and Mr. Frank Brown of Ayrshire and Arran health board on urology services.

Mr. Stewart: Mr. Brown, commissioning manager of Ayrshire and Arran health board, contacted Dumfries and Galloway health board in September 1993 to establish that board's purchasing intentions for urological services.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official*

Report, column *689*, if he will list the contracts currently in operation between the South Ayrshire and North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trusts and Dumfries and Galloway health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Currently, the South Ayrshire hospitals and North Ayrshire and Arran NHS trusts each have a block contract with Dumfries and Galloway health board for a variety of specialties.

Forestry

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to assess whether, in deciding not to oppose afforestation plans at Cloanaig, Kintyre, Scottish Natural Heritage took adequate account of the interests of local communities within the terms of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991.

Sir Hector Monro: The formulation and provision of advice to the Forestry Commission on the natural heritage aspects of woodland grant scheme applications is solely a matter for Scottish Natural Heritage.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether tax options of the kind described in the recent Country Landowners Association report, "Focus on Woodlands", are being considered by the forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: The Country Landowners Association report was one of a large number of representations received by the review group in the course of its work. The views expressed in these representations have been valuable to the group in preparing its advice to Ministers.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that the Government's forestry review group is considering in detail all types of incentive for both tree planting and management.

Sir Hector Monro: The forestry review group was asked, among other things, to review the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, in accordance with the manifesto commitment. Ministers are now considering its advice before deciding what action, if any, should be taken.

Health Service Management

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the targets for each national health service general manager, unit general manager and chief executive in the next year; and what is the performance-related pay payable for achievement of these targets.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally. The setting of targets for each NHS general manager, unit general manager and chief executive is determined locally. Arrangements for assessment of performance-related pay for achievement of targets are matters for the remuneration committee of the employing body.

Insolvency Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* corporate and *(b)* individual insolvencies were recorded in Scotland for each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart: The number of insolvencies in Scotland for each of the past five full accounting years was as follows:

(a) Corporate insolvencies

Year	Number
1988-89	663
1989-90	651
1990-91	720
1991-92	862
1992-93	915

Source: Table C2 of "Companies in 1992-93".

(b) Individual insolvencies

Year	Number
1988-89	1,612
1989-90	2,618
1990-91	5,451
1991-92	8,584
1992-93	11,970

Source: Office of the Accountant in Bankruptcy.

A1 (Accidents)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the total number of *(a)* minor, *(b)* serious and *(c)* fatal road traffic accidents on the A1 in (i) East Lothian and (ii) Berwickshire in each month for the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table.

Numbers of personal injury accidents on the A1

	1991				1992				1993			
	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
East Lothian												
January	—	2	3	5	—	3	2	5	—	—	6	6
February	—	—	3	3	—	1	1	2	—	1	—	1
March	—	1	1	2	—	—	3	3	—	—	1	1
April	—	—	—	0	—	—	1	1	—	—	2	2
May	—	1	3	4	2	—	2	4	—	—	2	2
June	—	1	2	3	—	1	1	2	—	1	1	2
July	1	—	2	3	1	—	5	6	1	1	5	7
August	1	1	3	5	—	—	4	4	—	3	5	8
September	—	—	3	3	2	—	2	4	—	—	2	2
October	—	1	2	3	2	—	2	4	—	2	2	4
November	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

	1991				*1992*				*1993*			
	Fatal	***Serious***	***Slight***	***Total***	***Fatal***	***Serious***	***Slight***	***Total***	***Fatal***	***Serious***	***Slight***	***Total***
December	—	2	4	6	—	—	3	3	n/a	n/a	n/	n/a
Totals	2	9	28	39	7	5	26	38	1	8	26	35
Berwickshire												
January	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0	—	1	4	5
February	—	2	2	4	—	1	4	5	—	—	4	4
March	—	1	1	2	—	—	—	0	—	—	3	3
April	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	—	1	3	4
May	1	—	—	1	1	—	1	2	—	—	1	1
June	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0
July	—	1	2	3	—	—	—	0	—	—	2	2
August	—	—	—	0	1	1	—	2	—	1	—	1
September	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	—	1	1
October	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0
November	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	0	—	1	—	1
December	—	—	—	0	—	—	—	0	1	—	1	2
Totals	1	5	9	15	2	3	6	11	1	4	19	24

Note: n/a=not available as the accident figures for these months have not yet been verified.

New Home Building

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the number of new homes to be built in the Blairgowrie, Alyth, Coupar Angus, Meigle, Newfyle, Birk Hill and Muirhead areas of Tayside in the next three years and five years, as advised by Tayside regional council, Angus district council and Perth and Kinross district council.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally.

Forestry Review Group

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to publish the report of the forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: No. The report of the forestry review group was prepared for the confidential advice of Ministers.

Seals

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the Sea Mammals Research Unit estimates the number of grey and common seals in Scotland; if the seal population of lochs is included; and what assessment he has made of the method of counting.

Sir Hector Monro: Each year, the sea mammal research unit—SMRU—carries out counts of grey seal pups using aerial photography. All major Scottish colonies are surveyed, including Loch Eriboll—the only site within a loch where significant numbers breed.

The SMRU counts common seals along the Scottish coastline during August each year, using a thermal-imaging camera mounted in a helicopter. The survey is repeated on a five-year cycle and includes all islands and sea lochs.

The SMRU survey programme for Scottish seals is reviewed annually by the special committee on seals, an independent group of experts.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *955-56*, if he will make a statement listing the current annual fees levied by the private schools with pupils under the assisted places scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is publicly available in the publication "Which School" which is available from the Independent Schools Information Service (Scotland) at the following address:

Floor 2/1
11 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3EH

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what agencies are employed by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise to provide its public relations; and what is the annual cost to the company.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is an operational matter for Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I will ask its chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Speech, Paisley

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech on Saturday 26 February.

Mr. Lang: I have placed in the Library a copy of the extract from my speech at Paisley on 26 February which was released to the press. I shall be replying shortly to the hon. Member's letter to me on the subject.

Howie Report

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish the Howie report on the reform of the upper secondary school curriculum.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Howie report was published on 5 March 1992.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the report of the Howie committee on curriculum and examinations in upper secondary education in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am pleased to announce that I am publishing the Government's response to the Howie committee's proposals today. Details of my decisions, which build on the strengths of the current system, are set out in the document "Higher Still: Opportunity For All", copies of which have been deposited in the Library of the House and the Vote Office.

Nurses

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of newly qualified nurses completed their training in Scotish NHS hospitals in the 12-month period ended December 1993 and found full-time permanent employment in NHS hospitals in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 February 1994]:* The exact information requested is not available centrally. The table shows the status of nurses who were final year students in Scotland on 30 September 1992 one year later.

It should be noted that the methods by which this information is collected do not permit account to be taken of certain students, for example those who have been unable to complete their training within the normal three year period; those who, having qualified, may have chosen to have a break in service before seeking employment; those who have found employment as a nurse outwith the NHS; and those who may have qualified, joined the NHS and left. Those who qualify and work occasionally in the NHS, for example, bank or agency nurses, also cannot be identified and have therefore been counted with the "not employed" category.

Status of final year basic student nurses in Scotland one year later; year beginning 30 September 1992:

Status at 30 September 1993	*Headcount*	*Per cent.*
In full-time post in NHS	889	37·5
In part-time post in NHS	325	13·7
Total in post in NHS	1,214	51·2
Taking further training in NHS	16	0·7
Not employed in NHS	1,143	48·1
TOTAL	2,373	100

Public Bodies

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the members currently appointed to the Scottish health service advisory council.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The advisory council was abolished last year.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the people from Clydebank who have been appointed to *(a)* Glasgow health board, *(b)* Dumbartonshire local enterprise company, *(c)* the board of management of Clydebank technical college and *(d)* other Government bodies;

(2) which people from Eastwood have been appointed to *(a)* Greater Glasgow health board, *(b)* Argyll and Clyde health board, *(c)* the boards of local enterprise companies, *(d)* local hospital trusts, *(e)* the board of management of technical colleges and *(f)* other Government bodies;

(3) how many people on local hospital trusts live in *(a)* Clydebank and *(b)* Eastwood.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* No resident of Clydebank has been appointed to Greater Glasgow health board. One resident of Eastwood has been appointed to the board, Rev. R. D. M. Campbell.

No resident of Eastwood has been appointed to Argyll and Clyde health board.

No resident of Clydebank has been appointed to local NHS hospital trusts. The names of those residents of Eastwood who have been appointed to local NHS hospital trusts are as follows:

Southern General Hospital NHS Trust:—Mrs. Ann P. Moore
Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust:—Mrs. Alison Gilchrist
Dr. Robert Colville
Yorkhill NHS Trust:—Mrs. Gwendoline Garner

Information identifying the place of residence of members of the boards of management of further education colleges is not held centrally.

I do not make appointments to the boards of local enterprise companies and so I am not in a position to give the information requested in respect of them.

The addresses of appointees to non-departmental public bodies are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to secure greater transparency in the affairs of non-elected bodies whose membership in whole or in part is appointed by him or who exercise functions previously carried out by local authorities.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Such action as is necessary has already been taken or is in hand. All the bodies to which I appoint members and which undertake expenditure directly either produce audited accounts or, in some minor cases, have their expenditure included in the accounts prepared by my Departments. Most also produce annual reports. These reports and accounts are laid before Parliament and they may be examined by the Committee of Public Accounts.

In addition, the Comptroller and Auditor General may conduct inquiries into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which bodies to which I appoint members and which receive more than half their income from public funds, have used their resources. Reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General may be submitted to Parliament and the Committee of Public Accounts may question senior officials both of my Department and, in many cases, of the bodies themselves.

Management statements have been, or will be, prepared for most executive NDPBs. These will be published and will define the role and responsibilities of the body, its relationship with its sponsor departments, its accountability, aims and objectives. In addition, executive NDPBs are expected to meet the charter standards of the citizens charter and the principles of the Government's White Paper, "Open Government". A code of conduct for NHS boards which encourages transparency about NHS activities has already been issued for consultation. It is also planned to produce a code of practice to follow up steps already taken as part of the patients charter initiative to incorporate into the NHS the principles of the Government's White Paper, "Open Government".

The only bodies which carry out functions formerly undertaken by local authorities, are the colleges of further education for which I became responsible on 1 April 1993. The colleges produce annual reports and audited accounts and the Comptroller and Auditor General has a right to inspect their books and records and to carry out value for money studies. Again, he may report the results of these studies to Parliament and the Committee of Public Accounts can question relevant officials. This year, for the first time, each college will also be required to publish a shortened development plan, describing its forward objectives and its performance in meeting past objectives.

Carstairs State Hospital

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received a report on the escape of two patients from Carstairs state hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* Yes. On 27 January two patients who were being transported from the west wing to the east wing of the State hospital, forced open the back door of the van and attempted to escape. They were in sight of security staff at all times and monitored by the hospital's close circuit television. They were apprehended within 90 seconds.

As a result of the incident rigorous daily checks are now carried out on all vehicles used for transporting patients at Carstairs.

The recent announcement by my noble and learned Friend to invest £14 million in the creation of the state hospital on a single site will remove the possibility of a recurrence of this type of incident.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

British Virgin Islands

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, c. *683-84* what is the total cost per annum to the Overseas Development Administration, including accommodation and air fares of *(a)* the inspector of banks and trust companies, *(b)* the insurance services adviser and *(c)* the principal tax adviser in the British Virgin Islands.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is usual in this country to observe the practice of maintaining the confidentiality, on pay and allowances, between employer and employee and therefore it is not our practice to reveal remuneration details for individual technical co-operation officers. However, average costs for the British Virgin Islands were contained in my answer of 15 February, columns *683-84*.

Vietnam

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what bilateral aid programmes the United Kingdom is pursuing with Vietnam; what is the level of aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are providing know-how to help prepare for investments in strategic infrastructure and assistance for resettlement of returned economic migrants. Expenditure in 1993-94 will be about £3 million. We also intend to provide concessional support for £50 million worth of projects.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to, or received from, authorities and agencies in Mozambique in respect of the diversion of aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The only reported losses of British bilateral aid have been pilferage of food aid. We estimate losses of about 2 per cent. in 1993. All out bilateral food aid in 1993 was provided through British non-governmental organisations—NGOs—who employ contractors, paid on performance, to store and transport the food to specific destinations. Distribution to beneficiaries is supervised by NGOs. Where there are losses in storage and transit, we expect the NGOs to recoup the losses from the contractors concerned.

Regular co-ordination meetings are held between the Government of Mozambique, donors, and implementing agencies to monitor the distribution of emergency relief and food aid. Where specific cases of diversion of United Kingdom bilateral food aid has been suspected, they have been taken up by the ambassador with Ministers in the Government of Mozambique and provincial governors. In such cases assurances have been received that action is being taken to prevent further instances.

Malaysia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payments were made to Biwater Berhad of Malaysia in 1986; and for what purpose.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: One payment of £48·6 million was made to Antah Biwater JV under the United Kingdom—Malaysia grant 1986 in respect of the rural water supply project, which provides clean water supplies to about 4 million people in 134 areas in Malaysia.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payments were made in 1986 to Antah Holdings of Malaysia; and for what purpose.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payments were made to citizens of Malaysia and Malaysian companies by the ODA for proposed aid-related projects in the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988; and for what purposes such payments were made.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Computer Exports

Mr. Alison: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of United Kingdom exports of computers in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom exported computers worth £3·8 billion in 1992, the last full year for which data are available. Exports of computers in the first nine months of 1993 were worth £3·5 billion. Due to changes in the system of collecting trade data, figures for 1993 as a whole are not yet comprehensive enough for direct comparisons with earlier data. However, the value of United Kingdom exports of computers in 1993, as a whole, are expected to reach a record level.

International Trade Centre

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about Liverpool as the location for an international trade centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department has received only one such representation, from a local Liverpool resident. It is being considered by officials.

Post Office

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to complete his review of the Post Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is anxious to complete the Post Office review as soon as possible. The Government will not however set an artificial date.

Modems

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans his Department has to resolve the legal anomalies regarding the import and sale of modems not approved for connection to the United Kingdom public telephone network; and whether he intends to press for a Europewide solution.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department is reviewing the United Kingdom approvals regime for telecommunications terminal equipment, including the placing on the market of modems capable of, but not approved for, connection to the network. One of the main objectives of the review is to introduce a regime consistent with our obligations under the Telecommunications Terminal Equipment Directive —91/263/EEC. At the same time, my officials are discussing the particular problems caused by unapproved modems with the Commission and other member states with a view to developing a pan-European solution.

Trade and the Environment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what decisions were taken at the governing council of GATT in Geneva on 22 February on the link between trade and the environment.

Mr. Needham: On 22 February the GATT council considered and agreed the outline of the GATT report to the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development on GATT activities following the 1992 UNCED conference. The report will highlight the contribution of the Uruguay round to sustainable development, as well as pointing to the value of analytical work already carried out in GATT. Contracting parties see the December 1993 decision on future trade and environment work as evidence of continued commitment to this important issue.

Fire Safety

Mr. Pike: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information his Department has on the benefits to date arising from regulations covering furniture foam; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended, include requirements for the flammability resistance of foam filled furniture. Statistics for deaths and injuries in fires are compiled by the Home Office from data collected by fire brigades. The data records that the number of deaths caused by combustion originating in upholstery and covers in dwellings has fallen from 193 in 1988 to 117 in 1991. Though other factors, such as an increased use of smoke alarms, may have influenced these figures the fall in the death rate associated with fires in upholstery and covers was much steeper than the fall in death rate from fires in dwellings overall.

Information Super-highways

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he has taken to promote the development of information super-highways in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: A recent study, commissioned by this Department, concluded that the United Kingdom is one of the most advanced countries worldwide on a range of key telecommunications infrastructure indicators, including use of optical fibre at trunk and local level, digitalisation of exchanges and availability of advanced services such as ISDN. This position has been achieved through our policies of privatisation, liberalisation and competition. A large number of companies are now competing to provide high-capacity telecommunication services, including BT, Mercury, Energis, COLT, MFS and the cable TV operators. I hope to license more shortly.

Aviation Services

Ms Coffey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the progress of the general agreement on tariffs and trade regulations on aviation services.

Mr. Needham: Air transport services fall within the scope of the general agreement on trade in services, which forms part of the GATT agreement. The annex on air transport services notes that the agreement does not apply to measures affecting air transport traffic rights. A number of countries have made liberalisation commitments in services related to repair and maintenance, sales and marketing and computer reservation systems. There will be periodic reviews to consider whether the extent of the application of the agreement to air transport services should be expanded.

The GATT negotiations on trade in civil aircraft will continue for a further year following the conclusion of the GATT round. The Government are keen that these negotiations should resume at the earliest opportunity, in order to allow time for the negotiation of an agreement covering the whole aerospace sector, to include balanced disciplines on direct and indirect support while protecting existing Government launch aid. Meanwhile, the Government, in conjunction with industry, the European

Commission, and other EU Governments, are carrying out an analysis of the various options for achieving such an agreement.

PRIME MINISTER

Nursery (Official Visit)

Q8. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what further plans he has to visit a children's nursery.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Milton Keynes

Q10. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit Milton Keynes.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister how many public interest immunity certificates he or his predecessor have been asked to sign in each year since 1979; how many he or his predecessor declined to sign; and if he will make a statement on his policy of signing public interest immunity certificates.

The Prime Minister: No central record has been kept of the number of public interest immunity certificates put to Ministers since 1979, and a search of all the records in No. 10 would involve disproportionate cost. I do not recall being asked to sign such a certificate and it is unlikely that either I or my predecessor would have been asked to sign one since immediate responsibility for the relevant documents or information would normally rest with the head of a separate Department.

USA (Official Visit)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters were discussed, and what decisions taken, during his visit to the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: We discussed current international issues, and established a wide measure of agreement on points for joint United Kingdom-United States action. These included sending a joint British-American civil planning mission to Sarajevo; continuing support for the process of democratic and economic reform in Russia; steps to promote the process of democratic reform in South Africa; reaffirmation of United States support for the joint declaration on Northern Ireland; and support for Governor Patten's policies on Hong Kong.

Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister who pays for the ceremonial dress worn from time to time by the Lords Lieutenant of England.

The Prime Minister: On appointment, Lords Lieutenant are offered a contribution from public funds towards the cost of the ceremonial uniform worn on their official engagements.

Official Gifts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, column 579, if he will place in the Library a copy of the official inventory of items given to Prime Ministers.

The Prime Minister: A variety of gifts are received from heads of government, heads of state and others. They are all handled in accordance with "Questions of Procedure for Ministers". It is not considered appropriate to provide a list.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give details of the official gifts he has presented on the official visits abroad he has made since November 1990.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* No. The customary practice is to give official gifts to heads of government, heads of state and small numbers of officials on the occasion of each visit to a country, but it is not considered appropriate to give details of these.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 3 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

St. Winwaloe's Day

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to celebrate St. Winwaloe's day.

The Prime Minister: None.

Malaysia

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister what offers of aid to Malaysia were discussed during his visit to Malaysia in September 1993; and what were the amounts involved for each potential project.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* There was no substantive discussion of aid offers during this visit.

However, I attended the unveiling of a plaque at the Connaught Bridge power plant for which the Government had provided £23·485 million aid and trade provision support. I was also present at the signature of a document between the Kuala Lumpur international airport Berhad and the Anglo-Japanese airport consortium, on the role the consortium would play in the Kuala Lumpur airport project.

St. David's Day

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to celebrate St. David's day.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales held a reception on the eve of St. David's Day, to mark the occasion.

Cabinet Meetings

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Prime Minister where the handwritten records of the Cabinet Secretary of each Cabinet meeting are kept; and how far back such records go.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 March 1994]*: The Cabinet Secretary's notebooks, which contain the handwritten records of each Cabinet meeting, have been preserved since 1947. They are retained in the Cabinet Office with the approval of the Lord Chancellor under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958.

Air Miles

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Prime Minister what rules apply to the use of air miles credited to Ministers undertaking official journeys.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 2 March 1994]*: I have recently made it clear that I do not believe that Ministers or officials travelling on Government business, necessarily paid for from public funds, should make private use of air miles which may arise as a result of that expenditure. There is no objection to re-applying the benefits of these schemes to travel on Government business.

EDUCATION

Colleges of Further Education

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking, and what funding is being withheld from colleges of further education, to require them to change the contracts of existing staff; whether any targets for the percentage of existing staff moving to new contracts have been proposed by him; what additional finance is being made available to colleges to allow them to offer incentive packages to existing staff to take new contracts; what limits he has placed on the scale of these offers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The holdback of grant from the Further Education Funding Council relates to newly employed staff. It is for individual colleges to decide whether they wish to move existing staff onto new contracts and how rapidly they wish to do so. It is also for individual colleges to decide what incentives they will offer their staff, within the resources available to each college and within the framework of the Government's policy on public sector pay.

Female School Leavers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give a ranking by county of the percentage of female school leavers leaving school with five or more GCSEs at grades A to C.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table gives details of the ranking by county of the percentage of female school leavers estimated to be leaving maintained schools in England in 1992 with five or more GCSEs at grades A to C. The latest year for which the information is available is 1991-92, when the school examinations survey was undertaken with a reduced sample of 3 per cent.

Female school leavers achieving 5 or more grades A-C at GCSE in English schools in 1991-92

	Per cent.	*Rank*
Avon	46·1	16
Bedfordshire	50·2	12
Berkshire	38·3	30
Buckinghamshire	53·1	6
Cambridgeshire	41·5	25
Cheshire	42·8	21
Cleveland	32·3	37
Cornwall	52·4	9
Cumbria	38·4	29
Derbyshire	38·8	27
Devon	48·8	15
Dorset	43·7	19
Durham	45·5	17
East Sussex	49·5	13
Essex	49·2	14
Gloucestershire	51·5	11
Hampshire	52·0	10
Hereford and Worcester	34·3	35
Hertfordshire	54·1	3
Humberside	34·4	34
Isle of Wight	52·5	8
Kent	43·7	19
Lancashire	32·6	36
Leicestershire	30·4	38
Lincolnshire	35·2	32
Norfolk	38·5	28
North Yorkshire	42·2	22
Northamptonshire	41·2	26
Northumberland	53·0	7
Nottinghamshire	35·0	33
Oxfordshire	44·0	18
Shropshire	42·1	23
Somerset	53·3	4
Staffordshire	41·6	24
Surrey	63·6	2
Warwickshire	68·4	1
West Sussex	53·2	5
Wiltshire	35·4	31

Source: School Examinations Survey 1991-92.

Student Grants

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to amend the regulations for mandatory awards for those students in higher education, who were abducted from the United Kingdom as children, and who therefore would not qualify for an award under the current regulations because of their limited period of residence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to amend the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations in the way the hon. Member proposes. Normally, a student must have been ordinarily resident in the British Islands throughout the three years immediately preceding the start of the first year of his course to qualify for a mandatory award. Periods of temporary absence abroad do not breach a person's ordinary residence in the British Islands. Under the regulations, it is for an applicant's local education authority to decide whether the period during which he was abroad as a result of his abduction should be considered a temporary absence in deciding if he is eligible for a mandatory award. Where a student is not eligible for a mandatory award, the LEA has the power to make a discretionary award to him.

Malaysian Students

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Malaysian students have entered the United Kingdom in each year since 1980 for the purpose of studying; and what financial support they directly, or the Malaysian Government on their behalf, received from the Government.

Mr. Boswell: The following table shows the number of Malaysian students enrolled as full-time and sandwich course students at universities, polytechnics, Scottish central institutions and all other colleges maintained or assisted by local authorities or grant-aided by Education Departments in the United Kingdom. Information on independent sector further and higher education institutions is not collected centrally.

(000s)

Year	*Number*
1980	12·9
1981	9·0
1982	6·5
1983	5·5
1984	5·0
1985	6·3
1986	6·5
1987	6·8
1988	6·4
1989	7·5
1990	7·5
1991	7·9

United Kingdom Government support for Malaysian students is shown in the following table; figures are not available prior to the 1984-85 financial year.

	£000s
1984-85	3,063
1985-86	2,947
1986-87	2,836
1987-88	3,158
1988-89	2,560
1989-90	2,797
1990-91	2,874
1991-92	2,913
1992-93	2,403

School Governors

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the amount of paperwork sent to chairmen of governors of secondary schools;

(2) what measures are being taken to reduce the level of documentation being sent to chairmen of governors of secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: We are aware of concerns expressed about the amount of paperwork sent to schools from my Department. We have responded to those concerns by regulating, since 1991, the flow of paper so that only essential documents, mainly those relating to statutory responsibilities, are sent automatically. I constantly invite suggestions from schools of paperwork which is redundant —with a view to reducing or eliminating it.

Crook Primary School

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library the action plan from Crook primary school governors; and if he will also place in the Library the advice to him on that plan from *(a)* Durham county council and *(b)* Ofsted.

Mr. Forth: I have deposited a copy of the governors' action plan in the Library. As required by section 211 of the Education Act 1993 Durham local education authority has sent its commentary on the action plan to my right hon. Friend and Her Majesty's chief inspector for schools. It is for the LEA to decide whether to make copies more widely available. HMCI's advice to my right hon. Friend is given in confidence.

Ministerial Instructions

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Ministers have issued written instructions to override his Department's accounting officer's objections.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 24 February 1994]:* The Secretary of State has not since 1979 issued any formal instructions to override the advice of his accounting officer.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Public Bodies

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give a full list of all non-ministerial Government Departments financed from public funds in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: A list of non-ministerial Government Departments is contained in the list of ministerial responsibilities produced by the Cabinet Office. Copies of the latest LMR—June 1993—are available from the Vote Office. Since June 1993, three new non-ministerial Government Departments have been established—the Office of the National Lottery, the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising, and the Office of the Rail Regulator.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list the non-departmental public bodies in operation in the United Kingdom each year since 1979;

(2) if he will list all publicly funded advisory bodies in the United Kingdom;

(3) what has been the total cost of non-departmental public bodies to the Exchequer in each year since 1979;

(4) how many people are employed in non-departmental public bodies in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Such information is contained in the publication "Public Bodies 1993", and earlier editions of the same publication. Copies are available in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all non-ministerial Government Departments responsible for regulating the privatised utility services.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following non-ministerial Government Departments are responsible for regulating the privatised utility services—the Office of Electricity Regulation, the Office of Gas Supply, the Office of Telecommunications, and the Office of Water Services.

Bacteria

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what research the Government are funding or initiating into the dangers of bacterial strains becoming resistant to available antibiotics; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what research the Government are funding or initiating into the possibility that antibiotic-resistant strains of enterococcus may pass on their immunity to other more deadly types of bacteria; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what research has been conducted into the antibacterial resistant traits of staphylococcus aureus.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Medical Research Council attaches importance to research into the mechanisms of pathogenicity and drug resistance in bacterial infections and supports a range of studies in this area which are relevant to understanding how antibiotic resistance develops. As part of its clinical research initiative in Nottingham, the council is building up support for several groups studying a range of bacterial infections. One group has a particular interest in problems related to staphylococcal infections. The MRC is also reviewing the literature relating to septic shock, especially in relation to possible studies of monoclonal antibody therapy. In addition, the Public Health Laboratory Service, a non-departmental public body, is undertaking surveillance programmes to monitor the incidence and effects of multiple antibiotic resistance to staphylococcus aureus and to enterococcus bacteria.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those answers to parliamentary questions since 1990 that have subsequently turned out to be incorrect.

Mr. Waldegrave: Such information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Research Establishments

Mr. Bates: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which bodies will be covered by the multi-departmental scrutiny of public sector research establishments.

Mr. Waldegrave: I announced the terms of reference for this efficiency scrutiny on 2 February. The bodies which will be covered are listed in the table. The team will make recommendations to Sir Peter Levene, the Prime Minister's efficiency adviser, by the end of April 1994. It is normal practice for efficiency unit reports to be published.

Science and technology establishments included in the PSRE scrutiny

Life sciences sector	*Topic area*
MAFF	
1. ADAS	Plant/Animal/ Environment
2. Central Veterinary Laboratory	Animal
3. Central Science Laboratory	Plant/Animal/ Environment
4. Food Science Laboratory	Food
5. Torry Research Station	Food
6. Directorate of Fisheries Research	Fish/ Environment
ODA	
7. Natural Resources Institute	Plant
Scottish Office	
8. Marine Laboratory/Fisheries Research Services	Fish
9. Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	Plant
SARI	
10. Scottish Crop Research Institute	Plant
11. Rowett Research Institute	Food
12. Hannah Research Institute	Animal
13. Macaulay Land Use Research Institute	Plant/Animal/ Environment
14. Moredun Research Institute	Animal
AFRC	
15. Institute for Animal Health	Animal
16. Institute for Food Research	Food
17. Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research	Plant/Animal/ Environment
18. Institute of Arable Crops Research	Plant
19. Roslin Institute	Animal
20. Babraham Institute	Animal
21. Institute of Plant Science Research	Plant
MRC	
22. Radiobiology Unit	Health
23. Toxicology Unit	Health
24. Dunn Nutrition Unit	Health
25. Virology Unit	Health
26. Reproductive Biology Unit	Health
NERC	
27. Institute of Virology and Environmental Microbiology	Environment
28. Institute of Terrestrial Ecology	Environment
29. Institute of Fresh Water Ecology	Environment
30. Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory	Environment
31. Plymouth Marine Laboratory	Environment
Other public bodies	
32. Public Health Laboratory Service (DH)	Health
33. Horticultural Research International (MAFF)	Plant
34. National Institute of Agricultural Botany (MAFF)	Plant
35. National Radiological Protection Board (DH)	Health
36. National Institute for Biological Standards (DH)	Health
37. Forestry Commission Laboratories (Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)	Plant

Science and technology establishments included in the PSRE scrutiny

Physical sciences sector	*Topic area*
DOE	
1. Building Research Establishment	Engineering
DOT	
2. Transport Research Laboratory	Engineering
Home Office	
3. Police Scientific Development Branch	Engineering
4. Forensic Science Service	Forensic
DTI	
5. National Engineering Laboratory	Engineering
6. National Physical Laboratory	Analytical
7. AEA Technology (and Warren Spring)	Engineering
8. Laboratory of the Government Chemist	Analytical
9. National Weights and Measures Laboratory	Analytical

Physical sciences sector	*Topic area*
HSE	
10. Research and Laboratory Services Division	Analytical
AFRC	
11. Silsoe Research Institute	Engineering
NERC	
12. Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory	Environment
13. Institute of Hydrology	Environment
14. British Geological Survey	Environment
SERC	
15. Daresbury Laboratory	Analytical
16. Rutherford Appleton Laboratory	Analytical

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the public appointments she is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Jack: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Fish Passes and Screens

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give the *(a)* number and *(b)* location of (i) fish passes and (ii) screens.

Mr. Jack: The Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales are required only in certain circumstances to approve the design of fish passes and gratings—screens—installed in England and Wales. Our records show that 212 fish passes and 10 gratings have received such approval or have been granted provisional approval. The location of each is as shown. No record is kept of those passes and gratings which do not require approval.

Location of approved fish passes and gratings in England and Wales

NRA region and river	*Location*
Gratings	
North West	
Leven	Low Wood power station
Southern	
Cuckmere	Arlington reservoir
South West	
Bole	Longham pumping station
Exe	Exwick mills
Exe	Pynes water works
Taw	East Yelland power station
Thames	
Thames	Chertsey intake
Welsh	
Wye	Bwlch-Gwyn
Wessex	
Avon	Sluice at Chippenham
Yorkshire	
Esk	Ruswarp
Passes	
Anglian	
Chad Brook	Hall mill
Stour	Brundon hall
Stour	Brundon mill
Stour	Cornand weir
Stour	Flatford mill
Stour	Judas Gap weir
Stour	Lamara weir
Northumbrian	
Coquet	Moor ford
Saltburn by the Sea	Skelton Beck dam
Tees	Blue House point
Tees	Broken Scar
Wansbeck	Amenity weir
Wear	Harelow bridge
Wear	Harelow weir
Wear	Harelow dam
North West	
Calder	Oakenclough Garstang
Calder	Calder hall
Caldew	Cummersdale weir
Caldew	Hawksdale weir
Caldew	Holme head
Derwent	Fitz weir
Derwent	Yearl weir
Duddon	Duddon hall
Duddon	Ulpha
Eamont	Brougham mill
Ehen	Ennerdale lake
Ellen	Netherhall weir
Kent	Burneside mills
Kent	Burneside weir
Kent	Cowen head weir
Kent	Staveley mill weir
Kent	Stramongate
Leck	Cowan bridge
Lowther	Askam
Lune	Broadraine weir
Lune	Lower Halton weir
Lune	Halton weir
Lune	Skerton weir
Lune	Upper Halton weir
Marron	Branthwaite weir
Leven	Low Wood, Haventhwaite
Ribble	Locks weir
Ribble	Settle weir
Ribble	West Bradford weir
Wiza	Wigton
Severn Trent	
Severn	Castle weir
Severn	Shrewsbury weir
Tanat	Carreghofa weir
Trent	Beeston weir
Trent	Cromwell weir
South West	
Avon	Bicton mill
Avon	Chippenham
Avon	Downton
Avon	Lower Twerton
Axe	Axminster bypass
Axe	Tower weir
Axe	Westford mill
Axe	Weycroft weir
Axe	Whitford bridge
Barle	Perry weir
Barle	Sticks weir
Bray	Clapworthy weir
Bray	Skentaw[illegible]y bridge, Muxworthy
Camel	Camelford weir
Coly	Coles weir
Dart	Totnes weir
Dean Burn	Buckfast Leigh

NRA region and river	*Location*
Exe	Bolcham weir
Exe	Bridgetown weir
Exe	Pynes weir
Exe	Rushford and Witney Brooks
Exe	Thorverton weir
Exe	Thorverton weir
Exe	Trew's weir
Kensey	Ridgegrove weir
Mole	Head weir
Okement	Monkokehampton weir
Otter	Honiton flood alleviation
Quarme	Enterwell
Rushy Ford	Rushy Ford and Witney Brook
Stannon	Allenford
Swincombe	Swincombe intake works
Tamar	Gunnislake weir
Tavy	Abbey weir
Tavy	Denham bridge
Tavy	Evans weir
Tavy	Lopwell dam
Taw	Colleton weir
Taw	Eggesford weir
Taw	Meahay Dunsford
Tone	Firepool weir
Tone	French weir
Tone	Ham weir
Tone	Newbridge
Torridge	Torrington weir
Southern	
Bull	Leabridge farm
Cuckmere	Milton lock
Great Stour	Abbots mill
Itchen	Gaters mill
Itchen	Woodmill pool
Itchen	Woodmill
Itchen	Allbrook lock
Little Test	Drawing room pool
Medway	Eldridges sluice
Meon	Longwater bridge, Fontley
Meon	Titchfield mill
Meon	Wickham mill
North	Newhurst lane
Ouse	Fletching mill
Ouse	Goldbridge weir
Ouse	Pools bay
Rother	Coltershore bridge
Rother	Goldbridge weir
Rother	Hardman weir
Rother	Hardman
Rother	Moorland farm
Stour	Deans (Hookers) mill
Test	Abbey mill
Test	Nursling mill and Testwood mill
Test	Testwood mill
Uck	Uckfield mill
Thames	
Charwell	Banbury town
Thames	Cookham weir
Thames	Molesey weir
Thames	Molesey upper weir
Welsh	
Afon Syfynwy	Llys-y-Fran
Bowy	Blynpurffaith
Brynbonian	Llethrmadynt Rhyd-y-Bed
Brynbonian	Pont Brynbonian weirs
Ceiriog	Brynkinalt
Ceiriog	Clynceirlog weir
Cleddau	Haverfordwest
Cledlyn	Maes-y-Felin weir
Clwyd	Bala lake
Clwyd	Bala lake
Clwyd	Bala lake scheme
Clwyd	Nant Clwyd hill
Clwyd	Ruthin weir
Clwyd	Ruthin weir
Conwy	Conwy falls
Dee	Chester weir
Dee and Clwyd	Tryweryn weir
Dulais	Talyfan
Eastern Cleddau	Canaston bridge
Eastern Cleddau	Canaston intake
Eastern Cleddau	Vickers mill weir
Eddw	Franksbridge
Elwy	Bont Newydd weir
Elwy	Nont Newydd
Glandy	Glandy Joint ford
Grannel	Penbry dam
Gwendraeth Fach	Old Forge weir
Gwyrfou	Llyn Cwellyn
Honddu	Castle weir
Istrad	Brookhouse weir
Leri	Talybont
Leri	Leri weir
Llethi	Llanarath bridge
Nant Crymlyn	Corneldu Mawr Farm
Reidol	Reidol falls weir
Shedi	Derw mills
Solva	Whitechurch
Syfynwy	Llys-Fran
Taff	Black weir
Taff	Radyr weir
Tarvelan	Johnstown
Tawe	Swanage barrage
Tawe	Panteg weir
Tawe	Tawe barrage
Tolog	Tolog weir
Tryweryn	Bala weir
Twrch	Penarth bridge
Usk	Berthin brook
Usk	Pentrefelin weir
Usk	Pentrefelin weirs
Westfield Pill	Neyland
Yseir Fawr Brook	Upper weir
Wessex	
Avill	Hurlypool weir
Avill	Loxhole bridge
Avon	Avon mill
Avon	Bickton mill
Avon	Bickton top weir
Avon	Downton
Avon	Great weir, Knapp mill
Avon	Keynsham weir
Avon	Keynsham weir
Avon	Knapp mill
Avon	Knapp mill works extension
Avon	Lower Tiverton
Avon	Melksham Townbridge
Avon	Old mill, Harnham
Avon	Ringwood
Avon	Salisbury generating station
Avon	Standlynch mill
Avon	Standlynch weir
Avon	Wild weir
Chew	Chewton place
Chew	Keysham park weir
Dart	Staverton weir
Exe	Exeford
Frome	Bindon mill
Frome	Welsh mill
Nadder	Harnham mill
Stour	Throop mill weir
Tone	Longaller weir
Washford	Upstream and downstream
Wylye	Chilhampton
Yorkshire	
Derwent	Kirkham abbey weir
Don	Thrybergh weir
Esk	Ruswarp weir
Ouse	Linton weir
Ure	Boroughbridge

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the revised scheme for the reorganisation of the Milk Marketing Board will be sent out for consultation.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales hope to issue a consultation document on the amended reorganisation scheme shortly.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the contracts presently held for disposal of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected carcases.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry presently holds nine contracts for the incineration and 65 contracts for the transportation of carcases of cattle suspected of being affected by BSE, with companies throughout Great Britain. Specific information relating to these contracts is classified as commercial-in-confidence.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cases of BSE by county for each month from January to December 1993.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of cases of BSE in Great Britain listed by month of confirmation and county from January to December 1993 inclusive, are as follows:

Total number of cases by month confirmed and county—1993

County/month year	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Avon	82	63	65	55	59	53	38	37	31	57	58	37	635
Bedfordshire	11	8	13	7	4	11	8	6	6	2	9	13	98
Berkshire	21	14	14	8	18	9	8	13	13	15	17	7	157
Borders	15	20	15	11	15	15	5	9	10	10	13	16	154
Buckinghamshire	46	37	30	23	33	21	19	27	19	23	34	21	333
Cambridge	14	15	13	7	12	16	11	7	6	9	12	8	130
Central	3	9	10	1	5	2	11	5	3	4	9	5	67
Cheshire	166	172	136	122	115	142	98	125	100	109	166	106	1,557
Cleveland	6	8	7	4	4	5	0	9	2	5	3	5	58
Clwyd	48	67	54	53	39	67	51	50	48	54	49	44	624
Cornwall	145	318	222	209	129	205	156	79	151	218	135	157	2,124
Cumbria	149	134	117	150	88	94	79	83	104	90	145	95	1,328
Derbyshire	96	84	130	75	54	103	47	64	79	63	96	50	941
Devon	285	330	250	242	209	218	214	281	232	208	253	190	2,912
Dorset	180	181	162	203	107	181	110	163	124	131	178	102	1,822
Dumfries	72	58	68	45	66	66	36	56	22	68	68	46	671
Durham	23	16	14	12	13	14	3	12	12	20	16	16	171
Dyfed	190	229	179	157	151	149	136	119	133	130	194	136	1,903
Essex	20	14	21	13	19	18	14	18	11	15	22	14	199
Fife	13	8	7	8	10	6	3	9	10	8	9	14	105
Glamorgan Mid	5	4	5	5	3	4	4	1	4	1	10	5	51
Glamorgan South	8	16	11	5	9	7	7	8	9	9	10	7	106
Glamorgan West	6	2	1	0	6	3	3	0	2	6	4	3	36
Gloucestershire	95	57	82	52	50	40	31	47	41	60	63	34	652
Grampian	35	43	29	36	26	34	29	21	27	36	47	33	396
Gwent	27	37	31	19	25	11	16	22	13	13	23	18	255
Gwynedd	17	20	19	11	14	12	9	12	16	17	17	22	186
Hampshire	91	39	106	51	81	63	51	49	67	40	72	29	739
Hereford & Worcester	54	77	52	55	61	38	35	50	58	50	70	46	646
Hertfordshire	17	9	12	6	19	22	4	15	8	14	16	14	156
Highland	12	7	7	5	4	9	4	11	4	6	9	11	89
Humberside	31	19	19	15	20	16	12	22	17	16	13	14	214
Isle of Wight	14	8	24	14	13	18	3	5	8	11	13	6	137
Kent	64	17	34	25	63	52	23	30	48	25	35	39	455
Lancashire	158	105	130	173	103	125	78	89	104	95	120	75	1,355
Leicestershire	88	38	67	59	37	68	51	39	61	38	78	40	664
Lincolnshire	27	5	24	13	23	31	11	16	14	34	25	29	252
London	2	1	8	3	3	4	0	4	1	3	1	4	34
Lothian	8	8	5	6	3	8	3	4	3	9	3	8	68
Manchester	9	3	12	8	12	12	6	4	4	8	11	5	94
Merseyside	2	1	4	5	0	1	1	1	5	0	4	1	25
Norfolk	106	25	80	29	95	107	80	111	76	64	105	88	966
Northamptonshire	43	15	30	17	35	23	15	20	22	19	23	20	282
Northumberland	38	18	32	13	22	20	13	23	14	33	19	35	280
Nottinghamshire	19	18	26	21	27	19	13	16	19	9	19	6	212
Orkney	2	4	5	3	2	1	1	2	2	5	3	3	33
Oxford	66	39	44	44	33	39	21	49	20	24	46	29	454
Powys	56	59	46	49	33	47	45	48	56	36	66	53	594
Shropshire	98	98	80	68	74	90	59	79	61	71	101	67	946
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	287	268	270	220	110	316	163	167	216	175	227	116	2,535
Staffordshire	78	113	97	67	72	118	70	96	92	66	74	49	992
Strathclyde	59	66	47	29	47	50	19	32	26	60	61	44	540
Suffolk	56	22	33	35	48	54	22	44	28	32	47	43	464
Surrey	36	11	32	17	40	24	16	13	17	16	26	21	269
Sussex East	50	19	36	26	48	49	13	26	22	24	50	31	394
Sussex West	97	36	62	51	80	66	42	58	50	40	58	62	702
Tayside	19	13	11	12	13	4	12	10	10	17	11	12	144
Tyne and Wear	3	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	1	16
West Midlands	3	1	4	5	3	1	1	3	2	0	7	5	35
Warwickshire	34	27	43	27	34	29	22	35	27	30	35	27	370
Wiltshire	168	163	166	108	123	127	79	93	97	85	145	81	1,435

County/month year	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Total*
Yorkshire North	181	151	164	97	160	130	106	157	97	143	93	141	1,620
Yorkshire South	14	16	24	8	9	7	12	13	12	15	5	10	145
Yorkshire West	29	26	20	13	21	16	17	23	12	25	18	23	243

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers failed to submit applications for hill livestock compensatory allowances by the deadline of 20 February.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* We cannot say definitely how many producers failed to submit claims for HLCAs by the due date of 20 February. In 1993 we received some 14,151 claims in England; by 20 February this year we had received 13,066. Those producers who have not claimed by 20 February will still be eligible to receive payments if claims are received by 12 March, but under EC rules they will lose 1 per cent. of the payment due for each working day by which their claim is late. A reminder to producers and others on this was given in MAFF news release 61/94. Claims received after 12 March cannot be accepted.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the powers of the Child Support Agency in relation to deductions from an individual's salary.

Mr. Burt: Under section 31(2) of the Child Support Act 1991, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has the power to impose a deduction from earnings order against a liable person to secure payment of the amount due under a maintenance assessment, and any arrears which may have accrued, where other methods of collection have been unsuccessful, or where the liable person specifically requests it. The decision to impose such an order will be taken in the light of the individual circumstances of each case.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether an employee must be informed before any deduction from salary is made to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: An absent parent will always be notified that a deduction from earnings order will come into effect before any money is deducted from his earnings.

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many parents with care are presently owed arrears from the Child Support Agency because sums collected from absent parents in receipt of income support have not been paid over by the Benefits Agency;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to set up arrangements between the Benefits Agency and the Child Support Agency for the transfer of benefit deducted from absent parents as a contribution in lieu of child support to be paid to parents with care who are not in receipt of income support;

(3) how much money, deducted by the Benefits Agency from income support payable to absent parents, is waiting for transfer to the Child Support Agency to paid to parents with care.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) by Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive of Child Support Agency on 23 February 1994 at columns *366-67.*

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will break down by area CSAC the cumulative summary of the Child Support Agency performance from 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is the responsibility of its chief executive, Ros Hepplewhite. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 2 March 1994:

I am writing to you subsequent to the Ministerial reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for a breakdown by Child Support Agency Centre of the cumulative summary of Child Support Agency performance which has been laid in the Library of the House.

The information you requested, broken down by CSAC and covering the period 5 April 1993 to 31 December 1993 is attached. As a result of ongoing validation some totals differ from those previously provided, although the differences are not significant. All figures should therefore continue to be regarded as provisional and may be subject to further amendment.

I hope you find the information helpful.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis the figures for amounts of money recovered by the Child Support Agency are calculated.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 3 March 1994.

I am replying to your question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking on what basis the figures for amounts of money recovered by the Agency are calculated.

Where the parent with care is receiving Income Support, a saving is recorded if action taken to arrange maintenance results in benefit reducing or ceasing. If the maintenance arranged is collected by the Agency, the figure for the amount recovered is obtained from the receipts into the Agency's bank account.

If the maintenance arranged is instead paid directly from the absent parent to the parent with care, a total of the amount by which benefit reduces is kept clerically. Records are similarly kept of voluntary and court-ordered maintenance payments made directly to parents with care which reduce Income Support entitlement.

Where the absent parent is in receipt of Income Support, a nominal maintenance contribution of £2·20 may be deducted from his or her benefit. Totals of these maintenance deductions are periodically reported to the CSA by the Benefits Agency.

Where the involvement of the Agency results in benefit ceasing, because the maintenance arranged exceeds benefit entitlement or for some other reasons, a saving is calculated by multiplying the weekly amount of benefit previously in payment by the estimated number of weeks for which the claim would have continued, in the absence of CSA involvement.

Where the parent with care is receiving Family Credit and Disability Working Allowance savings are determined by information from periodic scans of the relevant computer data-base. If the involvement of the Agency results in benefit ceasing, savings are estimated retrospectively, by analysis of a sample of cases.

I hope this reply is useful.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received from people in Coventry concerning the Child Support Agency being given access to personal information when approaching employers;

(2) what representations he has received from employers concerning their duty to supply information to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 2 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about representations received from the people of Coventry concerning the Child Support Agency gaining access to personal information from employers; and representations from employers on the same subject.

There are no recorded representations from people living in Coventry concerning the Agency being given access to personal information.

Although records are not kept of individual occurrences, we are aware that one employer has contacted the Agency concerning the duty to provide information on employees. In this case, the employer was made aware of the relevant legislation, and to date, nothing further has been heard.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what resources are devoted to the prevention of fraud by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my right hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Paul Channon, dated 2 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the resources that the Child Support Agency devotes to the prevention of fraud.

As the Agency acts as intermediary between two parties in the arrangement of child maintenance, it has no discrete resources devoted to the prevention of fraud. Where Social Security benefits are in payment, however, and a potential fraud against the benefits system comes to light, relevant information is passed to the Benefits Agency or Employment Services to investigate.

If an allegation of misrepresentation is made which does not involve the incorrect payment of a Social Security benefit, then the child support officer will consider whether there is sufficient evidence to review the maintenance assessment.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions he has given to the Child Support Agency as to their conduct when seeking information from an individual's employer.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 2 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security concerning the instructions given to the Child Support Agency's staff when contacting employers.

The Child Support Manual stresses the need for care and the avoidance of disclosure of confidential information when contacting employers. Normally employers are contacted only where clients are unable to provide sufficient information or verification of their income for child maintenance to be assessed. Exceptionally, an employer may be approached where all other attempts to contact a client has failed.

A copy of the Child Support Manual is available in the Library.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when Mr. W. J. Potts of Chelmsford (CSA Reference: 6455 WAL 1004029951) can expect a reply to his letter of 1 November 1993 to the Child Support Agency requesting a reassessment of his child maintenance assessment.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Simon Burns, dated 2 March 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about correspondence between your constituent Mr. W. J. Potts, and the Child Support Agency.

I am afraid that the Agency has no record of a letter from Mr. Potts dated 1 November 1993, although correspondence was received from him dated 21 November 1993, which requested a reassessment of his maintenance. This review has now been carried out, and Mr. Potts was notified of its outcome on 25 February. Please accept my apologies for the delay.

I understand that you contacted the Customer Services manager at the Belfast Agency Centre on 25 February about Mr. Potts' case, and that he replied to you by letter the same day.

Income Support

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in *(a)* each of the counties, *(b)* each local authority and *(c)* each parliamentary constituency in Yorkshire and Humberside were dependent on (i) supplementary benefit in 1979 and (ii) income support in the latest year for which data are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families with children in *(a)* each of the counties, *(b)* each local authority and *(c)* each parliamentary constituency in Yorkshire and Humberside were dependent on (i) supplementary benefit in 1979 and (ii) income support or family credit in the latest year for which data are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children in *(a)* each of the counties, *(b)* each local authority and *(c)* each parliamentary constituency in Yorkshire and Humberside were living in families which were dependent on (i) supplementary benefit in 1979 and (ii) on income support or family credit in the latest year for which data are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Graham Case

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice he is giving to those women inquiring about the interim arrangement pending the determination of the Graham case by the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Scott: Women are informed if they are entitled to an increase in invalidity benefit as a result of the Social Security Commissioner's decision in this case. Where payment of the increase is suspended they are also advised that the suspended benefit will be paid in full if the commissioner's decision is upheld; and that if they have difficulty managing in the meantime they should contact their local Benefits Agency office, so that the decision to suspend can be reconsidered.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has on the date when the European Court of Justice will begin its hearing of the Graham case in respect of invalidity benefit; and when a decision is likely to be announced.

Mr. Scott: The Court of Appeal decided on 18 January to refer the Graham case to the European Court of Justice. The European Court's procedure necessitates inviting all other member states to submit observations on the point at issue should they wish to do so. It normally takes about 18 months following a reference before judgment is handed down.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days per year the chief executive of the Prison Service agency spends on his other business interests.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the terms of his appointment the Director-General of the Prison Service is permitted to spend a maximum of one and a half days a month in normal working hours as a non-executive director of other organisations.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the actual and average amounts of child maintenance paid by absent parents through court orders in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Racial Violence

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to help reduce racial violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 25 November 1993 at column 167-69 for details of the steps taken by the Government to combat racial violence.

Since then, we have reconvened the interdepartmental racial attacks group, chaired by the Home Office, as a forum for gathering information and sharing good practice on the multi-agency approach to combating racially motivated crime. The group had its first meeting on 25 February and is now developing a work programme of specific projects aimed at addressing the problem of racial attacks and harassment.

In January I gave oral evidence to the Home Affairs Committee for its current inquiry into racial attacks and harassment. The Committee's report is due to be published in April, and future Government action will be informed by the Committee's recommendations.

Commission for Racial Equality

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the annual budget over the last three years of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Commission for Racial Equality's budget over the last three years was as follows:

	£
1991-92	14,075,000
1992-93	14,996,000
1993-94	15,051,000

Parole

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the statutory basis for the ineligibility for parole of those serving sentence for murder who have never admitted their guilt;

(2) how many prisoners, serving sentences for murder, are ineligible for parole at all times having never admitted their guilt.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prisoners serving the mandatory life sentence for murder are released on life licence, not parole. There is no statutory basis, rule or policy which automatically prevents a prisoner who denies guilt from being released from custody although a prisoner's willingness and ability to tackle their offending behaviour is an important element in the difficult process of assessing potential future risk. However, mandatory life sentence prisoners who deny their guilt can be, and have been, released on life licence if the parole board so recommends and the Secretary of State accepts the recommendation.

Mounted Police

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many police forces in England and Wales have mounted police units; and what information he has on the average cost per mounted police unit;

(2) what consultations he has had in relation to the value for money of mounted police units; what is the most recent report from the chief inspector of constabulary on the criteria for established mounted police units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Eighteen police forces in England and Wales have mounted police units. These vary in size from the Metropolitan police, with 201 horses, to the Essex police, with four horses. The average size of a mounted unit is 26 horses with 34 police officers and civilian staff. The total cost of such a unit is estimated at £820,900 for the current financial year.

I have not had any recent consultations in relation to the value of money of mounted police units. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary identifies and gives advice on good practice in the course of inspections of mounted units but there has been, as yet, no specific study of value for money or the criteria for establishing mounted units. However, the Metropolitan police is currently carrying out an efficiency scrutiny of its mounted unit.

Taylforth Libel Case

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *19*, what investigation has been made into police involvement in the release of the story which led to the recent Taylforth libel case, before the reporter from *The Sun* telephoned the Metropolitan police press bureau; what action will be taken against officers found to have released such items to the press if discovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: An investigation was carried out in 1992 by the Metropolitan police, in accordance with the procedures for handling police complaints contained in part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. A report was submitted to the Police Complaints Authority which concluded that the allegation of improper disclosure of information by police officers could not be substantiated. No officer has therefore faced any disciplinary proceedings in relation to the case.

Wheelclamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to make the maximum sum which can be charged by private wheelclampers the same as the fixed charge of the Metropolitan police for wheelclamping.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are still considering what action, if any, it would be appropriate to take in respect of wheelclamping on private land. Questions relating to charges for the release of clamped vehicles form part of this consideration.

Prison Service

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which members of senior Prison Service personnel working in the Prison Service agency received bonus payments in 1992; and what were the amounts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None, though members of the senior open structure were eligible to receive performance pay increases in accordance with the arrangements for the civil service generally. The amounts of such pay increases are personal to the individuals concerned and are not published.

Custodial Sentences

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made to the extent to which reducing the use of custodial sentences contributes to a reduction in the levels of crime.

Mr. Maclean: Levels of crime are affected by a wide range of factors. It is possible to make some estimate of the effect of the use of custodial sentences in terms of the incapacitation of offenders. But it is not possible to make any meaningful assessment of the overall effect of custodial sentencing on crime levels because of uncertainties surrounding the effects of other factors.

Political Parties (Election Spending)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce a limit on the overall spending by political parties on election campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans to do so.

UK Gold Television

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what work the consultant, UK Gold Television, is doing on behalf of the Prison Service agency; how many companies were involved in tendering for the work; and how much UK Gold is being paid.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No consultant from UK Gold Television is doing work on behalf of the Prison Service.

Fire Services

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many firemen have been injured in Wales in the line of duty in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Numbers of firefighters killed or seriously injured in Wales in the line of duty in each year since 1980 are shown in the following table. Serious injuries are defined as those which result in absence of duty for at least one month.

	Serious injuries	*Fatalities*
1980	37	—
1981	50	—
1982	42	—
1983	26	—
1984	21	—
1985	76	—
1986	51	—
1987	34	1
1988	50	—
1989	36	—
1990	59	1
1991	42	1
1992	50	—

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he proposes to ensure that the fire services in the counties of Wales will retain their professionalism in the proposed reorganised local government units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle; On the date of reorganisation of local government in Wales, my right hon. and learned

Friend proposes to establish three combined fire authorities with responsibility for providing fire services in Wales. We believe that this will improve the strategic capability of fire services in Wales, and ensure that they continue to operate effectively and efficiently. Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services will continue to report to me on the manner in which fire authorities in Wales are performing their statutory duties under the Fire Services Act 1947. I am confident that the new brigades, and the officers serving in them, will maintain and continue to develop the high level of professionalism with which fire services in Wales are provided.

Directorate of Telecommunications

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many firms were invited to tender in the proposed sale of DTELS; how many bids were received; how many bids were still active when the Government made their decision about the preferred bidder; between which firms the final sales decision was made; what was the sale price; and what degree of debt write-off, deferred payment or preferential agreement was involved in the sale of DTELS;

(2) what are the public interest considerations which relate to the sale of DTELS to NTL;

(3) what contractual obligations were written into the sale of DTELS in respect of price stability in the telecommunications contracts for Britain's emergency services.

Mr. Howard: The privatisation of DTELS was advertised twice in the *Financial Times* and copies of the information memorandum inviting indicative bids were issued to some 40 organisations. Seven bids were received by 22 October which were short-listed to three for submission of final bids by 17 December. Two final bids were taken forward from National Transcommunications Ltd. and from Pell Frischmann Consulting Engineers Ltd. The latter also offered the option of a joint bid with Serco Ltd.

The sale of DTELS was completed on 1 March. Full consideration of £6·6 million has been received in lump sum payment. In accordance with normal commercial practice, certain limited sums may become payable by the Department to the purchaser as a result of claims under the terms of the sale contract.

The objectives of the sale were to:

maximise sale proceeds consistent with preserving the best prospects for effective competition in the market for telecommunications support services for the emergency services;

obtain reassurances that the purchaser should have the capacity to meet transferred liabilities and obligations.

I am satisfied that sale to NTL meets those objectives.

The stability of contract prices for telecommunications support to the emergency services is determined by the market and by the nature of the agreements with the emergency services entered into. There is competition for these contracts.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the sale of DTELS, formerly the Directorate of Telecommunications.

Mr. Howard: DTELS has been sold to National Transcommunications Ltd.—NTL. The sale was successfully completed on 1 March for a consideration of £6·6 million, subject to post-completion audit.

The objectives of the sale, which were announced on 14 July 1993 at column *495* were:

to maximise sale proceeds consistent with preserving the best prospects for effective competition in the market for telecommunication support services for the emergency services;

to obtain reassurance that the purchaser should have the capacity to meet transferred liabilities and obligations.

I am satisfied that these objectives have been met.

I am confident that DTELS in NTL ownership and with increased commercial opportunities can continue to compete vigorously for telecommunications business in support of the emergency services. This healthy competition will help ensure that the emergency services will get best value for their expenditure.

Police and Fire Services

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each of the last five years how many (i) firemen and (ii) police officers in each region have been injured in the line of duty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Fire brigade casualties for England and Wales for the years 1988-92 are shown in the following table. The cost of extracting the data for each brigade area would be disproportionate.

Brigade casualties, England and Wales 1988-92

	Fatal[1]		Non-fatal casualties		
			Fire-related		Non fire-related serious injuries[2]
Year	Fire related	Non fire-related	Total	Of which: serious injuries[2]	
1988	0	0	1,158	298	430
1989	1	1	1,462	325	394
1990	2	4	1,287	317	413
1991	2	2	1,020	302	620
1992	2	1	1,079	264	597

[1] Includes road traffic accidents.

[2] Resulting in absence of duty for at least one month.

Information on the number of injuries to police officers is not held centrally. The number of police officers assaulted on duty in England and Wales since 1989 is shown in the following table. Figures for 1993 are not yet available.

Total Police Officers assaulted.

Forces	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Avon and Somerset	543	437	522	485
Bedfordshire	155	241	195	152
Cambridge	175	176	115	116
Cheshire	341	651	644	715
City of London	34	27	26	12
Cleveland	274	304	241	183
Cumbria	136	130	154	130
Derbyshire	330	359	370	317
Devon and Cornwall	304	416	490	311
Dorset	133	158	141	138
Durham	274	256	233	227
Dyfed-Powys	84	112	95	76
Essex	141	193	190	209
Gloucestershire	210	189	120	145
Greater Manchester	1,067	1,216	1,126	1,009
Gwent	65	413	347	289
Hampshire	406	343	374	388
Hertfordshire	246	181	180	133
Humberside	560	318	282	217
Kent	320	192	225	207
Lancashire	285	397	439	436
Leicestershire	259	189	179	150
Lincolnshire	176	145	126	106
Merseyside	668	247	231	1,039
Norfolk	240	235	206	223
North Wales	240	193	92	132
North Yorkshire	126	146	149	140
Northamptonshire	163	208	169	136
Northumbria	461	677	872	432
Nottinghamshire	207	354	431	366
South Wales	759	793	688	583
South Yorkshire	334	308	180	197
Staffordshire	474	515	420	401
Suffolk	151	167	186	132
Surrey	145	198	238	239
Sussex	330	356	348	310
Thames Valley	434	427	380	374
Warwickshire	75	88	82	129
West Mercia	303	286	277	241
West Midlands	1,224	1,034	1,347	1,645
West Yorkshire	713	650	682	739
Wiltshire	166	261	195	194
Provincial Total	13,731	14,186	13,987	13,803
Metropolitan Police	[3]—	[1]2,647	3,960	3,413
England and Wales Total	[4]13,731	16,833	17,947	[2]17,216

[1] Excludes other assaults.

[2] Revised figure from that previously published.

[3] Figures not available.

[4] Figure excludes Metropolitan Police.

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he removed Mr. Lorrain Osman from Brixton prison on 12 December 1992 and placed him on a flight to Hong Kong without any notice to, and entirely without the knowledge of, his legal advisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: After protracted legal proceedings in this country lasting for seven years, Mr. Osman was extradited to Hong Kong on 15 December 1992—not 12 December—to face serious charges, to certain of which he subsequently pleaded guilty. He was returned to Hong Kong on the day on which the House of Lords finally dismissed his ninth application for habeas corpus, at which time there were no further proceedings outstanding. Throughout the proceedings, Mr. Osman's legal representatives were kept well aware of the Secretary of State's intention to surrender him as soon as there was no longer any legal impediment to his removal. They were notified by the House of Lords as soon as his final petition was refused; and they would have been aware that, with no further legal bar to surrender, steps would immediately be taken to return him to Hong Kong.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in considering whether to order the extradition of Mr. Lorrain Osman to Hong Kong on 15 June 1992, refused the request of Mr. Osman's legal advisers that he should personally inspect documents which had been the subject of claims by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for non-disclosure on public interest immunity grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Disclosure of the documents which were subject to public interest immunity certificates was sought by Mr. Osman in various habeas corpus applications. The High Court did not accept that they were relevant to the arguments which he was seeking to advance. The Secretary of State therefore saw no reason to inspect the documents himself before issuing his surrender warrant. His decision to order surrender was upheld by the High Court in subsequent judicial review proceedings initiated by Mr. Osman.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Secretary of State for the Home Department cancelled the appointment which he had made with a cross-party delegation of hon. Members who wished to make representations to him on 15 June 1992 against extraditing Mr. Lorrain Osman; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On 10 June 1992, my right hon. and learned friend the Member for Ruchcliffe (Mr. Clarke) agreed to see a number of hon. Members on 16 June 1992 about Mr. Osman's case, which was then pending before the House of Lords. The hon. Members gave no indication that they were then acting on behalf of Mr. Osman; and his solicitors had stated that, apart from a covering letter from Mr. Osman, the representations submitted by them on 12 June 1992 were complete. In those circumstances, the Secretary of State saw no reason to delay making an order for return and he signed a surrender warrant on 15 June 1992. Mr. Osman's solicitors had indicated that if a surrender warrant was signed they would seek a judicial review of the decision. The meeting with the hon. Members was cancelled because the Secretary of State considered that in the circumstances then obtaining, it would serve no useful purpose.

Safer Cities Programmes

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new safer cities programmes were funded each year since 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Four new safer cities projects were set up in 1991, and a further 10—which were announced in December 1993—are currently being established. Announcements on further projects are planned for 1994-95.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new safer cities programmes were discontinued through lack of funding in each year since 1991.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Sixteen of the original 20 projects will, as planned, cease to receive Government funding in March 1994 in order to release funds for a second phase of the programme in up to 40 new areas which have not yet benefited from safer cities funding.

Drugs

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people in *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* the west midlands were convicted of drug offences in each year since 1991;

(2) how many of those convicted of drug offences in the west midlands and Coventry in the last year for which figures are available were under 21 years of age;

(3) what the figures are for drug-related offences committed by young people in Coventry for each year since 1991.

Mr. Maclean: Information available centrally on persons convicted of drug offences by age group in the West Midlands police force area and the Coventry petty sessional division for 1991 and 1992 is given in the table.

It is possible to distinguish centrally only offenders who have committed drug offences as opposed to drug-related offences.

1993 data will not be available until the autumn.

Number of persons convicted of drug offences in the West Midlands police force area and Coventry petty sessional division by age group 1991 and 1992

Age group and year	West Midlands PFA Number	West Midlands PFA Per cent.	Coventry PSD[1] Number	Coventry PSD[1] Per cent.
Under 21				
1991	235	25	66	35
1992	145	20	29	23
All ages				
1991	950	100	191	100
1992	732	100	126	100

[1] Including offenders convicted at the Crown Court who were committed by Coventry PSD.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his letter dated 25 January, concerning the application of Mr. Marendra Kumar Patel (Ref. P380877/2 (S). PO 31329/93) to Her Majesty's post in Bombay to join his wife in the United Kingdom, when Mr. Patel's wife in the United Kingdom is to be interviewed; and if he will arrange for her to be interviewed close to her home in Bradford.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Mrs. Patel will be invited for interview in March. The interview will be conducted by the immigration office at Leeds Bradford airport.

Life Imprisonment

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions since 1985 he has imposed a minimum sentence for persons sentenced to life imprisonment of the same length as the recommendation of the trial judge or the Lord Chief Justice;

(2) on how many occasions since 1985 he has increased the minimum period of sentence for a person sentenced to life imprisonment beyond the recommended minimum length of sentence by the trial judge or the Lord Chief Justice; and on how many such occasions the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice have subsequently concurred in the increase;

(3) on how many occasions since 1985 he has imposed a minimum life sentence on a person sentenced to life imprisonment of less than the period recommended by the trial judge or the Lord Chief Justice.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The readily available information is for the period August 1990 to July 1993 inclusive. During this period a total of 806 mandatory life sentence cases were considered. Of these, Ministers set a period the same length as that recommended by the trial judge in 409 cases—in 325 of these the Lord Chief Justice agreed with the period recommended by the trial judge. In a further 244 cases Ministers set a period in accordance with the recommendation of the Lord Chief Justice.

A period higher than either of the periods recommended by the judiciary was set in 112 cases. The question of subsequent concurrence by the judiciary did not arise, since the final decision is for the Secretary of State.

A period lower than either of the periods recommended by the judiciary was set in three cases.

In the remaining 38 cases, Ministers set a period between the recommendations of the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice.

Firefighters (Pensions)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to review the pension arrangements for firefighters.

Mr. Howard: The terms of reference for the review of the police service pension scheme require that review to include in its report an assessment of the read-across to the fire service. I propose, in addition, to set up a separate review of pension arrangements for firefighters. My officials are drawing up terms of reference for the review, and will circulate them to the fire service employers' and employees' organisations. I will consult the Central Fire Brigades advisory council on any proposals which emerge from the two reviews for change to the pension arrangements for firefighters.

Mohammed Riaz and Abdul Raja

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *641*, what decision as to the period to be served for retribution and deterrence he reached in the case of Mohammed Riaz and Abdul Qayyum Raja; what were the recommendations made to him in each case by the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice; what rights both men have to make representations against his decision; in coming to his decision, what account he took of any recommendation made by the trial judge about deportation at the end of sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* The period for retribution and deterrence in these cases was originally set in 1988. At that time the trial judge recommended 10 years for Mr. Riaz and 15 years for Mr. Raja. The Lord Chief Justice of the day recommended a minimum period of 16 years for Mr. Riaz and 21 years for Mr. Raja. The Minister then set a period of 20 years for Mr. Riaz, and 25 years for Mr. Raja. In doing so he would have had regard to the statement by Sir Leon Brittan, as Home Secretary in 1983, that terrorists and certain other specified categories of murderer could normally expect to serve at least 20 years.

Following the Doody judgment of June 1993, the above details were disclosed to Mr. Riaz and Mr. Raja individually. They subsequently made representations and their cases were considered afresh in December 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend concluded that there were no grounds in either case to justify disapplying the policy set out in the Brittan statement. He therefore confirmed the existing periods in both cases. The possibility of deportation was not a factor which was taken into account in reaching his decision.

My right hon. and learned Friend is always prepared to consider any written representations from mandatory life sentence prisoners as to the period they should serve. However, as the cases of Mr. Riaz and Mr. Raja have already received very careful consideration, further representations are unlikely to succeed in the absence of new information.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Sport

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what attention he has given children's play in the course of his current review into the structure of sport in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sproat: We are considering the Sport Council's role in relation to children's play as part of our current review of the council's structure and functions. We expect to announce fresh proposals for the reorganisation of the Sports Council around Easter.

Public Appointments

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of public appointments made by his Department in 1993 were of women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Of the public appointments made during 1993 to bodies for which my Department has responsibility, 31 per cent. were of women.

Water

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to reduce the effect on the south-west tourist industry of water charges, the rate of progress towards agreed waste water directives and the level of funding required to prevent bathing being banned from local beaches.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 28 February 1994]:* Water charges are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and, primarily, for the independent Director General of Water Services. My Department has, however, received representations from the tourism industry about the level of water charges in the south-west and in other parts of the country. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last year wrote both to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the Director General of Water Services about the industry's concerns with regard to water infrastructure and connection charges.

The Director General is currently reviewing the price limits for water and sewerage services and is due to announce new limits in July 1994. The Government attach great importance to improving beaches and bathing water quality. A substantial programme of improvement in the south-west is already under way to secure compliance with EU standards. Many of these schemes are due to be completed in the next two years. Beach quality is important to holiday-makers, and proper attention to it will therefore significantly benefit the British tourism industry.

TRANSPORT

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *776*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each public information campaign listed.

Mr. Norris: The budgeted cost and estimated outturn of each of the Department of Transport public information campaigns listed in my answer of 16 February is as follows:

	Budgeted £ million	*Estimated outturn £ million*
Drink drive	2·6	2·6
Kill your speed	2·8	2·8
Rear seat belts	0·5	0·6
Drive booklet	0·2	0·2
Other road safety	0·7	0·6
Coastal and Marine Safety	0·3	0·3

The budgeted cost and estimated outturn of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's public information campaigns listed in my answer is:

	Budgeted £ million	*Estimated outturn £ million*
DVLA		
Road tax evasion	0·7	0·7
Vehicle Reg Nos.	0·6	0·6

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 February *Official Report*, column *644*, if he will place in the Library the results of independent research on his Department's major advertising campaigns during the current financial year.

Mr. Norris: Copies of the independent research into the Department's major advertising campaigns during the current financial year are being placed in the Library. These cover the spring and autumn phases of the "Kill your Speed" campaign and the summer drink drive campaign. The results of research into the Christmas drink drive campaign will be available later this month when they will also be placed in the Library.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that fast trains using the channel tunnel rail link will stop at Ashford international passenger station;

(2) if he will make it his policy to secure a regular service of fast trains on the channel tunnel rail link which stops at Ashford.

Mr. Freeman: It is a commercial matter for the railway operator what services to run from the station. European passenger services expect about one third of the international services, and about 2 million passengers per year by the turn of the century, to use Ashford international. Provision of a junction with the rail link west of Ashford, providing access to the station for fast domestic and international services, is already Government policy.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make a further announcement on the proposed competition to select a private sector promoter for the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Freeman: The competition begins today. The first stage will be for consortia to seek to pre-qualify, and the Department is today making available to interested parties a document which provides information about the project and sets out the procedure for pre-qualification. I am placing a copy in the Library.

Roads, Warwickshire

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *118*, if he will give his reasons for deciding not to provide a means of access from the M45 to the A5 in Warwickshire.

Mr. Key: My decision not to provide a means of access from the M45 to the A5 in Warwickshire was because no obvious need has been demonstrated.

Road Traffic Patterns

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the variables taken into account in calculating future road traffic patterns and projections.

Mr. Key: In calculating future road traffic patterns for road schemes, the starting point is a good understanding of the existing patterns of movement. This is usually obtained by roadside interviewing supported by manual and automatic traffic counts.

Working from this basis, the future pattern of movements is derived by application of growth factors. To ensure consistency with other appraisals, these are constrained at the district level to centrally produced estimates which are, in turn, constrained to agree with the national road traffic forecasts. Within these constraints, analysts are encouraged to take account of local variations in growth, as a result of new development, and so on. The key variables involved in these calculations include projections of the numbers of households, numbers of workers, and numbers of jobs.

Calculation of future traffic flows on roads—with and without schemes—is critically dependent upon the characteristics of the road network. The process of determining the routes that travellers take through the network depends upon the nature of the network, with congested urban networks requiring more complex methods than relatively uncongested inter-urban networks. Typically, relevant network characteristics can include carriageway type and width, hilliness and bends, junction types and geometric characteristics, and the operation of traffic signals.

The methods available for calculating future road traffic patterns and projections are described in detail in the Department's "Traffic Appraisal Manual". A short summary document is also available. These are available through the House of Commons Library.

Written-off Motor Vehicles

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that motor vehicles written off for insurance purposes do not reappear in the used car market as vehicles of merchantable quality.

Mr. Key: Vehicles are generally written off by insurance companies for economic reasons rather than on the basis of whether they are capable of being safely repaired. Where such vehicles are repaired and subsequently relicensed DVLA automatically notifies the police so that they can make inquiries where appropriate. Many written off vehicles are properly restored to a roadworthy condition each year and so legislation in this area would be unwarranted. Information on whether a vehicle has been previously written off by an insurance company is available to prospective purchasers from specialist data collection companies in the private sector. My advice would aways be to have a car inspected by an independent expert before agreeing to make a purchase.

Highways Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that no Department of Transport members of staff will be transferred to the new headquarters of the Highways Agency in St. Christopher house until all relevant EC directives/regulations and United Kingdom safety law/rules have been fully complied with; and if he will make it his policy that full and open consultation will take place between his Department's officials and the appropriate trade unions.

Mr. Norris: Establishing the Highways Agency's headquarters in St. Christopher house will enable the agency to develop its own corporate identity and sense of purpose as soon as possible. It is my firm policy, and one to which the chief executive is equally committed, that the offices there should comply with all relevant health and safety requirements. Staff have already been consulted about their individual needs in St. Christopher house, and my officials have had a number of open and productive discussions with trade union representatives. Further discussions are planned.

Car Boot Sales

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to introduce legislation to prevent the sale of second-hand tyres at car boot sales.

Mr. Key: I propose to go out to consultation shortly on draft safety regulations to be made under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to supplement that Act by making it an offence to sell or otherwise supply in the course of business any part-worn tyre that is defective. In the meantime, section 76(3) of the Road Traffic Act 1988, which is enforceable by trading standards officers, already makes it an offence for any person to sell or offer to sell a vehicle part—including a part-worn tyre—if that person has reasonable cause to believe that it will be fitted to a motor vehicle and the use of that vehicle would thereby contravene the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, including the various requirements for tyres.

Disabled Passengers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct Railtrack to undertake a programme of modernisation of stations to allow easy access to trains for passengers with disabilities.

Mr. Freeman: We wish to see improved access to train services for disabled people. These facilites are generally best incorporated into broader projects for station refurbishment, within Railtrack's overall investment programme. In designing station refurbishment projects, Railtrack will be able to draw on the code of practice for disabled passengers which the regulator will publish in accordance with section 70 of the Railways Act. This will include advice and design standards for the facilities disabled people need.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct Railtrack to include in its franchise documents a commitment to allow easy access for passengers with disabilities.

Mr. Freeman: All operators of passenger rail services or stations will be required to produce and implement a disabled person's protection policy, to be approved by the regulator, as a condition of being granted a licence to operate. In producing their policies, operators will need to have regard to the regulator's code of practice for disabled passengers, which he will publish in accordance with section 70 of the Railways Act after consultation with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.

Cyclists

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many pedal cyclists were *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured in each of the past five years.

Mr. Key: The information requested is shown in the table.

Pedal cyclist casulaties Great Britain 1988-1992
Number of casualties

	Killed	Seriously injured
1988	227	4,652
1989	294	4,836
1990	256	4,344
1991	242	3,946
1992	204	3,787

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the effect on the jursidiction of the British Transport police of the Railways Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: From 1 April 1994, the British Transport police's jurisdiction in respect of British Rail, London Underground Limited and the docklands light railway will be unchanged. It appears, however, that in respect of matters soley affecting Railtrack, its powers of pursuit and investigation could be limited.

The Government regard such a limitation, which arises from a purely legal point, as undesirable and are urgently considering with BR and BTP how it might be addressed.

Tolls

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those tunnels and bridges for which his Department has responsibility where tolls are levied which have exemptions for disabled motorists in receipt of mobility supplement and road tax exemption.

Mr. Key: The Department is the highway authority for the Severn bridge and the Dartford-Thurrock crossing. At both crossings, vehicles which are driven or used by disabled people and which are exempt from vehicle excise duty are exempt from tolls.

Scaffolding (Controls)

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the local authorities which have not adopted section 2 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* This provision requires any person erecting scaffolding on or above a highway to be authorised by a licence issued by the highway authority. We are not aware of any highway authority which is not complying with this requirement; detailed information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

If my right hon. Friend has a particular concern he may care to write to me.

WALES

Pit Closures

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the specific projects, and the amount which *(a)* has been spent and *(b)* will be spent to alleviate job losses from coal closures since October 1992 in Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Assistance for area affected by closure of Taff Merthyr colliery

£000

	Expenditure 1992-93	*Provision 1993-94*
Mid Glamorgan Training and Enterprise Council		
Merthyr Modern Manufacturing Training Centre	100	—
Cynon Valley Technology Centre	100	51
Employment Training and Employment Action (Training for Work from 1 April 1993)[1]	[2]135	[3]450
Improved Engineering training facilities at Merthyr College	—	50
Improved Engineering training facilities at Ystrad Mynach College	—	50
Improved access to training for Merthyr and Rhymney residents at Alan Davies Training Centre	—	20
Increased Business Enterprise Support[1]	—	450
Aberdare Opportunity Shop	—	110
Improved Engineering training facilities at other Mid Glamorgan colleges	—	170
Access to Training for the Homeless in Aberdare	—	10
Women in the Workforce[1]	—	5
Education/Business Links[1]	—	45
Enhanced Careers Guidance[1]	—	20
Creation of training/work opportunities for the Disabled[1]	—	15
Urban Programme		
Merthyr Tydfil BC:		
Goatmill Road, Dowlais	250	—
Repairs and Renewal to Treharris Boys Club	53	—
Cyfarthfa Park	60	140
Rhymney Valley DC:		
Caerphilly Business Park	58	—
Infrastructure Works at Duffryn Industrial Estate	100	—
Cynon Valley DC:		
Cwm Cynon Enterprise Centre	100	100
River/Sewer Diversion, Mountain Ash	130	—
Technology Centre, Aberaman	30	—

[1] Cannot be disaggregated to separately identify costs relating to Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.

[2] Excluding participants allowances.

[3] Including participants' allowances.

In addition, expenditure on Welsh Development Agency projects in the hon. Member's constituency is as follows:

	Expenditure October 1992 to date £000	*Planned expenditure £000*
General site improvements completed since October 1992	103	—
Adoption works under construction	18	60
Fitting out works at Triangle Business Park	57	527
13k sq ft extension at Pentrebach	447	—
Property Development Grant assistance for speculative units totalling 14k sq ft	—	50
Acquisition of Whitbread Enterprise Centre, Rhymney and refurbishment	250	150
Urban Development activity in Merthyr	2,164	1,240
Land reclamation activity in the constituency	6,300	1,770
Loans to businesses	40	—

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Redwood: The details of the public appointments I make are given in "Public Bodies: Appointments Made by the Secretary of State for Wales, 1 December 1993", copies are in the Library of the House.

In addition, I appoint jointly with the Secretary of State for the Environment, the following:

Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency—
Advisory panel on standards

Michael Fitzgerald, QC *(Chairman)*
Jeremy Baylis
Michael Rush, CBE
Robin Thompson

The members of Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments Advisory Committee were given in my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), c. *946*.

Public Bodies

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish guidelines on the conduct of members of non-departmental public bodies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I expect the highest standards in the conduct of public business in Wales. General guidance is available in "Non Departmental Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments". I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House. The Welsh Office draws on this to provide members of executive non-departmental public bodies in Wales, on appointment, with guidelines describing the purpose and function of the body, and their responsibilities as board members. The Government are also considering ways in which the approach recommended in the Cadbury committee's report could be adapted to meet the needs of non-departmental public bodies.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many non-departmental public bodies there are in Wales as at 1 January; and what is their total budget.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is given in HMSO "Public Bodies 1993" which is in the Library of the House.

Strategic Development Scheme

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was allocated to the district and borough councils in Wales by the Welsh Office out of the strategic development scheme in 1992.

Mr. Redwood: The strategic development scheme was launched on 11 June 1993 when a Welsh Office circular invited local authorities to submit bids for support in 1994-95. The scheme brought together support previously administered separately through the urban programme, rural initiative, projects of regional and national importance and special project schemes. The allocations to the district and borough councils in Wales in 1992-93 under these separate schemes is set out in the table.

1992-93 Allocations

Council	*Urban Programme*	*Rural Initiative*	*PRNI/SP*	*Total*
Alyn and Deeside District Council	110,000	—	—	110,000
Colwyn Borough Council	137,000	—	—	137,000
Delyn	765,658	—	2,000,000	2,765,658
Glyndwr District Council	225,237	—	—	225,237
Rhuddlan Borough Council	1,129,500	—	825,000	1,954,500
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council	562,059	—	200,000	762,059
Carmarthen District Council	£17,865	126,500	—	144,365
Ceredigion District Council	107,163	100,000	—	207,163
Dinefwr Borough Council	1,083,375	125,000	600,000	1,808,375
Llanelli Borough Council	1,103,627	—	1,200,000	2,303,627
Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council	112,439	342,104	700,000	1,154,543
South Pembrokeshire District Council	198,000	142,000	—	340,000
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	1,692,885	—	700,000	2,392,885
Islwyn Borough Council	852,476	—	—	852,476
Monmouth District Council	32,724	211,000	—	243,724
Newport Borough Council	840,426	—	—	840,426
Torfaen Borough Council	484,436	—	—	484,436
Aberconwy Borough Council	190,900	617,983	2,185,000	2,993,883
Arfon Borough Council	661,932	94,500	—	756,432
Dwyfor District Council	150,000	156,400	1,900,000	2,206,400
Meirionnydd District Council	223,529	100,000	—	323,529
Ynys Mon Borough Council	325,282	135,000	—	460,282
Cynon Valley Borough Council	2,334,765	—	—	2,334,765
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council	1,499,581	—	—	1,499,581
Ogwr Borough Council	1,363,902	—	—	1,363,902
Rhondda Borough Council	1,909,285	—	—	1,909,285
Rhymney Valley Borough Council	1,173,766	—	—	1,173,766
Taff Ely Borough Council	1,094,591	—	—	1,094,591
Brecknock Borough Council	252,000	—	—	252,000
Montgomeryshire District Council	—	196,826	—	196,826
Radnor District Council	15,836	—	250,000	265,836
Cardiff City Council	1,099,683	—	—	1,099,683
Vale of Glamorgan County Council	587,677	—	—	587,677
Port Talbot Borough Council	191,047	—	—	191,047
Lliw Valley Borough Council	439,078	—	—	439,078
Neath Borough Council	686,811	—	—	686,811
Swansea City Council	564,697	—	500,000	1,064,697
Wales Total	24,219,232	2,347,313	11,060,000	37,626,545

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received in favour of the intention to replace the Welsh dragon with the Union Jack on Welsh Development Agency literature; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: There is no such intention. However, based on my personal experience of meeting business people from overseas while promoting Wales, I have suggested to the Welsh Development Agency that the recognition of Wales as a first-class location for inward investment would be assisted by having both symbols prominent in the literature.

Railway Lines

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make provision, in his reorganisation of local government in Wales for specific funding for unitary authorities to underpin financially socially necessary railway lines; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No.

Clwyd (Job Losses)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* steel and *(b)* aerospace jobs lost in Clwyd since 1979.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested cannot be given as to do so would breach rules of company confidentiality.

Poolside Development, Caernarfon

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to expedite the necessary decisions, currently being discussed between the Welsh Development Agency, Arfon borough council, Gwynedd county council and the Welsh Office, in relation to the Poolside development at Caernarfon.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that a meeting between Arfon BC and Bangor Market Company Ltd.—to discuss design proposals for this site—is due to take place within the next two weeks. Once the company has firm proposals my officials will be happy to discuss the possibility of urban investment grant support for a retail development on the site.

National Curriculum

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what considerations underlay the issue of English language versions of material used in connection with the implementation of the national curriculum before the Welsh language versions were made available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is my aim to issue national curriculum documents in Welsh and English simultaneously whenever possible. Where the documents are not issued at the same time, this is for practical reasons.

Lorry Routes

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration has been given to the establishment of a national network of lorry routes based on weight and speed limits; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Motorways and trunk roads form a national network of through routes in Wales. They are suitable for all classes of vehicle except where specific constraints necessitate weight, height or length restrictions.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was allocated to each district and borough council in Wales out of the strategic development scheme fund in 1993; and how this figure was reached in each case.

Mr. Redwood: Allocations for 1993-94 through the urban programme, rural initiative, projects of regional and national importance and special project schemes were determined by a number of factors. A strategic approach was positively encouraged under the urban programme and bids forming part of an acceptable local strategy received priority. Voluntary sector bids under the urban programme and rural initiative were also given some priority. Other factors taken fully into account for all schemes included value for money, jobs created and sustainable economic development.

The allocations to the district and borough councils in Wales under these separate schemes is set out in the following table:

1993-94 Allocations

Council	*Urban Programme*	*Rural Initiative*	*PRNI/SP*	*Total*
Alyn and Deeside District Council	337,500	—	—	337,500
Colwyn Borough Council	70,000	36,000	1,226,000	1,332,000
Delyn	337,998	—	1,950,000	2,287,998
Glyndwr District Council	118,131	174,540	—	292,671
Ruddlan Borough Council	1,137,554	27,000	1,200,000	2,364,554
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council	246,401	—	2,085,000	2,331,401
Carmarthen District Council	17,865	120,000	—	137,865
Ceredigion District Council	76,781	519,000	500,000	1,095,781
Dinefwr Borough Council	427,830	236,000	—	663,830
Llanelli Borough Council	764,057	—	1,500,000	2,264,057
Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council	140,000	1,007,460	—	1,147,460
South Pembrokeshire District Council	221,792	67[illegible]238	1,000,000	1,894,030
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	915,728	—	655,000	1,570,728
Islwyn Borough Council	722,920	[illegible]	—	722,920
Monmouth District Council	183,306	[illegible]11	—	295,217
Newport Borough Council	1,034,386	—	—	1,034,386
Torfaen Borough Council	345,344	—	—	345,344
Aberconwy Borough Council	170,450	440,000	—	610,451

Council	*Urban Programme*	*Rural Initiative*	*PRNI/SP*	*Total*
Arfon Borough Council	381,854	590,000	—	971,854
Dwyfor District Council	121,475	501,300	1,000,000	1,622,775
Meirionnydd District Council	157,595	457,500	—	615,095
Ynys Mon Borough Council	116,291	165,000	—	281,291
Cynon Valley Borough Council	1,725,532	—	—	1,725,532
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council	987,046	—	—	987,046
Ogwr Borough Council	1,165,412	—	—	1,165,412
Rhondda Borough Council	2,799,766	—	—	2,799,766
Rhymney Valley Borough Council	744,720	—	—	744,720
Taff Ely Borough Council	533,282	—	—	533,282
Brecknock Borough Council	—	110,000	720,000	830,000
Montgomeryshire District Council	—	262,000	—	262,000
Radnor District Council	15,836	—	—	15,836
Cardiff City Council	1,305,692	—	—	1,305,692
Vale of Glamorgan County Council	760,882	—	—	760,882
Port Talbot Borough Council	330,809	—	—	330,809
Lliw Valley Borough Council	338,504	8,344	—	346,848
Neath Borough Council	310,285	—	—	310,285
Swansea City Council	964,804	—	165,000	1,129,804
Wales total	20,027,828	5,438,293	12,121,000	37,587,121

Water Disconnections

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of domestic water disconnections in Wales for 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The collection of statistics on water disconnections is a matter for the Director General of Water Services, who publishes this information on a half yearly basis.

The data for the period 1 April 1993 to 30 September 1993 are held in the Library of the House. The results for the period 1 October 1993 to 31 March 1994 will be published in May.

Rural Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available extra resources to enable highway authorities to improve the maintenance of rural roads.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Resources for local authorities' responsibility for highway maintenance are provided through the local government revenue settlement. They determine the level of expenditure in the light of total resources available and local needs.

Social Services (Charging)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from representatives of people with learning difficulties concerning county personal social services charging policies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I have received six letters on this subject.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the Clwyd People First Committee to discuss charging policies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. The charging policies to which the hon. Member is referring are entirely a matter for Clwyd county council.

Children's Play

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about his policy on children's playing fields and children's play; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The main planners and providers in this field are local authorities and the voluntary sector. Central Government support is provided by way of grant to help meet the costs of Play Wales, an advisory body made up of representatives from county and district councils and the voluntary sector.

Private Patients

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total income from private patients in the national health service in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 10 February, column *433-35*.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the income from private patients of each trust hospital in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There were no NHS trusts in operation in Wales prior to 1992-93. In that year the Pembrokeshire NHS trust came into effect and received £155,000 income from private patients. However, separate figures for each of the trust's hospitals are not available centrally.

Consultants

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of *(a)* finished consultant episodes and *(b)* private patient finished consultant episodes in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information in Wales is collected on the basis of in-patient cases treated in NHS hospitals and is given in the following table.

	Total number of in-patient cases	*of which private patients*
1989-90	475,515	1,994
1990-91	482,473	1,760
1991-92	500,336	1,558
1992-93	503,657	1,257

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Pergau Dam

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria he will use in directing what to include in the summary documents to be submitted to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on the aid support given to the Pergau dam project in Malaysia.

Mr. Goodlad: The summaries of documents which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has provided with his memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Committee on Pergau and aid and trade provision were drawn up in line with the long-standing conventions relating to the release of documents to Select Committees.

GCHQ

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the *(a)* planned costs and *(b)* actual spending on GCHQ civil servants' travel expenses for the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the Government's policy to give detailed information about the expenditure of individual security and intelligence agencies. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced on 30 November 1993, *Official Report,* columns *419-20,* figures for the aggregate expenditure on the security and intelligence agencies will be published with main estimates.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are applied by civil servants at GCHQ as to what class of air-travel they use.

Mr. Hurd: In determining travel arrangements for GCHQ civil servants, use is made where practicable of RAF flights, economy fares and MOD charter. Otherwise, normal commercial carriers are used with class of air travel determined in accordance with the following criteria:

Structure	[1]*Grade 3 and above*	*Other grades*
First/Economy	(a) Economy	Economy
	(b) First	Economy
Business/Tourist[1]	(a) Business	Tourist
	(b) Business	Business
First/Business/Tourist[1]	(a) Business	Tourist
	(b) Business	Business

[1] Or equivalent.

Note: (a) relates to flights up to 2·5 hours long;
(b) to longer flights.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made as to the implications of the United Kingdom Government failing to implement the chemical weapons convention before July 1994.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are unlikely to be any significant implications if the Government do not implement the chemical weapons convention by July 1994, as the earliest the convention can enter into force is January 1995.

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why his Department issued a fresh public interest immunity certificate on the seventh application by Mr. Lorrain Osman for habeas corpus in January 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: A public interest immunity certificate was signed in the course of Lorrain Osman's seventh application for habeas corpus to reassert the public interest in non-disclosure of documents sought by Mr. Osman.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the reasons why he, on 26 October 1990, applied for a court order to strike out from affirmations made by Mr. Lorrain Osman all passages referring to nine FCO documents already disclosed to his advisers and the removal of copies of all nine documents from the possession of Mr. Osman and from the record of the court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The order was applied for on the grounds that the documents in question were subject to public interest immunity and irrelevant.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the reasons why the disclosure of documents which were the subject of a public interest immunity certificate issued by the former hon. Member for Warwickshire, North on 12 June 1990 was thought likely to prejudice relations between Her Majesty's Government and an overseas Government or affect the efficiency of the officers concerned in carrying out negotiations or other diplomatic duties overseas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Confidential diplomatic communications are a well-established class of documents whose disclosure would not be in the public interest.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the nature of the relations, dealing or negotiations between the Government of the United Kingdom and other Governments referred to in paragraph 4 of the public interest immunity certificate issued on 12 June 1990 by the former hon. Member for Warwickshire, North in connection with communications between the Hong Kong Government, the United Kingdom high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. Our relations with other Governments are confidential.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times since 1979 a public interest immunity certificate has been issued by a Government Minister in a criminal case affecting the liberty of the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As regards Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers, the information sought is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in respect of how many documents the former hon. Member for Warwickshire, North, then Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, claimed public interest immunity by a certificate dated 12 June 1990 in connection with communications between the Hong Kong Government, the United Kingdom high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Sixty-nine.

Dependent Territories

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current rate of *(a)* income tax, *(b)* capital gains tax and *(c)* corporation tax in each British dependent territory.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman shortly with the information requested.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was *(a)* the total revenue received from off-shore financial activities and *(b)* the total expenditure on regulating such activities by the locally elected administration of each British dependent territory in the Caribbean in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information is as follows:

Caribbean Dependent Territories: Offshore Finance
Financial year 1992-93

	Total Revenue (£)	*Total cost of regulation* (£)
Anguilla[1]	155,750	77,500
British Virgin Islands[1]	12·66 million	733,333
Cayman Islands	19·52 million	1·16 million
Montserrat	159,000	33,000
Turks and Caicos Islands	1·54 million	200,000

[1] Estimate.

HEALTH

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many kidney patients died in 1992 while awaiting a suitable donor organ.

Mr. Sackville: There is no information about the number of people awaiting a kidney transplant who died of kidney disease during 1992. Kidney failure is fatal unless treated with dialysis or transplantation. People on dialysis awaiting a transplant may live for many years and may die from causes other than kidney failure.

Minimal Access Surgery

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with which bodies her Department is consulting as to the implications of the Cuschieri report on minimal access surgery; what plans she has to implement the report's recommendations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have referred Professor Cuschieri's report to the Standing Medical Advisory Committee and the Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee for advice.

Discussions are taking place with the competent authorities regarding standards of training of doctors in relation to minimal access surgery. The Department of Health and the Wolfson Foundation are funding the establishment of two minimal access therapy training units in England. Minimal access therapy has been identified as a priority for research to obtain better information about outcomes and the cost-effectiveness of new treatments.

Regional Offices

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reorganise the regional offices of the national health service; what criteria will be applied to potential locations in the north-eastern region.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in her statement on managing the NHS on 21 October 1993 her intention to abolish regional health authorities and reorganise the National Health Service Management Executive to include eight regional offices. As a first step towards the new structure she has decided, following consultation, to reduce the number of regional health authorities from 14 to eight, creating common boundaries with the regional offices. Decisions regarding the location of the new regional offices have yet to be reached.

Generic Substitution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposal to allow pharmacists to substitute cheaper non-branded drugs for the drug prescribed by the general practitioner; whether the general practitioner would be consulted; and how patients would be protected from fake and substandard drugs.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has opened discussions with the medical and pharmaceutical professions about generic substitution. We are seeking a way forward which would leave the clinical decision about whether a generic substitute was appropriate, to the prescribing doctor.

All medicines, whether branded or generic, have to meet the standards of safety, quality and efficacy required by the licensing authority.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff were employed by trusts in each region in each year since 1991-92; and what are these figures as a percentage of the total number of NHS provider staff.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of staff employed by trusts in each region is shown in the table. The total number of national health service provider staff cannot be separated from aggregated figures including all staff in regional and district health authorities. The growth in numbers of trust staff between 1991 and 1992 reflects the 57 trusts created on 1 April 1991 and a further 99 which came into being on 1 April 1992—replacing units formerly directly-managed by health authorities. Figures for September 1993 will not be available until later this year.

NHS staff numbers in trusts by region in England as at 30 September 1991

	1991	*1992*
Northern	4,090	12,910
Yorkshire	11,060	23,500
Trent	5,790	20,570
East Anglia	1,600	5,220
North West Thames	5,380	23,410
North East Thames	11,850	16,930
South East Thames	5,860	18,750
South West Thames	7,600	13,910
Wessex	2,760	13,360
Oxford	550	5,980
South Western	19,740	35,480
West Midlands	3,660	11,020
Mersey	15,570	25,310
North Western	5,460	16,590
Total	100,970	242,950

Source:

DoH non-Medical Workforce Census, Medical Workforce Census and form KM 49.

Note:

All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what inquiries her Department has made into the use of the financial assets of NHS trusts *(a)* generally and *(b)* with particular reference to currency speculation.

Mr. Sackville: None. Trusts account for the use they have made of their assets in their annual accounts which are subject to external audit.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how NHS trusts' annual accounts are publicised; and to whom they are distributed.

Mr. Sackville: National health service trusts must present their audited accounts at a public meeting. For accounts covering the financial year 1993-94 onward it is a mandatory requirement that this meeting, and the availability of copies of the accounts, must be advertised in the media local to the NHS trust no less than 14 days prior to the date of the meeting. Previously this was regarded as good practice and the procedure was followed by most trusts.

NHS trusts are required to distribute a copy of the audited accounts to any member of the public who requests one. A reasonable fee to cover copying costs may be charged. It is a matter for trusts themselves who they distribute copies of the accounts to without such a request having been received.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has given to board numbers of NHS trusts regarding use of NHS resources for purposes other than for health care provision.

Mr. Sackville: No specific advice has been given to trust board members regarding the use of national health service resources for purposes other than healthcare provision. Trusts are expected to use resources effectively, efficiently and economically whatever authorised purpose they are applied to. Advice on the use of resources generally is contained in the trust finance and capital charges manuals which are issued to trusts and are available to board members. Copies of these manuals are available in the Library.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory provisions govern the use by NHS trusts of resources for purposes other than those related to health care provision; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Paragraph 15 of part II of schedule 2 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 specifies that trusts shall have the powers specified in section 7(2) of the Health and Medicines Act 1988. These powers enable trusts to engage in activities, some of which may not be directly healthcare related, for the purpose of generating additional income to enable them better to perform their healthcare functions.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory provisions specifically prevent NHS trusts using financial assets for current speculation.

Mr. Sackville: The statutory provisions relating to the use of financial assets by national health service trusts are contained in schedule 3 to the National Health Service and Commuity Care Act 1990. Paragraph 1(3) of the schedule prohibits trusts from borrowing in any currency other than sterling except with the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. No such consent has been given. Paragraph 7 of the schedule limits the manner in which trusts can invest any money held to securities of the Government of the United Kingdom or such other manner as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may, with the consent of the Treasury, approve. Approval has been given for investment in certain United Kingdom public sector institutions, banks which are authorised under part 1 of the Banking Act 1987, and building societies authorised under the Building Societies Act 1986.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which legislative provision limits the uses to which the financial assets of NHS trusts may be put.

Mr. Sackville: The principal legislative provision relating to the financial assets of trusts is in schedule 3 to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990: paragraphs 1 and 2 of the schedule govern trust borrowing, including the provision that a trust may not use its assets as security for loans, and paragraph 7 governs investment.

Paragraph 6(2)d of schedule 2 to the Act provides for the Secretary of State to make directions restricting or prohibiting the disposal of an asset worth in excess of a value specified in trust establishment orders. All trusts have £1 million as the specified amount in their establishment order.

Community Care

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimate of the annual cost of providing publicly funded residential care for people in England who have been returned to, or retained within, the community under the community care policy; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: This year in England we estimate that between them local authorities and the Department of Social Security will incur net expenditure in the region of £3·5 billion supporting people in residential care and nursing homes. It is not possible to say how much of this is supporting people who have been resettled from long-stay hospitals or who might, under other circumstances, have entered such hospitals.

Family Health Services Authorities

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of *(a)* FHSA administration and *(b)* FHSA medicines in the latest available year.

Mr. Sackville: In 1992-93, the latest year for which figures are available, family health services authority administration amounted to £161,881,000. Expenditure on drugs by the family health services was £2,641,332,000.

FHSAs manage the introduction of general practitioner fundholding, the monitoring of GP prescribing, and the development of clinical audit in primary care—all initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of patient care and value for money.

In 1992-93 FHSA administration expenditure represented only 2·5 per cent. of the £6·5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on the FHS.

Dentistry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact of dentists deregistering their patients on the level of dental health in *(a)* London and *(b)* England.

Dr. Mawhinney: Dental treatment under the national health service is available throughout England. Over the period July 1992 to December 1993 there was a net increase in the number of patients registered with dentists and in the number of dentists in contract with family health services authorities, in both London and England.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been deregistered by their dentists in each of the London health authority areas during each of the last five years; and how many dentists in each of the London health authority areas have been involved in the deregistration.

Dr. Mawhinney: The available information is shown in the table. In the London area 338 dentists deregistered 39,127 adult patients and 15 dentists deregistered 85 child patients between July 1992 and February 1994. Some dentists will appear in both counts. Over the period July 1992 to December 1993, in the London area there was a net increase of 168,000 registrations and a net increase of 21 dentists contracted to family health services authorities.

Number of dentists deregistering patients and number of patients deregistered July 1992 to February 1994

	Number of dentists deregistering adults	*Number of adult patients deregistered*	*Number of dentists deregistering children*	*Number of child patients deregistered*
London FHSAs	338	39,127	15	85
Barnet	42	4,858	2	8
Brent and Harrow	7	1,542	2	2
Ealing, Hammersmith and Houslow	1	35	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	15	2,256	—	32
Barking and Havering	13	3,842	3	7
Camden and Islington	12	295	—	2
City and East London	31	546	3	11
Enfield and Haringey	3	978	2	3
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	9	2,192	1	14
Greenwich and Bexley	23	4,355	—	—
Bromley	39	13,175	1	2
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	29	446	—	—
Croydon	69	1,889	—	—
Kingston and Richmond	9	972	—	—
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	36	1,746	1	4

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of increases in the costs of dental treatment in *(a)* London and *(b)* England as a result of the Government's changes in the payment framework for dentists treating NHS patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: There have been no changes to the system for paying dentists since October 1990, when continuing care and capitation payments were introduced. The consequences of these changes, and other relevant factors, were considered at the time by the dental rates study group and were reflected in its recommended dental fee scale.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she will publish her Department's response to the oral health strategy; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will publish the Government's response to the Bloomfield report on dental services; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February at column *1042*.

Asthma

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence has been presented to her Department about the incidence of asthma and other respiratory illnesses in the London borough of Lewisham.

Mr. Sackville: None, as far as I am aware.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes to protect the health of asthma sufferers in London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Whilst no specific initiative is proposed for London, last July the Department of Health launched the chronic disease management programme, which is an organised programme of care run by general practitioners for people with asthma. The national health service management executive wrote to health authorities, GP purchasers and hospital providers last December, EL(93)115, asking them to work towards providing services based on the British Thoracic Society's "Guidelines on the Management of Asthma". Copies are available in the Library.

In 1992-93 the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, spent £1·5 million on research into asthma and areas which may be relevant to the condition. Moreover, we attach high importance to the prompt and appropriate treatment of people with asthma.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy concerning the allocation of resources to the treatment and prevention of asthma; and what studies her Department has made of its incidence in childhood.

Mr. Sackville: The care of asthma patients is provided for through resources made available to the national health service.

It is for individual health authorities to determine the level of service provision required to meet the needs of people with asthma in their area. Priorities are determined in the light of local circumstances.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department is undertaking of the current performance of the West Midlands regional health authority; and what oversight is being conducted of its attempts to clear up past problems identified by the Committee of Public Accounts.

Dr. Mawhinney: The performance of all regional health authorities is monitored by the national health service management executive—NHSME—through a process of continuous review, including quarterly meetings and an annual review by the chief executive of the NHSME. Performance is measured against progress being made on objectives agreed each year between the NHSME and each regional health authority set out in their regional corporate contracts. With regard to the past problems in west midlands identified by the Public Accounts Committee, actions have been taken by the RHA to resolve these problems and these actions have been closely monitored by the NHSME.

Leeds Health Authorities

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the combined administrative costs of the Leeds East and Leeds West health authorities in 1988-89; and what is the administrative cost of Leeds healthcare in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: The combined total administrative costs of Leeds East and Leeds West health authorities in 1988-89 were £5,907,495. The administrative cost of Leeds health authority in 1992-93 was £4,308,416. The 1992-93 figures are provisional and are not comparable to those of 1988-89.

Press and Public Relations Officers

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1048*, if she can now supply the figures for press and public relations officers employed by the NHS in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not available centrally on the numbers of press and public relations officers. After 1990 the method of collecting staffing figures changed and it was no longer possible to disaggregate staff engaged in particular areas of work.

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths have occurred as a result of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths from hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy (ICD 425.1)[1] in the United Kingdom 1988 to 1992

	Total
1988	79
1989	76
1990	64
1991	77
1992[2]	78

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

[2] Data for 1992 are provisional.

Wandsworth Health Authority

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the present number of psychiatric nurses employed within the Wandsworth health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for Wandsworth health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Dr. Enid Vincent, the chairman of the authority, for details.

Long-term Care

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will give details of the guidelines issued by her Department to local health authorities on their responsibilities to provide long-term care for people who need it for reasons of ill-health; and what monitoring is done by her Department on provisions;

(2) what guidelines have been issued by her Department to local health authorities defining their responsibilities to

provide long-term care for people who need it for reasons of ill-health; and what monitoring is done by her Department on availability of provision.

Mr. Bowis: The "Caring for People" White Paper makes it clear that the provision of continuing care for those who need it for reasons of ill health remains the responsibility of the national health service. It is a matter for district health authorities to determine in consultation with local social services authorities the level and type of care required. As part of the new community care arrangements we have required health and local authorities to agree their respective responsibilities for long-term care. This was a pre-condition of the 1993-94 and 1994-95 special transitional grant and covered by guidance in executive letters EL(92)82 and EL(93)97, copies of which are in the Library. There has been an extensive programme of monitoring of the new community care arrangements including the operation of agreements on continuing care responsibilities.

Eye Tests

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance has been given by her Department to opticians on the content of a standard eye test.

Dr. Mawhinney: An optician who carries out a sight test is required, by regulations, to perform (i) an examination of the external surface of the eye and its immediate vicinity, (ii) an intra-ocular examination, and (iii) such additional examinations as the optician considers clinically necessary.

Bassetlaw Hospital

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the nature of the recent incidents which resulted in *(a)* the calling of an inquiry at Bassetlaw hospital, Worksop, and *(b)* the calling in of the Nottinghamshire police;

(2) how many *(a)* members of the public and *(b)* members of the staff and of the latter in which grades, and which departments, were involved in the inquiry at Bassetlaw hospital;

(3) what consultations will take place between trade unions at Bassetlaw hospital and the hospital trust and the North Nottinghamshire regional health authority following the recent inquiry.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Bassetlaw hospital and community services national health service trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Mrs. Valerie Dickinson, for details.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the involvement of her Department in the inquiry into the security of the intensive care unit at Bassetlaw hospital.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the report of the inquiry into the intensive therapy unit at Bassetlaw hospital.

Mr. Sackville: We understand that the Bassetlaw hospital and community services national health service trust has conducted an internal investigation and a report has been handed to the police.

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department first learned that an inquiry into the security and tampering of equipment in the intensive therapy unit at Bassetlaw hospital was taking place.

Mr. Sackville: The Department was notified on Friday, 25 February.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has received a report from the South West Thames regional health authority showing the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the 1993 inquiry report into the failure of the computer-aided dispatch system at the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the South West Thames regional health authority—RHA—is today publishing a report of progress by the London ambulance service—LAS—in implementing the inquiry team's recommendations. The report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library, will be considered at a public meeting of the RHA next week.

As the Government announced in December, a further £14·8 million is being invested in the LAS in 1994-95 to help it improve its services. This money will enable the LAS to buy 120 new accident and emergency vehicles and recruit 240 additional staff. The extra money is being tied to specific targets for improving ambulance performance against national patients charter standards.

Hospital Security

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures she has taken to prevent the abduction of children from hospital maternity wards;

(2) what resources are available to NHS trusts and district health authorities to improve the security of hospitals;

(3) what guidelines she will issue to health authorities and NHS trusts following the recent abduction of a baby from the Royal United hospital in Bath.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 26 May 1993 at columns *577-78*. Security arrangements at all health service premises, for the protection of patients and the staff who care for them, rests with local managers. They are in the best position to decide what is needed to cope with the local situation and what proportion of their resources should be directed to security matters.

To help them in this task, in March 1992 the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts—NAHAT—published, with financial assistance from the Department, a revised edition of the "National Health Service Security Manual". The Department provided copies for each unit and commended it to them as an excellent source of advice and guidance, copies of which are available in the Library.

National health service managers have a difficult balance to strike between allowing access to visitors, families and staff, while ensuring that there are satisfactory arrangements for the security of all those who use the hospital for lawful purposes.

GP Fundholders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent general practitioner fundholders may vary national terms and conditions of employment for directly employed staff; and whether such conditions of employment or any applicable professional code of practice take precedence in the event of conflict.

Dr. Mawhinney: Like all general practitioners, GP fundholders are independent contractors who employ staff on the basis of statutory employment legislation.

Staff Relations (Public and Media)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps have been taken to ensure that primary care staff are aware of the guidance on staff relations with the public and media;

(2) if the guidance for staff on relations with the public and media is applicable to staff directly employed by general practitioner fundholding general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 25 February at column 525.

Private Health Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had in the last 12 months with the Chancellor of the Exchequer of *(a)* extending tax relief on private health insurance to those aged under 60 years or *(b)* abolishing tax relief for those aged over 60 years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. The tax relief on private medical insurance enables those with insurance to retain cover at a time when income falls and premiums rise and also reduces pressure on the national health service.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will recommend that the schedule for the 1995 general household survey contain questions on private medical insurance in British households.

Mr. Sackville: Questions for possible inclusion in the 1995 general household survey have yet to be agreed.

Pay Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list each dedicated national health service pay bed unit and its total income from private patients in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the local provision of pay beds is held by health authorities and national health service trusts. The income raised is used to improve services for all patients.

Hospital Equipment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards exist to protect patients from unauthorised interference with equipment in hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: It is a matter for the local management to ensure that appropriate strategies and procedures are in place which will ensure a safe and secure environment for patients.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the scope of the NHS Supplies Authority research in the summer of 1993; and what was the circulation of the results.

Mr. Sackville: An extensive survey of customers was carried out by national health service Supplies last summer covering a wide cross-section of almost 2,000 people within the customer base, ranging from chief executives to ward sisters. The results were communicated to staff, customers and the media.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of time between orders being placed with the NHS Supplies Authority and the delivery of goods.

Mr. Sackville: Between three and five working days for stock goods. All distribution centres operate a two to three-hour emergency service.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trusts contract with the NHS Supplies Authority; and what percentage the NHSSA has as its sole supplier.

Mr. Sackville: National Health Service Supplies has contracts to provide a supplies service to 99 per cent. of NHS trusts. There are no trusts that use NHS Supplies to supply every item they purchase.

Sulphamethoxazole

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths linked to the use of sulphamethoxazole have been reported by doctors to the Committee on Safety of Medicines; what research the committee has undertaken into the number of unreported cases; what action has been taken; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Sulphamethoxazole has not been available as a single constituent product since 1977. Prior to this time, no suspected adverse reactions with a fatal outcome were reported in association with sulphamethoxazole alone. Since 1977, it has been available only as a multi-constituent product in combination with trimethoprim, as co-trimoxazole. The Committee on Safety of Medicines—CSM—has received 135 reports of deaths suspected to have been associated with the use of co-trimoxazole. Such reports do not necessarily mean that the drug was responsible. Co-trimoxazole has been very widely used. Some 87 million prescriptions have been dispensed since the drug was first marketed in the United Kingdom.

No specific research has been undertaken by the CSM with respect to under-reporting of suspected adverse reactions to co-trimoxazole.

Reports of serious and fatal adverse reactions to co-trimoxazole have been kept under review by the CSM. In July 1985 an article was published in "Current Problems", its regular drug safety bulletin, informing doctors of deaths, predominately due to blood dyscrasias and skin reactions, reported in association with co-trimoxazole. In addition, the data sheet for co-trimoxazole, produced by the manufacturer and authorised by the licensing authority, fully reflects its known side-effects.

Out-patient Consultant Episodes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of out-patient consultant episodes for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Consultant out-patient activity 1987-88 to 1992-93

	All out-patient attendances	*First out-patient attendances*
1987-88	36,846,100	8,513,700
1988-89	36,117,800	8,389,400
1989-90	36,305,200	8,519,400
1990-91	36,111,500	8,501,800
1991-92	36,893,700	8,941,500
1992-93	37,527,000	9,342,300

Source: Department of Health return KH09.

Social Work Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the expected cost of her proposals for a national care curriculum for social work training; and whether extra funding will be made available to meet this cost;

(2) when she will introduce her proposed national care curriculum for social work training;

(3) if she will list the organisations that will be consulted on her proposals for a national care curriculum for social work training.

Mr. Bowis: We know of no such care curriculum. Perhaps the hon. Member will write to me.

Finished Consultant Episodes

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations underlie the publication of the total number of finished consultant episodes in national health service hospitals in 1992-93 and not of the number of private patient finished consultant episodes.

Mr. Sackville: Information on private patients treated in national health service hospitals is not collected separately via aggregate central returns, but is obtainable from "Hospital Episode Statistics". These data are not yet available for 1992-93. Information on patients in private hospitals is not collected by the Department.

Rampton Hospital

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many and what percentage of patients have been injured by other patients in each of the past 10 years at Rampton hospital;

(2) how long the review of the management of violence and aggression at Rampton hospital is estimated to last;

(3) what assessment she has made of reasons for variations in the annual number of attacks on staff by patients at Rampton hospital;

(4) how many recorded incidents there were of attacks on staff by patients at Rampton hospital in each of the past 10 years;

(5) what changes there have been in the training of staff in restraint in the past five years at Rampton hospital; and what was the expenditure on restraint and control training in each of those years;

(6) how many working days were lost at Rampton hospital in respect of staff suffering from violent attacks or stress-related illness in each of the last five years;

(7) if she will give the reasons behind the withdrawal and non-replacement of defence shields at Rampton hospital.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Ministerial Meetings

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings there have been in the last 12 months between herself, a Health Minister, parliamentary private secretaries or parliamentary under-secretary and representatives of private health insurance companies.

Mr. Sackville: Five meetings.

Consultants (Merit Awards)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the allocation of merit awards to consultants is dependent on whether a consultant is employed by the national health service in a part-time or full-time capacity; and how many consultants earn less than £1,000 annually in private sector work.

Dr. Mawhinney: Eligibility for distinction awards is not dependent on whether a consultant is employed in a part-time or whole-time capacity. The actual amount payable to a part-timer is determined on a pro rata basis. Information on the number of consultants with private earnings of less than £1,000 per annum is not available. However, in 1988-89 it is estimated that about 25 per cent. of hospital consultants had no private earnings.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has held with the Home Office and the Department of the Environment regarding the need to improve co-ordination between the Department, the police and social services in the treatment of her mentally ill in the wake of the report of the inquiry into the care and treatment of Christopher Clunis.

Mr. Bowis: We fully endorse the importance placed by the inquiry on co-ordination in this area. The Department works closely with the Home Office to encourage effective liaison between the police and other criminal justice agencies and the health and social services.

Amenity Beds

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service patients paid a charge for an amenity bed in 1992-93; and what percentage of them were receiving national health service treatment in NHS hospitals, excluding trusts.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 4 February at columns *985-86.*

EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total cost for the recent market testing of Employment Service job clubs, including the staff time of those involved in preparing the bids.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The costs of running the market test, including the staff time of those involved in preparing the bids has been estimated to be £132,000. The full annual value of the services prior to testing was £8·4 million and following the market test the equivalent cost is anticipated to be £8·1 million. The competition costs should be recovered within six months.

Advertising

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *644*, what was the budgeted and actual cost of each of the public information campaigns listed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Campaign	*1993-94 Budgeted spend £*
Make it your Business	2,000,000
1993 National Training Awards	564,000
Career Development Loans	1,870,000
Careers Service	150,000
New Horizons for Women	300,000
Just the Job/New Measures	1,800,000
Employer Campaign	1,300,000
Disability	1,300,000

As these campaigns are ongoing and will continue after the end of the current financial year, actual costs are not yet known.

Campaign	*1993-94 Budgeted Spend £*	*Actual cost £*
Workstart	15,000	14,079
Jobfinders Grant	35,000	18,419
Work Trials	15,000	13,541
Community Action	15,000	12,403

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing the number of full-time *(a)* male and *(b)* female employees in 1968, 1973, 1979, 1989 and 1993 in numbers and as a percentage of the population of adult working age in each case.

Miss Widdecombe: The available information is given in the following table:

Employees in Employment: Great Britain (seasonally adjusted)

Thousands

	Full-time males	*Percentage of male working age population*	*Full-time females*	*Percentage of female working age population*
1973	12,824	77·2	5,530	36·6
1979	[1]12,390	73·0	5,598	35·9
1989	10,814	60·3	5,936	36·3
1993[2]	9,405	52·2	5,485	33·3

[1] Employees data relates to 1978.

[2] September 1993; latest data available.

Full-time employees data are unavailable prior to 1971.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage the number of weekly hours worked by all operators in manufacturing industry has fallen since 1989; and when he expects the number to recover to the 1989 level.

Miss Widdecombe: Since 1989, the index of total weekly hours worked by all operatives in manufacturing fell by 29 per cent.

Construction Industry

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what statistics are available on the construction industry regarding *(a)* fatalities and *(b)* injuries that were directly the result of negligent employers breaking criminal health and safety laws over the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of fatalities and other injuries occurring in the construction industry over the last five years was set out in tables 2., 3 and 4 of the Health and Safety Commission's 1992-93 annual report.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the estimated cost of occupational ill-health in the construction industry during 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No estimates are available of the specific cost of occupational ill health in the construction industry during 1993. However, a recent study by the Health and Safety Executive shows that in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the direct cost to employers of work-related ill health in Great Britain.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made in the last five years in reducing the accident level in the construction industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Both the numbers and rates of injuries to employees have continued to fall over the last five years; the trend for every category of injury and for each year is downwards, more sharply in the last two years. Injury rates among the self-employed are also improving, the last three years' figures being generally lower than at the end of the 1980s.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Health and Safety Executive regarding predictable and preventable construction fatalities that were directly a result of negligent employers breaking health and safety laws.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive has periodically briefed Ministers on the preventable nature of construction industries and the need to improve health and safety management in the industry. With this objective I expect shortly to receive proposals from the Health and Safety Commission for new Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people over the past five years have died in the construction industry due to accidents on site and industrial-related diseases.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Member will have the Health and Safety Commission's 1992-93 annual report, published last November, tables 2, 3 and 4 of which contain the detailed injury figures. Figures for work-related ill health in construction or any other industry are not generally available due to the difficulty in relating deaths to possible fatal exposures occurring years before. However, for the five-year period 1987 and 1991, about 20 per cent. of the people whose death certificates mentioned mesothelioma as a cause of death had a last full-time occupation in the construction industry.

Upper Limb Disorders

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department has undertaken to provide information and appropriate occupational health expertise to employers who have employees that are in high-risk work related upper limb disorders occupations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Measures taken by the Health and Safety Executive in recent years have included:

General guidance for employers on preventing work related upper limb disorders published in 1990;

A four-year campaign to raise employer awareness of work-related musculo-skeletal harm, including workplace visits, presentations, and leaflets. The final phase will be launched in April;

Guidance to family doctors on identifying any workplace dimension to upper limb disorders in patients, through a booklet and audio cassette;

An expansion of ergonomics training for HSE's employment medical advisory service staff and inspectors;

HSE ergonomic advice in workplaces identified as high risk.

An action programme recently agreed by the Health and Safety Commission included further plans for a simple guide for supervisors on assessing risks of these disorders; a booklet of case studies of practical solutions to ergonomic problems and guidance for the ceramics, food processing, and rubber sectors.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost to his Department of administering the operation of the career development loans scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: Administration costs associated with the career development loan programme were £212,000 in 1992-93, compared with £206,000 in 1991-92.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements exist for writing off the debt incurred by those applying for funding under the career development loan scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: There are no arrangements for writing off career development loan debts. CDLs operate similar to normal unsecured personal loans and, as CDL literature points out, borrowers are responsible for repaying to the bank the loan and interest on it at the end of the repayment holiday period, currently the period of training and up to three months afterwards.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many loans made under the career development loan scheme in each year since the introduction of the scheme were for courses with a duration of *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* between three and six months, *(c)* between six and 12 months and *(d)* more than 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table sets out the number of approved career development loans by course duration, for each of the financial years since the scheme was introduced nationally in July 1988.

Career development loans by course duration

Financial year	*Less than three months*	*Three months and up to six*	*Six months and up to 12*	*More than 12 months*[1]
1988-89	401	188	1,787	—
1989-90	842	369	5,286	—
1990-91	1,033	498	6,073	—
1991-92	1,543	788	8,233	—
1992-93	1,237	935	8,172	—
[2]1993-94	1,153	889	8,321	26

[1] CDLs for courses lasting longer than one year and up to two years were only available from April 1993 through local sponsorship by training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies. From April 1994 the criteria for all CDLs will be extended to courses lasting up to two years.

[2] Figures for 1993-94 are as at 1 March 1994.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost to his Department of meeting interest charges on interest-free loans awarded under the career development loan scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department currently pays the interest on career development loans whilst the borrower is undertaking training and for up to three months afterwards. From April this year the Department will pay the interest during the period of training and for up to one month afterwards. Borrowers who are registered unemployed one month after completing training may apply to the bank to defer repayments for up to a further five months. During 1992-93 the cost to the Department of meeting interest charges was £3·4 million, compared with £2·8 million in 1991-92.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which financial institutions operate the career development loan scheme in conjunction with his Department; and what remuneration they receive for this service.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department operates career development loans in partnership with three major high street banks—Barclays, the Co-operative and the Clydesdale. Under the conditions of the scheme the Department agrees to pay interest charges on loans while the borrower is training and for up to three months afterwards. From April this year, the Department will pay the interest during the period of training and for up to one month afterwards. Borrowers who are registered unemployed one month after completing training may apply to the bank to defer repayments for up to a further five months.

In addition, the Department agrees to pay the banks the value of defaulted CDLs up to an agreed percentage limit of the bank's CDL lending portfolio.

The Department also pays the banks a small administration charge, £45 plus VAT in each case, in connection with loans of less than £300 and costs associated with recovering moneys on defaulted loans. Total costs since the scheme began have been modest, £3,491 and £1,532, respectively.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been accepted under the career development loans scheme for each year since its introduction; what was the average amount of loan made; and how many loans were made *(a)* up to £500, *(b)* between £500 and £1,000, *(c)* between £1,00 and £2,000, *(d)* between £2,000 and £3,000, *(e)* between £3,000 and £5,000 and *(f)* and over £5,000 in each year since the introduction of the scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table sets out the number of approved career development loans by loan value, for each of the financial years since the scheme was introduced nationally in July 1988.

Number of approved career development loans

Value of approved loans	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*[1]
Up to £500	211	347	334	658	609	613
£501 to £1,000	467	1,410	1,049	1,467	1,383	1,286
£1,001 to £2,000	612	2,064	2,906	3,068	2,752	2,379
£2,001 to £3,000	306	594	894	1,501	1,360	1,476
£3,001 to £5,000	780	2,082	2,421	3,870	4,240	4,622
Over £5,000[2]	—	—	—	—	—	13
Total number of loans	2,376	6,497	7,604	10,564	10,344	10,386
Average value of loans	£2,401	£2,417	£2,477	£2,643	£2,778	£2,911

Notes:
[1] Figures for 1993-94 are as at 1 March 1994.
[2] CDLs for loans over £5,000 and up to £10,000 were only available from April 1993 through local sponsorship by training and enterprise councils (TECs) and local enterprise companies (LECs). From April 1994 the loan criteria for all CDLs will extend to £8,000.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the career development loan scheme; what assessment has been made of the employment status of applicants to the scheme; what assessment has been made of the employment status of those who complete the scheme; and what types of courses were founded under the scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: The career development loan programme is monitored closely and includes follow-up questionnaires being sent to a sample of trainees three months after they have completed their training. The 1992-93 annual report on CDLs shows that with total public expenditure costs for CDLs amounting to £15·27 per training week, costs are much smaller than those associated with other publicly funded training programmes.

Currently, 30 per cent. of trainees are employed full-time at the time of applying for a CDL and a further 30 per cent. are registered unemployed. More than two out of three obtain jobs as soon as they finish their training.

A wide variety of courses are supported by CDLs, ranging from postgraduate to sport and tourism. Further information on CDLs, including a list of the varying types of courses undertaken, can be found in the 1992-93 annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Freephone and Freepost

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost to his Department of running freephone and freepost facilities related to the career development scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: The cost of the Department of freephone and freepost facilities associated with career development loans were £10,000 and £4,500, respectively in 1992-93. The further costs of handling the freephone and freepost responses and dispatching the requested literature amounted to some £145,000.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many decisions calling for the reinstatement of employees dismissed by their employers have been given by industrial tribunals; and how many of these have been *(a)* acted on and *(b)* not acted on by those employers in each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: The details, which are for both reinstatement and re-engagement orders, are as follows:

	Complied with	*Not complied with*	*Total*
1988-89	[1]—	[1]—	59
1989-90	[1]—	[1]—	59
1990-91	[1]—	[1]—	64
1991-92	70	1	71
1992-93	65	8	73

[1] Not available.

I regret that figures showing the numbers of orders complied with or not complied with are not available for the years 1988 to 1990.

Labour Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women between the ages of 16 and 59 years there are; and what percentage of them are economically active in *(a)* Cornwall *(b)* Devon, *(c)* East Sussex, *(d)* Essex, *(e)* Hereford and Worcester, *(f)* the Isle of Wight, *(g)* Merseyside, *(h)* Mid-Glamorgan and *(i)* West Sussex.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates from the summer, June to August, 1993 Labour Force Survey show that 65·5 per cent. of women aged between 16 and 59 in Merseyside were economically active. LFS estimates, by sex, for this specific age group are not available for levels below region or metropolitan area.

Population estimates and economic activity rates for each area, relating to women aged 16 to 59 are available from the 1991 census of population and can be obtained via the NOMIS database in the Library. In addition, the population estimates are updated annually and the most recent figures, relating to June 1992, are given in the following table:

Estimated resident population at mid-1992

thousands

Counties	*Women aged 16-59*
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	131·6
Devon	289·2
East Sussex	196·8
Essex	453·3
Hereford and Worcester	199·3
Isle of Wight	33·0
Merseyside	418·2
Mid-Glamorgan	155·6
West Sussex	195·9

Source:
Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

Employment Agencies

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider introducing legislation to amend the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 to allow workers who are paid by and contracted to a temporary employment agency, yet classed as being self-employed, to claim redundancy payments if the employment agency goes into liquidation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Payments under the redundancy and insolvency provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 can be made to employees, as defined in the Act. Workers contracted to a temporary employment agency are not excluded from the legislation and may be eligible for payments provided that the facts of their contract with the agency are consistent with employee status, whether or not the agency classified them as self-employed. Whether a particular individual is an employee for these purposes is therefore a question of fact to be determined where necessary by an industrial tribunal. The courts have laid down criteria for distinguishing employees from the self-employed. There are no plans to change the legislation.

Youth Training Scheme

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of participants on the former youth training scheme found subsequent employment as a result of a placement on the scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: Of all those who left the former youth training scheme in its last full year of operation—April 1989 to March 1990—in Great Britain, 67 per cent. went into full-time or part-time employment or self-employment.

Workstart

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places were allocated to each of the four workstart pilot schemes and the North Norfolk Action pilot scheme; how much money was allocated to each scheme; what percentage of places was taken up on each of the five schemes after the first six months of operation in each case; and how much each scheme has cost after the first six months of operation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of £750,000 was allocated to the North Norfolk Action pilot scheme. One hundred and eight work experience opportunities are available. After six months, 125 have participated in the work experience part of North Norfolk Action. Currently 58 per cent. of the places are filled. The cost of these places is some £114,000.

The informtion requested on the Workstart pilots is as follows:

	Places allocated	*Resources allocated* £	*Percentage of places taken up after six months* Per cent.	[1]*Cost of scheme after six months* £
East Kent	250	660,000	39	61,880
South London	250	660,000	32	48,550
Tyneside	250	660,000	18	25,440
Devon and Cornwall	250	660,000	2	2,280

[1] The figures given are the amounts paid to employers under the scheme. In addition each pilot will have incurred marketing and administration costs from within its total allocation of £660,000.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Privy Council

Ms Lynne: To ask the Lord President of the Council to which bodies the Privy Council makes appointments; what is the total membership of these bodies; how many members of each are appointed by the Privy Council; and if he will list the bodies according to the Government Department or other organisation that makes the recommendations for appointments.

Mr. Newton: In respect of the first and third parts of the question, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's reply of 27 January 1994 at columns 359-60, to a question from the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright).

The full information relating to the second part of the question is not held centrally and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost. The remaining information requested is as follows:

Body to which appointments are made	*Recommendations/comments sought from*
Council and Academic Advisory Committee of the University of Buckingham	The University
Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine	Health Departments
Court of the University of Kent at Canterbury	The University
General Optical Council	Health Departments
Court of the University of Lancaster	The University
Council and Statutory Committee of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain	The Society, and Health Departments
Council of the University of the South Pacific	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Court and Conference of the University of Stirling	The University
General Convocation of the University of Strathclyde	The University
Court of the University of Sussex	The University
Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons	The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Council of the Royal Veterinary College	The College

DEFENCE

Operation Sharp Guard

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the continued progress and effectiveness of Operation Sharp Guard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Navy ships and aircraft and RAF Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft continue to contribute to operations in the Adriatic to monitor and enforce compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions on trade sanctions and the arms embargo against the former Yugoslavia. NATO/WEU Operation Sharp Guard continues to be highly successful. Since enforcement operations began, there have been over 27,000 challenges of suspected violators and over 1,900 instances of ships being stopped and boarded, with over 450 diversions for inspections.

Environmental Damage

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been carried out by his Department on the costs of damage to the environment caused by its activities.

Mr. Hanley: In line with Government policy, the Ministry of Defence seeks to identify, assess and, where practicable, minimise the environmental impacts of its activities. The identification and, where appropriate, rectification of environmental damage attributable to past defence activity, principally soil contamination, is undertaken where there is considered to be a risk to health and safety, where water quality is threatened or where land is being sold.

Indonesia

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent additions there have been to the contracts for supplying military equipment to Indonesia.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter for the customer and the supplier.

Soviet Nuclear Submarine

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for his Department of the sunken Soviet nuclear submarine Komsomolets.

Mr. Hanley: I am not aware of any specific implications for my Department.

Radar Installations

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation has been made of the possible health risks of siting Ministry of Defence radar installations within close proximity to settlements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department sites radar installations in accordance with national guidelines. However, where there is concern about possible health implications from facilities in close proximity to settlements, my Department commissions independent consultants to carry out a full evaluation in accordance with DOE circular 15/88, Welsh Office circular 23/88—"Assessment of Environmental Effects"—and Scottish Office circular SDD 3/88.

Hercules

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected cost of replenishment of the current fleet of Hercules aircraft in use by the Royal Air Force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It would not be appropriate to release sensitive cost information particularly during the competitive procurement process that we are pursuing for the Hercules replacement/refurbishment programme. I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made to the House in closing the debate on the Royal Air Force on 27 January, *Official Report*, columns 506-7.

Air Training Corps

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations have been received on the question of the future of the Air Training Corps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department has received a number of representations on the future of the Air Training Corps. I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave during the Adjournment debate on the future of the Corps on 23 November 1993, *Official Report*, columns 421-28, and in my answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 21 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *68*.

C-130J Aircraft

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the total cost of purchasing 30 C-130J aircraft for use by the Royal Air Force; what proposals there are to purchase such aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: It would not be appropriate to release sensitive cost information particularly during the competitive procurement process that we are pursuing for the Hercules replacement/refurbishment programme. As I explained to the House in closing the debate on the Royal Air Force on 27 January, columns 506-7, the C-130J aircraft is only one of the options under consideration.

Anti-ballistic Missiles

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the development of a British or collaborative European anti-ballistic missile capability.

Mr. Aitken: We are considering whether the United Kingdom might have a future requirement for ballistic missile defence and are about to embark on a two-year programme of pre-feasibility studies to determine what options might be available. The United Kingdom is also fully involved in a number of international studies.

Live Firing Exercises

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what notice was given to local fishermen before the live firings exercise involving the RAF and HMS Fearless, conducted outside the established exercise areas in the Minch in the week beginning 7 February; and if he will make a statement on future policy regarding notice for such exercises.

Mr. Hanley: The activity in the Minch involving HMS Fearless and the RAF took place on 10 February. It was not a live firing exercise; only inert practice bombs were used and the activity was conducted wholly within the Clyde exercise areas. The firing was carried out in full accordance with established safety procedures which ensure the safety of other vessels. Since there is currently no requirement to inform mariners of this type of activity, no formal notification was given of the firing, although notices had been issued indicating that HMS Fearless would be operating in support of exercises in the area. There are no plans to alter the requirements governing the issue of formal warning notices, but we intend shortly to introduce a system for broadcasting details of firing intentions in local sea areas.

Defence Review

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to conduct a review similar to that being conducted by the Director General of Testing and Evaluation, for all service ranges not under the director general; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The future requirements for MOD ranges are being reviewed as part of the defence costs study "Front Line First". The study is progressing well. As my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces made clear in his written answer of 18 February to the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar), the study is due to report in March, but it will not be until some time after this that final conclusions will be reached. Decisions taken as a result of the study will be announced in due course.

Woolwich Arsenal

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were employed by his Department or its agencies at the Ministry of Defence Woolwich arsenal in each of the years 1964, 1970, 1980 and 1990; and how many are employed there currently.

Mr. Aitken: The number of staff currently employed by the MOD and Defence Research Agency at the Royal Arsenal is 413. Records do not exist for years prior to 1975, but available figures are: 1975—3,799;, 1980—2,823; 1990—1,544.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel are presently in Mozambique; and what tasks they are performing.

Mr. Hanley: As well as the defence attaché and his supporting staff of one, there are currently 14 British military personnel in Mozambique making up the Mozambique short-term training team. Their role is to supervise and monitor Mozambican instructors, previously trained by the Mozambique training team at Nyanga, Zimbabwe, in the training of the unified Mozambican army.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the value to United Kingdom companies of defence contracts following the establishment of memoranda of understanding with *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Ecuador, *(c)* India, *(d)* Indonesia, *(e)* Jordan, *(f)* Nigeria, *(g)* Oman, *(h)* Pakistan and *(i)* Thailand in each of the last five years.

Mr Aitken: It is not generally Government policy to comment on the value of defence sales to individual countries.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to appoint the new head of the Defence Export Services Organisation; when the post was advertised; and how the successful candidate will be chosen.

Mr Aitken: The post was advertised on 29 September 1993. Executive search consultants were employed to help to identify suitable candidates. A decision on the appointment will follow in due course.

Arms Sales

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with which countries the Government have a protocol on arms sales; and when each one was entered into.

Mr Aitken: Her Majesty's Government signed protocols on arms sales with the Government of Malaysia in 1988 and with the Government of Brunei in 1989.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will establish an independent scientific inquiry into reports of the existence of a medical condition peculiar to service in the Gulf conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We have no plans to do so as there remains no clinical evidence that members of the British armed forces who served in the Gulf conflict are suffering from any unexplained medical symptoms which would call for such an inquiry. My Department continues to monitor all the available information on the alleged syndrome and continues to offer medical assessments for those United Kingdom Gulf war personnel who are concerned about their health. Of the 11 so far assessed—of the 14 who have come forward for examination—all have been found to be suffering from separate but recognised medical conditions unconnected with their service in the Gulf.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent communications he has received from legal firms concerning Desert Storm syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence has received correspondence from two firms of solicitors concerning the reported effects of the so-called Desert Storm syndrome. One is acting on behalf of an individual; the other wrote on behalf of a group of solicitors who have indicated that they will be acting for a number of service and ex-service personnel. We have not yet been informed how many individuals this group will represent.

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to send additional British troops to Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A total of 120 additional British troops were deployed to UNPROFOR Bosnia-Herzegovina command last month. The Government have no plans at this stage to send further troops, but will continue to keep developments in Bosnia under review.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1054*, whether those British service personnel in the former Yugoslavia who will be participating in the two-month trial of the United Nations system of supply are volunteers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: British personnel stationed at Tomislavgrad have been chosen to participate in the United Nations food trial. Tomislavgrad is a staging post for convoys and as such is subject to a fluctuating complement of personnel. This unit has been chosen, therefore, as it represents a rigorous examination of the United Nation's ability to maintain the quantity and quality of rations demanded by the British contingent in Bosnia. Since the trial must involve a complete unit, seeking individual volunteers would be impractical.

Mountain Rescue

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost per hour of operating the RAF search and rescue mountain rescue teams based at Scottish airfields.

Mr. Hanley: No charges are recovered for assistance given by the RAF mountain rescue teams except when provided in connection with civil aviation incidents. The cost per hour of operating the RAF MRTs is dependent upon the manpower and resources utilised in undertaking the task and costs vary in accordance with the number and grade of personnel involved, and the number and type of vehicles used.

Sea King Helicopters

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost per hour of operating a Sea King helicopter on search and rescue duty.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of operating an RAF Sea King search and rescue helicopter on duty is £5,210 per hour at full cost.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *383*, in the case of which countries with whom memoranda of understanding were agreed such agreement was preceded by the drawing up of a protocol.

Mr. Aitken: Malaysia is the only country with which the Government have signed a defence procurement protocol prior to a memorandum of understanding.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Playing Fields

Ms Hoey: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee when hon. Members will be given full access to the "Register of Playing Fields in England and Wales"; and what has caused the delay in access for Members.

Mr. Waller: In answer to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on 12 January 1994, *Official Report*, column *209*, the Department of National Heritage stated that the Sports Council would be providing the register's database on diskette to the Library of the House. Unfortunately the database has been supplied in a form which is not usable with existing Library software without significant programming effort, and the volume of data is too great to be provided in the form of a print-out. The Library has, however, made arrangements to obtain sample data in spreadsheet format from Birkbeck college, which maintains the database, and will continue to explore alternative means of access for Members.

7 Millbank

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what was the cost of the initial refurbishment of 7 Millbank; if he will identify the cost of building the canteen and kitchen area; what is the estimated cost of further refurbishment of 7 Millbank; and if he will identify the cost of expanding the canteen and kitchen area.

Mr. Ray Powell: The cost of the building works at 7 Millbank will be some £6·3 million. The cost of the canteen and kitchen area is not separately identified in the contract. £100,000 is provided in the estimate for 1994-95 for an extension to the cafeteria and servery—there are no plans to expand the kitchen.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the total revenue raised by VAT in the current financial year; and what will be the likely take in each of the next two financial years.

Sir John Cope: A total of £38½ billion, £43 billion and £48 billion respectively.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the average family paid in VAT in 1979; and what is the most recent figure.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) earlier today.

Interest Rates

17. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss interest rates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I meet the Governor regularly to discuss a range of economic and monetary issues, including interest rates.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average rate of interest over each of *(a)* the past two years and *(b)* the average between February 1974 to May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: *(a)* In 1992 the average level of interest rates was 9·6 per cent. In 1993 the average level of interest rates was 6 per cent. Between March 1992 and February 1994 the average level of interest rates was 7·4 per cent.

(b) Between February 1974 to May 1979 the average level of interest rates was 10½ per cent.

Interest rates are set to achieve the Government's inflation objectives. Base rates now stand at 5·25 per cent. and are among the lowest in the EC.

27. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much British industry has saved from the reduction in interest rates in the last 18 months.

Mr. Portillo: United Kingdom base rates have fallen by 4¾ percentage points over the past 18 months. It is estimated that, when fully passed on, that will have reduced United Kingdom companies' interest bills by over £6 billion a year.

City of London

18. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is proposing to take to ensure that the City of London remains the dominant financial centre in Europe.

Mr. Nelson: The Government remain committed to providing an environment which will enable the City to maintain and enhance its position as a leading world financial centre and the pre-eminent financial centre of Europe.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

19. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received encouraging him to increase the size of the public sector borrowing requirement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I do not believe that any reputable organisation would recommend that we increase the level of public borrowing.

Taxation

16. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the total income tax take was being contributed by top rate tax in 1979 and the latest available year.

Mr. Dorrell: The higher rate of tax currently accounts for 24 per cent. of total income tax compared with 9 per cent. in 1978-79.

20. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the cost to the average family from (i) April 1994 and (ii) April 1995 of the cumulative tax increases announced since last March.

29. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the increase a typical family will have to pay over the next two years in taxes announced in last year's Budgets.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the cost to the average family from *(a)* April 1994 and *(b)* April 1995 of the cumulative tax increases announced since last March.

Mr. Dorrell: The Budget measures restore sound public finances. This is the only basis for a sustained recovery that will create more jobs and higher living standards.

22. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to compensate families on 75 per cent. or less of average earnings, following the changes announced in last year's Budgets concerning income tax and national insurance.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to compensate families with two children and one spouse working on average male earnings, following the increases in income tax and national insurance coming into effect in April 1994.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1979 families on three quarters of average earnings have enjoyed an increase in real net income of over 62 per cent.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people with earnings below the income tax threshold will be affected by the increases in indirect taxation announced in November's budget.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 14 December 1993 at column *579*.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's tax policies on the income of a family with two children and one spouse on average male earnings.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Keen) earlier today.

Landfill Levies

21. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what studies the Treasury has commissioned on the effect of inflation on landfill levies.

Sir John Cope: None.

Family Incomes

23. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average income of a family of four in 1994; and what it was in 1979 at 1994 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The real take-home pay of a one-earner married couple on average earnings with two children has risen by £83, over 40 per cent. since 1978-79.

Public Assets (Sales

24. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what revenue he is expecting from the sale of public assets during the next three years.

Mr. Portillo: I am expecting privatisation proceeds of £5·5 billion in 1994-95 and £1 billion in each of 1995-96 and 1996-97.

Economic Demand

25. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Portillo: For domestic demand, the most recent figures available are for the fourth quarter of 1993. By then, it had risen for seven successive quarters, to a level over 4 per cent. above its trough in the first quarter of 1992. Its growth is forecast to strengthen in 1994.

Drugs

26. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the street value of drugs seized by Customs and Excise last year.

Sir John Cope: The street value of drugs seized by Customs and Excise during the calendar year 1993 was about £518,500,000

This included:

	£ (Thousand)
Heroin	97,955
Cocaine	110,244
Cannabis	176,033
Synthetic drugs	134,210

Sport (Taxation)

28. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to decrease the taxation burden on sport in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Cope: A new VAT exemption for the supply of certain services by non profit-making organisations to persons taking part in sport will be introduced shortly. Copies of an information paper giving further details including a draft Treasury order have been placed in the Library.

Inland Revenue (Inquiries)

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many counter callers and telephone queries the Inland Revenue has had in the period January and February in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Dorrell: The information is in the table. The figures relate only to tax offices and there is no available data for specialist or collection offices.

	Counter callers	*Telephone callers*
mid December-mid January 1992	219,889	1,224,936
mid January-mid February 1992	493,927	2,521,731
mid December-mid January 1993	270,589	1,891,875
mid January-mid February 1993	380,439	2,212,201
mid December-mid January 1994	235,969	1,857,123
mid January-mid February 1994	343,349	2,579,192

There has been an increase in the aggregate number of counter and telephone callers in the reporting period to mid-February this year, compared with the previous month, but this follows the pattern in previous years, as the table shows.

Hotels and Boarding Houses

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *890*, why in carrying out the national revaluation 1995, hotels and boarding houses' district valuers required a detailed breakdown for each of the items requested to establish rental values; if he will give respondents more than 21 days to carry out the work involved; and if he will introduce a simplified form.

Mr. Nelson: Forms requesting the supply of information served by valuation officers on the occupiers or owners of hereditaments have been designed to enable those officers to obtain the information they require in order to compile and maintain rating lists.

A general form requiring rental details is used in most cases but for some types of business information is required about receipts because rental details are scarce. Hotels and boarding houses fall within this category.

The law requires that the form seeking information is returned to a valuation officer within 21 days. However, where there are particular difficulties in complying with this time limit, a longer period may be agreed.

It is not considered appropriate to introduce a further simplified form. Any ratepayer who is having difficulty with the form should approach his or her local valuation officer who will offer guidance on its completion.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993" including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Nelson: In addition to the public appointments he is responsible for making which are identified in "Public Bodies 1993", my right hon. and learned Friend is also responsible for appointments to the following bodies:

Building Societies Commission;
Friendly Societies Commission;
Crown Estate Commission;
Public Works Loan Board;
Retail Price Index Advisory Committee;
Securities and Investments Board;
Treasury Academic Advisory Panel;
National Savings Board;
Central Statistical Office Management Board;
VAT Tribunals;
Central Statistical Office Advisory Committee;
Royal Mint Management Board;
Financial Services Tribunal

Spouse's Transitional Exemption

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of the spouse's transitional exemption in 1993-94, 1994-95, 1995-96 and 1996-97 in constant 1994 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The legislation which introduced independent taxation for married women provides for two transitional allowances. One enables a husband who has been unable, since 1989-90, to use all his allowances effectively to transfer to his wife as much of his personal allowance as is necessary to bring the total allowances usable by the couple to the level of the allowances they could set against their income in 1989-90. The other transitional allowance protects the entitlement of husbands aged under 65 whose wives are entitled to age-related allowances. The Exchequer cost of these provisions is not available centrally.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Government agencies and Departments currently subscribe funds to the International Monetary Fund, and what is the level of subscription for each agency and Department.

Mr. Nelson: As a member of the International Monetary Fund, the United Kingdom pays a subscription, its "quota", by placing a proportion of the reserves at the IMF's disposal. These funds are available for use by the United Kingdom in the event of balance of payments need. The quota is transferred to the IMF by the Bank of England acting as the Treasury's agent for the management of the reserves. In addition, the Overseas Development Administration makes an annual contribution to the interest subsidy account of the enhanced structural adjustment facility—ESAF—which is a trust fund administered by the IMF.

Details of the level of these payments were provided in my response to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 10 December 1993 at columns 403-4, to which I refer the hon. Gentleman. In addition, the ODA has made a one-off pledge of up to £50 million towards the enlarged ESAF and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 3 December 1993 at columns 795-96.

Annuality

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the rules on annuality for nationalised industries; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have decided that from 1994-95 nationalised industries should, as a general rule, be allowed to defer spending equal to up to 5 per cent. of their capital investment from one year to the next. This will be achieved by adjusting the industries' external finance limits, so that extra spending in the later year is matched by reduced spending in the earlier year. This change should make it easier for nationalised industries to manage their capital expenditure programmes.

Low Incomes

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government's tax policies on the economic well-being of people on low incomes who are below pension age.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 February 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) earlier today.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 4 March 1994

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Investments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what was the income from gilt stripping for 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what has so far been the size of the erosion of the capital base by gilt stripping in each of these years.

Mr. Alison: The income from gilt stripping in the years in question was:

	£ million
1989	6·6
1990	6·1
1991	4·9
1992	8·9

Gilt stripping refers to the accounting policy of recording interest on gilt-edged securities on a receipts basis rather than an accruals basis. To the same extent that the income so recorded is higher than it would have been under the accruals basis, there will be a reduction in the increase, or an addition to the decrease, of the valuation of the capital base.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *525-26*, if gilt stripping covers dividend stripping.

Mr. Alison: The phrase "gilt-stripping" was used by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in his question of 25 February and was taken to refer to the accounting policy described in my earlier answer.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, columns *525-26*, if he will place in the Library a copy of counsel's opinion on the commissioners' methods of accounting for capital and income; and what is meant by "maintaining the integrity of the commissioners' portfolio".

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have taken counsel's opinion on their methods of accounting in order to assist their compliance with the relevant legislation. It is recognised that legal advice is given in confidence: the commissioners would feel constrained in taking legal advice, on this or any other issue, if such advice had to be written in anticipation of the possibility that it might be made public.

It is the commissioners' aim to maintain the major part of their investments in assets which will generate increasing returns over the long term. Investment of a significant part of their assets in fixed interest securities such as gilts would not satisfy this aim for that part of their investments. There is a natural conflict between the need to limit the short-term cuts in allocations and the long-term requirement for growth.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list details of those assets which the commissioners believe will produce above average capital growth and their estimate of the size of this growth; and by what date that capital growth will be realised.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners invest in a wide range of properties and securities with the expectation that the portfolio as a whole will produce returns by way of a combination of income and capital growth. Those investments which currently yield less than an average income are retained by the commissioners in the expectation that they will return more than average capital growth. It is not practical or realistic to list details of all such investments, nor would it be in the interests of the commissioners or the Church of England to disclose such commercially sensitive details of individual investments.

TRANSPORT

Road Construction

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contacts he has had with Professor John Whitelegg of Lancaster university as to the relationship between new road construction and inward investment.

Mr. Key: Although I am aware of Professor Whitelegg's work in this area and his views on this relationship, I do not have any formal contact with him at present.

The relationship between road construction and inward investment is not straightforward. Although road investment appears not to be a sufficient condition for local development, it is clear that satisfactory transport links are an important factor in decisions by industry where to locate.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in respect of Union Rail's recent statement that double-deck trains on the proposed channel tunnel rail link will be unable to enter Ashford international passenger station.

Mr. Freeman: The international rolling stock that will run on the new rail link is single deck and can serve Ashford international passenger station for many years to come. If a future generation of international trains were to be double deck, any necessary adjustments could be made to the track and line side structures if there was a need for access to the IPS by these larger trains.

Aircraft Accidents

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fatal and *(b)* non-fatal aircraft accidents have occurred in each of the last 10 years in respect of aircraft flown by holders of a private pilot's licence in which heart-related illness was found to be a factor.

Mr. Norris: According to records of the Civil Aviation Authority's safety data and analysis unit, the accidents in

the last 10 years, involving an aircraft flown by holders of a private pilot's licence, in which heart-related illness was found to be a factor, are as follows:

		Injuries	
Date	*Aircraft type*	*Fatalities*	*Non-fatalities*
9 August 1985	Aeroplane	1	—
13 March 1986	Aeroplane	1	1
8 May 1987	Microlight	1	—
4 October 1991	Aeroplane	1	—
3 March 1992	Aeroplane	1	—

Air Miss Reports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the air miss incident that occurred south-west of Ebbw Vale on 19 January; how many air miss reports were made; how many were withdrawn; and what reasons were given for this.

Mr. Norris: The responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. The authority has provided me with the following information about this incident:

- (i) Only one air miss report had been filed; this was by the commander in charge of one of the aircraft.
- (ii) The air miss report was subsequently withdrawn by the aircraft commander.
- (iii) the aircraft commander—correctly—withdrew his air miss report when he realised that, although the standard separation—five nautical miles, horizontally, or 2,000 ft vertically—had not been provided, there had in fact been no risk of the aircraft actually colliding.

An air miss is defined as a situation in which it is considered that an aircraft has been endangered by the proximity of another aircraft to the extent that a risk of collision existed. The decision fo file an air miss report appropriately rests with the commander of any aircraft involved. There are occasionally instances, such as this, when an air miss report is later withdrawn by the pilot who had filed it, when he realises that there had in fact been no risk of collision.

This loss of standard separation is, however, the subject of an active occurrence investigation by the CAA's air traffic control investigation section. When the investigation has been concluded a report on it will be circulated as part of a routine—monthly—occurrence publication. I will arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy of this publication in due course.

Road Traffic Projection Calculations

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether road traffic projection calculations are based on *(a)* the full economic potential of an area or *(b)* current economic performance.

Mr. Key: Local road traffic projection calculations take account of the best available views about the economic performance of an area. They are consistent with projections of local changes in population, numbers of households, numbers of jobs and land use. They assume a uniform rate of growth in average household income across Great Britain, consistent with the rates of economic growth used in the preparation of the 1989 national road traffic forecasts.

Brecqhou

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice his Department received from the Civil Aviation Authority before refusing a permit for the use of a MIL M1-26 helicopter on Brecqhou.

Mr. Norris: In considering this application for a permit the Department, as usual, sought the advice of the CAA safety regulation group on safety aspects. The CAA advised that it had received inconclusive details from the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation about the helicopter's civil certificate of airworthiness. In the circumstances, the CAA could not recommend that the aircraft should operate; nor could it offer advice on the operation or maintenance standards due to a lack of available information. Accordingly, the Department was unable to issue a permit for this operation.

Motorways

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make individuals working on the motorway widening unit redundant.

Mr. Key: None. The motorway widening unit with its staff will transfer to the new Highways Agency on 1 April as part of the road programme directorate. The staffing of the unit from that date will be a matter for the chief executive of the agency.

A27

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, columns *562-63*, why he maintains that those on the proposed route for the A27 who have to sell their property because of urgent personal problems can do so at a market price.

Mr. Key: Owner-occupiers of property which would be physically affected by the proposals for the A27 at Worthing can ask the Department to purchase them under the statutory blight provisions. Those whose property would not be physically affected by the proposals, but whose enjoyment of their property would be seriously affected by them, can apply to the Department for purchase under the Secretary of State's discretionary powers. These are exercisable in cases where there is a recognised urgent need to move. In both cases, property which is accepted for purchase would be bought at the full market value calculated as if the scheme had never been proposed.

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 February, *Official Report*, columns *562-63*, why he is attempting to sell now rather than wait for the outcome of the public inquiry.

Mr. Key: The Department is obliged to sell surplus property and, with advice from the district valuer, may do so throughout the planning and development stages of any scheme. At Worthing a small number of properties are being offered for sale which would not be affected by the published proposals or by any alternative route proposed at the current public inquiry.

Speed Limiters

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require all new cars to be fitted with speed limiters.

Mr. Key: No. Speed limiters work at one preset maximum speed and most accidents involving cars occur in built-up areas where the speed limit is well below the maximum of 70 mph.

London Bus Strategy

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a full list of all organisations to which his Department sent, and from which it has received responses regarding the consultation paper on a bus strategy for London, together with the addresses of each such organisation.

Mr. Norris: A list of those who responded to the consultation paper was deposited in the Library in July 1991.

ENVIRONMENT

City Grant

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those sites covered by British Gas where discussions are taking place about the possible approval of city grant;

(2) what is the current situation regarding his Department, English Partnerships and British Gas over grant applications; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many applications for city grant there have been concerning sites owned by British Gas in the last two years;

(4) how city grant applications have been approved for sites owned by British Gas in the last two years; what were the amounts in each case; and what was the amount of clawback of grant in each case.

Mr. Baldry: On 10 November 1993 English Partnerships took over from my Department responsibility for the city grant programme—although not for the analogous grant offered by urban development corporations in their own areas—including responsibility for on-going discussions over possible projects involving British Gas sites at the Greenwich peninsula, Foleshill gasworks, Coventry, and Pleck gasworks, Walsall. These discussions are at various stages.

In the last two years, one formal application for city grant has been received by the Department and English Partnerships in respect of a British Gas site—for Foleshill—and none has yet been approved.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the schemes given city grant in the west midlands region in the last two years with the amounts in each case; and what were the amounts of clawback of grant.

Mr. Baldry: The schemes in the Department of the Environment's west midlands region for which the provision of city grant was approved since April 1992, and the approved level of grant, are set out in the table. None of these schemes has yet reached the date for determining the level of any clawback. The urban development corporations offer their own grants analogous to city grant; schemes funded in this way are not included.

Project	*Approved Grant (£)*
Birmingham	
Bordesley Village housing phase 3	206,000
Bramston Street units	364,000
Trafalgar Road housing	657,000
Newton Road housing	264,000
Coventry	
Parkside offices phase 1	580,000
Dudley	
Waterfront phase 8	2,432,420
Waterfront Point North offices	2,903,025
Wollaston Road housing	1,302,612
Addison Road housing	760,000
Coseley Housing	250,000
Walsall	
Reedswood Park mixed development	8,000,000
Wolverhampton	
Bushbury Lane industrial units	113,000
Bell Place offices	107,000
Wolverhampton Racecourse redevelopment	3,037,000
Shaw Park offices	112,000
Cannock Road warehouse units	720,000
Spring Road industrial units	670,680
Springvale industrial units	2,282,000
Wrekin	
Station Road, Telford housing	434,000

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning possible abuse of city grant.

Mr. Baldry: None.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much city grant was given by his Department in each of the English regions in the last financial year.

Mr. Baldry: The total value of grants for city grant applications approved in 1992-93 for each of the Department of the Environment's regions is set out in the table. The figures do not include grants analogous to city grant, made by urban development corporations.

Region	*Total Approved Grants*
West Midlands	13,638,737
North West	12,393,565
Northern	11,552,480
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,915,428
London	1,999,528
East Midlands	2,212,155
Merseyside	14,157,312
South East	0
South West	3,705,204

Shalfleet Bridge

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision in respect of the application for listed building consent in respect of Shalfleet bridge; and when he received it.

Mr. Baldry: The application for listed building consent in respect of Shalfleet bridge envisaged total demolition and reconstruction. Experts from English Heritage, the Secretary of State's statutory advisors on listed building matters, are not satisfied that this is necessary. They have written to the island technical unit, explaining their concerns, and await a reply. Once this is received, the matter can be given further consideration.

The application was originally received on 4 January, before the building was listed. The Department wrote to the island planning unit on 27 January informing it that the application would be treated as if it had been received on 20 January, the date of listing.

Council Houses

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many specific consents for the sale of part II housing—council houses—were give to *(a)* Westminster and *(b)* Wandsworth council in each year since 1980.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 25 January 1994]:* The number of special consents for the sale of council houses and flats given to each authority for the years 1988 onwards are below. Our records of special consents do not enable us to extend back to earlier years.

	Westminster	*Wandsworth*
1988	5	4
1989	nil	nil
1990	9	nil
1991	6	1
1992	7	nil
1993	21	nil

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were sold by *(a)* Westminster council and *(b)* Wandsworth council under general consent in each year from 1980 to date.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 25 January 1994]:* Local authority statistical returns on the sale of their housing do not enable us to identify the number of sales made under the general consents.

Artillery Mansions

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will visit the squat at Artillery mansions, 75 Victoria street, London SW1 to discuss homelessness and the lack of affordable housing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have no plans to visit Artillery mansions. I frequently meet staff of the voluntary sector agencies working with homeless people in central London and regularly visit projects managed by these agencies. I also launched the empty homes agency in February 1992.

On 8 February 1994, I chaired a meeting attended by a wide range of representatives from voluntary sector organisations and central London local authorities to discuss the considerable progress being made under the Government's rough sleepers initiative, which by March 1996 will have provided around 3,300 permanent new homes for people with a history of sleeping rough in the centre of the capital.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has regarding the ownership of Artillery mansions, 75 Victoria street, London SW1; if he will discuss its future with Westminster city council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I have no official information regarding the ownership of Artillery mansions, although I have seen media reports suggesting that Great Bear Ltd. are the owners.

It would not be appropriate for me to discuss with Westminster city council the merits of any action that it might take in relation to the building, since the owners might have a right of appeal to the Secretary of State in respect of such action.

Population Control

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policies his Department has as regards population control; and what plans he has to review them.

Sir George Young: None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Malaysia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what letters were sent and on what date in June 1988 by the British high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur to Ministers in the Malaysian Government on the issue of allocating aid to Malaysia for projects to be agreed between the Governments of Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* The British high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur wrote to the Malaysian Minister of Finance on 28 June 1988.

Samanalawena Dam, Sri Lanka

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the attempts made to resolve the technical problems that have arisen with the Samanalawena dam in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* We responded to the technical problems by funding an international panel of experts to consider the best way to resolve the leakage on the right bank to the dam. They endorsed the procedure of sealing the floor of the reservoir with clay without draining out the water. We will consider offering further technical assistance for the remedial works when project partners have decided how they wish to proceed.

Arms Sales

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out those guidelines on linking arms sales to aid which are non-statutory.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government do not link arms sales and aid. Nor do we use the aid programme to finance arms sales.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In addition to appointments listed in "Public Bodies" the Lord Chancellor makes the following non-judicial appointments from members of the public:

the legal services ombudsman, appointed under the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990;
the Lord Chancellor's investment advisory committee which has five members and advises the Public Trust Office and the Court of Protection on investment matters;
the Magistrates Courts rule committee, which has 14 members;
the Advisory Committee on the Children Act, which has 13 members;
Review Committee: Insolvency Rules—Northern Ireland—which has seven members;
County Court rules committee—Northern Ireland—which has 10 members;
Supreme Court rules committee—Northern Ireland—which has nine members;
Crown Court rules committee—Northern Ireland—which has 11 members;
Family Proceedings rules committee—Northern Ireland—which has 12 members; and
Magistrates Courts rules committee—Northern Ireland.

From time to time, the Lord Chancellor also makes other appointments on request, sometimes jointly with other appointing authorities.

Legal Aid

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total legal aid budget for 1993-94; how much of it was spent; and what unused funds have been used for.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) on 20 January, at columns *719-20*, and the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 3 February, at column *809*. In accordance with Government accounting rules, unused funds are surrendered to Her Majesty's Treasury at the end of the financial year.

Age Limits

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what age limits are *(a)* recommended and *(b)* required for service by (i) the judiciary, (ii) the magistracy, (iii) chairs and members of industrial tribunals and (iv) jury service; and in each case what are the reasons for the age limits set.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information is as follows:

(i) *The Judiciary*

The statutory qualifications for appointment to judicial offices, which generally prescribe a given number of years' professional standing, are set out in the booklet "Judicial Appointments: the Lord Chancellor's Policies and Procedures", a copy of which is in the Library. The booklet also sets out the age ranges within which the Lord Chancellor normally makes or recommends appointments to judicial office. The statutory qualifications and the age levels for appointment reflect the need for candidates for judicial office to have acquired the necessary professional experience and maturity of judgment. The ages below which appointments are not normally made also reflect the principle that before appointment to full-time office candidates must first serve in an appropriate part-time capacity long enough to establish their competence and suitability. The ages beyond which appointments are not normally made are designed to allow those appointed to hold office for a reasonable period after appointment and to provide for the prospect of progression from part-time to full-time office or to a more senior post on an appropriate timescale. The compulsory retirement ages for the judiciary currently vary. When the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993 is brought into force later this year, judicial office holders first appointed thereafter will have to retire at the age of 70, subject in most cases to a power of continuance in office up to the age of 75 where this is in the public interest. This strikes a balance between the benefits of experience and expertise and the demands placed on older judges.

(ii) *The Magistracy*

It is rare for the Lord Chancellor to appoint a lay magistrate below the age of 27 or above the age of 60. There is no minimum statutory age for appointment. By section 8 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979, lay magistrates must retire from active service on the bench when they reach the age of 70 years except for the chairman of a bench who may continue until the end of the year in which he or she attains the age of 70. These limits reflect the need for public confidence in the administration of justice. A lay magistrate must have the experience and maturity to sit in judgment on others and offer the prospect of a reasonable period of service after appointment.

(iii) *Chairmen and members of industrial tribunals*

Those appointed to the panel of chairmen of industrial tribunals must have a seven-year general qualification within the meaning of section 71 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. Appointments to the panel of part-time chairmen are rarely made under the age of 35 or over the age of 62. Full-time chairmen are appointed from among experienced part-time chairmen. Like other members of the judiciary, chairmen of tribunals must have professional experience and maturity of judgment and offer the prospect of a reasonable period of service in office. By the terms of their appointment, both full-time and part-time chairmen of industrial tribunals must retire at the end of the completed year of service in which they attain the age of 72. As for other judicial offices, the Judicial Pensions and Retirement Act 1993, as described above, introduces a compulsory retirement age of 70 for chairmen of industrial tribunals.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of Employment is responsible for appointment to the panels of lay members of industrial tribunals.

(iv) *Jury Service*

The qualifying ages for jury service are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. However, I understand that generally those who are aged between 18 and 70 are eligible to be summoned for jury service, although any prospective juror over the age of 65 is entitled to be excused if he so wishes.

Eighteen is the normal age of majority and is the age at which persons appear on the electoral register from which jurors are drawn. The upper age limits seek to avoid imposing demands that might be unwelcome or unreasonable for many elderly people.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Marine Aggregates Industry

Mr. Alnger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what responsibility his Department has for promoting the interests of the marine aggregates industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: Responsibility for promoting the interests of the marine aggregates industry belongs to the Department of the Environment.

Electricity (VAT)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require electricity suppliers to make available facilities to avoid payment of value added tax in the first year of the new tax regime to electricity customers paying their electric bills by direct debit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, columns *572-73*, what was the number of applications and responses to the *(a)* export services, *(b)* business in Europe, *(c)* small firms merit award for research and technology scheme, *(d)* inward investment and *(e)* Queen's awards campaigns during this financial year.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

Export services/Business in Europe

Responses and calls to the campaign hotlines are running at a rate equivalent to about 30,000 for the full year.

SMART

The 1994 competition has not yet closed, and responses and applications are still coming in. There were over 6,200 responses to the 1993 campaign and nearly 1,500 applications.

Inward Investment

The latest available figures show that overseas publicity by the Invest in Britain Bureau was associated with 3,718 enquiries handled by the bureau in London and 182 new investment projects out of 396 dealt with during the year. Investment projects take several months, and often years, to come to fruition and so a direct link between general promotion and one year's projects cannot be made.

Queen's Awards

Details of application numbers will be released when the 1994 award winners are announced in April. For the 1993 awards there were over 11,000 inquiries and 1,822 applications.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, columns *572-73*, what was the budgeted and the actual cost of each of the public information campaigns listed.

Mr. Eggar: Expenditure in the current financial year is expected to be as follows:

	£
Export services/business in Europe advertising (joint campaign)	200,000
SMART publicity campaign	250,000
Firework safety publicity campaign	166,500
Inward investment advertising	942,000
Queen's awards publicity campaign	280,000

Expenditure will be broadly in line with budgets.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of *(a)* the advantages and *(b)* the disadvantages of foreign ownership of United Kingdom manufacturing industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *717*.

Aviation Services

Ms Coffey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the progress of general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations on aviation services.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her on 3 March 1994, *Official Report*, columns *802-03*.

Wind Turbines

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies he has undertaken as to the impact on British manufacture of wind power turbines and employment in the wind energy sector of United Kingdom wind farms of different sizes.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* I have not undertaken any studies. A British manufacturer has supplied 70 wind turbines to wind farms in the United Kingdom, worth nearly £20 million, and my Department estimates that there are over 400 people currently employed in the wind energy sector in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the size of the world wind turbine market at present; what its growth has been over the last four years; what share of it is held by British manufacturers; and what proportion of wind turbines in the United Kingdom have been manufactured within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* The Government do not have statistics of the world market for wind turbines. The following estimates have been based on available published data:

(i) The total capacity currently installed worldwide: 2600 MW.

(ii) The total capacity installed worldwide in each of the past four years:

Year	*Megawatts*
1990	300
1991	150
1992	250
1993	300

(iii) The total capacity world-wide supplied by British manufacturers: 55 MW.

(iv) 20 per cent. of the wind turbines in the United Kingdom are of British manufacture.

Mine Detectors

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether mine detectors may be exported to the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* Mine detectors are covered by the military list of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992 and therefore fall within the United Nations arms embargo of former Yugoslavia under the terms of United Nations Security Council resolution 713 of 1991. The temporary export of detectors for humanitarian purposes, for example under the auspices of the United Nations, would, however, be given sympathetic consideration.

Coal Mines (Drainage)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the future Coal Authority will carry responsibility for discharges of mine water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 9 February 1994, *Official Report,* column *315.*

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bulb Growers

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has received from the other member states of the European Union about the charges they propose to make on bulb growers for field inspection for the purpose of a passport.

Mr. Jack: I have no precise details of the charges made by other member states on bulb growers for field inspections for the purpose of a plant passport. However, I have general details of the plant passporting charges in many northern European member states, including the Netherlands. Although direct comparisons are difficult to make, the principle of setting fees which achieve full cost recovery is a common element.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what requirements are imposed by the EC Commission on the Council of Minsters of member states to impose a charge on bulb growers when their records of bulb passports are examined.

Mr. Jack: At the present time, there is no EC requirement that member states should charge for any aspect of plant passport authorisation checks. However, it is the policy in many member states, including the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Germany, that the industry, rather than the taxpayer, should meet the cost of providing a range of plant passport services.

Apples

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action she is taking to ensure a level playing field in the market for apples, with particular reference to Coxes, in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The principal problem facing English apple growers is oversupply within Europe. The objective of the EC regime in fruit and vegetables is to provide for fair competition. However, the intervention system sustains over-production, distorts the market and needs reform. The Council of Ministers has asked the Commission to come forward with proposals and we shall be pressing for these to take full account of the needs of the market, including that for our Coxes.

Agricultural Development Advisory Service

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), of 25 February, *Official Report,* columns *492-93,* what reductions in staffing she envisages will result from the proposed changes to the Agricultural Development Advisory Service.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to ADAS and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Dr. Gavin Strang, dated 4 March 1994:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question as to what reductions in staffing ADAS envisages will result from its proposed re-structuring.

Our cost recovery target of 63 per cent. from April 1994 onwards as agreed in PES 1993 is significantly more testing than hitherto. This rate of growth is achievable, but cannot be produced from revenue growth alone and requires a rapid and fundamental change in our working practices and cost base.

The total reduction in ADAS consultancy and administrative support posts anticipated during 1994-95 is of the order of 325 out of a total number of posts of 2,500. I must stress, however, that redundancies will be kept to a minimum and that the necessary administrative post reductions will be managed in the following way:

resettlement of staff into MAFF, Welsh Office and other Government Departments where possible;
a reduction in the number of casual staff, and;
natural wastage.

It is hoped that the reduction in the number of consultancy posts can mainly be achieved through a programme of:

voluntary redundancy;
early retirement, and;
natural wastage.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate in real terms the increase in farming incomes in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993; and by how much she estimates farming incomes will rise in 1994.

Mr. Jack: Total income from farming, which represents the total income from agriculture of the group with an entrepreneurial interest in the industry—farmers and spouses, non-principal partners and directors and their spouses and family workers—showed an increase in real terms in 1992 of 19·6 per cent. compared with 1991. The provisional figure for 1993 is 38·6 per cent. higher than in 1992. Figures for 1994 are not available.

Farm and Food Prices

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will estimate by how much *(a)* farm prices and *(b)* food prices have increased in the United Kingdom since September 1992.

Mr. Jack: Between September 1992 and December 1993 farm prices—as shown by the index of producer prices for agricultural products—rose by 1·9 per cent. Food prices—as shown by the food component of the index of retail prices—rose by 1·8 per cent. over the same period and by 2·3 per cent. through to January 1994.

Offshore Oil Licensing

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will list all the blocks her Department recommended should be excluded from the 14th round of offshore oil licensing; and what was the specific reason in each case;

(2) what areas of concern her Department asked the DTI to address in deciding which blocks to license during the 14th round of offshore oil licensing.

Mr. Jack: I refer to the reply I gave on 28 February 1994, at column *591*, and to the one given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy on 16 February 1994, at column *835*.

Veterinary Medicines

Mr. French: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current position on the establishment of maximum residue limits for active ingredients used in veterinary medicines for horses; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Under Council regulation 2377/90, maximum residue limits must be established by 1996 for active ingredients in veterinary medicines used in food-producing species. The European Commission has now confirmed that, in line with existing United Kingdom policy, if a horse is not destined for human consumption, maximum residue limits will not be required. In addition, the Commission has emphasised that it is not the intention of regulatory authorities to deny veterinarians the possibility of treating animals.

In the United Kingdom, therefore, we shall continue to require that where no MRLs have been established, the product should be clearly marked as not to be used on any animal that might be intended for human consumption. This applies to all horses, irrespective of value. I am satisfied that this provides the necessary guarantees to consumers of the safety of food while safeguarding animal health and welfare.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools do not have premises insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are four grant-maintained schools which do not have full premises insurance cover, out of a total of 814 currently operating. These are Edenham high school, Croydon; the Radcliffe school, Wolverton, Milton Keynes; Wood End middle school, Middlesex and Wrenn school, Wellingborough.

The position on each school is:

Edenham high school: has full premises cover apart from cover for subsidence; the school has been awarded a capital grant allocation for funding in 1994-95 to remedy the problem.

Radcliffe: the school has insurance cover apart from premises insurance; it has recently been surveyed and negotiations are continuing.

Wood End middle school: has cover for contents and employers liability; capital grant has been allocated to rebuild the school.

Wrenn school: has all the required insurance cover apart from subsidence cover which relates to past problems with its caretaker's house.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations govern his reference of parliamentary questions on the Child Support Agency to the director of the agency; what consideration has been given to answering such questions himself; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) on 7 February at columns *33-34*.

EC Nationals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from the European Commission and others regarding his proposal to introduce a test of habitual residence in the United Kingdom affecting EC nationals seeking work in the United Kingdom; how he proposes to introduce the test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Representations have been invited by the Social Security Advisory Committee from organisations and individuals who have views on the proposed introduction of a test of hibitual residence into the income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit schemes. The test will be introduced by laying regulations before the House, together with a Command Paper addressing the issues raised by those representations. We have received no representations from the European Commission on this matter.

Ms. Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many inquiries have been received by the Child Support Agency from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents since its introduction; how many inquiries have received a full reply within *(a)* one month, *(b)* two months and *(c)* three and over; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Ms Ann Coffey, dated 3 March 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of enquiries received from Members of Parliament by the Child Support Agency.

I am sorry, but the Agency does not collect statistics in the precise form in relation to clearance times which you have requested. I have received over 3,700 letters from Members of Parliament, and by 25 February, I had replied to over 1,900. Set out in the table below are the average clearance times for such correspondence:

	Per cent.
Cleared 1-15 days	16·61
Cleared 16-20 days	8·66
Cleared 21-40 days	26·76
Cleared over 40 days	47·98

In addition, over 1,300 letters have been sent to Agency Centres.

As you know, the Agency has set up a telephone help-line for Members of Parliament. From 13 December 1993, the date on which the service began, to 25 February 1994, we had received 663 calls.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which areas in the United Kingdom were triggered for cold weather payments in February.

Mr. Scott: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Winnick, dated 3 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking which areas in the United Kingdom were triggered for cold weather payments in February.

The attached appendix shows the weather stations which were triggered in February and the Benefits Agency Districts they cover, in whole, or in part. The relevant periods of cold weather are also shown together with an indication as to whether the trigger was due to a forecast or recording.

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Areas which were triggered for cold weather payments in February 1994

Weather station and Benefits Agency district office	*Period*	*Trigger*
Eskdalemuir		
East Lowlands	16–22 February	Forecast
Motherwell	23 February to 1 March	Forecast
North Cumbria		
South West Scotland		
Aviemore		
Grampian and Shetland	12–18 February	Recording
Highland and Islands	21–27 February	Forecast
Tayside		
Wilsden		
Barnsley	10–16 February	Recording
Blackburn	17–23 February	Recording
Bradford		
Central Derbyshire		
Kirklees		
Leeds North		
Leeds South		
North Derbyshire		
North Staffordshire		
Oldham		
Pendle and Rossendale		
Sale/East Cheshire		
Sheffield West		
Stockport		
Tameside		
West Pennine		
Yorkshire Pennine		
Glasgow airport		
Clyde Coast and Cowal	13–19 February	Recording
Coatbridge		
Forth Valley		
Glasgow West		
Glasgow City		
Glasgow Lauriston		
Glasgow South West		
Irvine and Kilmarnock		
Lomond and Argyle		
Lothian West		
Motherwell		
Renfrew		
South West Scotland		
Spring and Cumbernauld		
Leuchars		
Fife	13–19 February	Recording
Forth Valley		
Tayside		
Leeming		
East Yorkshire	15–21 February	Recording
Newcastle		
North Durham		
North Tees		
North Tyneside		
Northumberland		
North Yorkshire		
South Durham		
South Tees		
South Tyneside		
Wearside		
Edinburgh airport		
Coatbridge	16–22 February	Recording
East Lowlands		
Fife		
Forth Valley		
Lothian Central		
Lothian West		
Motherwell		
Tayside		
Finningley		
Barnsley	16–22 February	Recording
Doncaster		
East Yorkshire		
Hull		
Chesterfield and Worksop		
North Nottinghamshire		
Rother and Dearne		
Sheffield East		
Sheffield West		
Wakefield		
Waddington		
Cambridgeshire	16–22 February	Recorded
Wash Coast		
East Yorkshire		
Hull		
North Leicestershire		
South Humberside		
West Lincolnshire		
Kinloss		
Grampian and Shetland	24 February to 2 March	Forecast

Weather station and Benefits Agency district office	*Period*	*Trigger*
Highlands and Islands		
Lomond and Argyle		
Coltishall		
Norwich	17–23 February	Forecast
Suffolk		
Honnington		
Cambridgeshire	17–23 February	Recorded
Wash Coast		
North Essex		
Norwich		
Suffolk		
Marham		
Wash Coast	18–24 February	Recorded
Norwich		
Watnall		
Central Staffordshire	18–24 February	Recorded
Central Derbyshire		
East Nottinghamshire		
Northamptonshire		
North Derbyshire		
North Leicestershire		
North Nottinghamshire		
North Staffordshire		
South Leicestershire		
Warwickshire		
West Lincolnshire		
West Nottinghamshire		
Rother and Dearne		

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress his Department has made towards market testing recruitment monitoring.

Mr. David Davis: A draft invitation to tender for recruitment monitoring services has been drawn up. The approval of the Privy Council is currently being sought for a minor amendment to the civil and diplomatic service Orders in Council 1991 which will allow the Civil Service Commissioners to delegate to others their recruitment monitoring functions and thus to market test the operation. Subject to Privy Council approval, we hope to issue invitations to tender shortly.

Public Bodies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his oral statement of 24 February, *Official Report,* columns 463-75, if he will publish the list of known Labour supporters appointed to public bodies to which he referred.

Mr. Waldegrave: From my own knowledge, I had constructed the following list for the purposes of the debate:

Lord Cocks, Deputy Chairman, BBC
Baroness Jay, Member, Kensington Chelsea and Westminster health authority
Baroness Blackstone, Natural History museum
Clive Wilkinson, Chairman, Sandwell health authority
Helene Hayman, Chairman, Whittington trust
Margaret Hodge, Local Government Commission
Dr. Dickson Mabon, Chairman, London homeopathic hospital trust
Dr. Edmund Marshall, Member, Wakefield FHSA
Lord Barnett, Victoria and Albert museum
Rosie Barnes, Non-executive director, Greenwich healthcare trust
Bill Kilgallon, Chairman, Leeds mental health trust
Bob Cryer, British Film Institute

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Shortages

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research is being conducted by the Department or elsewhere into the long-term implications of the decline of the population of working age compared with that of retirement age and the extent to which there will be an additional need for immigrant labour to overcome labour shortages.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department does not project the demand for labour. It publishes projections of the labour force, as well as expected demographic changes and the trends in economic activity. The most recent projections go up to the year 2006. "Labour force projections: 1993-2006" is published in the *Employment Gazette,* April 1993 pp139-147. The *Employment Gazette* is available from the Library.

In addition, reports of Carnegie inquiry into the third age, which was co-funded by the Employment Department, are now published. The inquiry explored aspects of the aging of the work force and population. The reports are available from the Library.

Immigrant Labour

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has commissioned on the relationship between immigrant labour and unemployment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The labour force survey provides information on the number of immigrants unemployed in the United Kingdom, according to the International Labour Office definition of unemployment.

Information form the LFS can be obtained from the Library via computer link.

In 1981 the Policy Studies Institute published "Unemployment and Racial Minorities". This work was commissioned by the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been conducted by his Department on the impact which immigrant labour has had on the labour market since 1964.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has commissioned the following relevant research studies:

"The role of immigrants in the labour market" by the Department of Employment Unit for Manpower Studies—March 1977.

"Foreign workers and the UK labour market" by John Salt and Robert Kitching, *Employment Gazette,* November 1990, pages 538-46.

"Foreign workers and the UK labour market: a correction", *Employment Gazette,* July 1991, pages 405-8.

"Irish nationals in the British labour market" by Christopher Woolford, *Employment Gazette,* January 1994, pages 29-32.

Information on the number and occupation of immigrants in the United Kingdom labour market since

1984 is collected in the labour force survey. This can be obtained from the Library via computer link. The *Employment Gazette* is also available from the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has commissioned on the extent to which refugees and immigrants, other than those for whom an employer has a work permit, are successful in the labour market, and the extent to which language ability affects their employment prospects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Employment Department has commissioned no research on this issue.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department has carried out on whether immigrant labour has displaced, or complemented, the indigenous work force in different sectors of employment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This issue is explored in reports of two research projects conducted for the Employment Department.

"The role of immigrants in the labour market" by the Department of Employment Unit for Manpower Studies—March 1977.

"Foreign workers and the UK labour market" by John Salt and Robert Kitching, *Employment Gazette*, November 1990, pages 538-46.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been conducted on the occupational attainment of immigrants and refugees in the British labour market compared with the occupational level in their previous country of residence.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has not conducted and is not aware of any studies on this issue.

Work Permits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what empirical research on future labour market needs is conducted by his Department in order to inform those officials responsible for decisions on work permit applications.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department draws on a range of labour market information and consults professional bodies and trade federations.

EC Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been conducted, is being conducted or is planned into the impact of other EC workers on the British labour market and into the potential impact of allowing third-country nationals resident in other member states to work without restrictions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has commissioned the following relevant research studies on the impact of European Union workers on the British labour market.

"Foreign workers and the United Kingdom labour market" by John Salt and Robert Kitching, *Employment Gazette*, November 1990, pages 538-46.

"Foreign workers and the United Kingdom labour market: a correction", *Employment Gazette*, July 1991, pages 405-408.

"Irish nationals in the British labour market: by Christopher Woolford, *Employment Gazette*, January 1994, pages 29-32.

The *Employment Gazette* is available from the Library.

Information on the number and occupation of European Union workers in the United Kingdom labour market since 1984 is collected in the labour force survey. This can be obtained from the Library via computer link.

The Department has not conducted research into the impact of allowing third-country nationals resident in other member states to work without restrictions in the United Kingdom.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in slaughterhouses in each county of England in each year since 1985.

Miss Widdecombe: Due to the small number of employers in each county operating slaughterhouses, the confidentiality restrictions of the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 prevent this information from being released.

Employment estimates are available for the standard economic regions in England from the periodic censuses of employment. The most recent of these was conducted in September 1991. The estimates can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library, subject to the confidentiality restrictions of the 1947 Act.

Youth Training

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide an up-to-date table showing for the counties of England, for each year since 1989, the number of places on youth training schemes and the number of people who have been waiting for eight weeks for a place.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is available for England and training and enterprise councils in England, but not on a comprehensive basis for English counties. Information about the number of available places is not collected centrally. The number of young people on youth training at the end of each financial year and at the latest date are given at tables 1 and 2. TEC level data are not available prior to 1991-92.

Information on the number of people waiting for eight weeks or more has only been collected since autumn 1992 and the first reliable TEC level data are available from March 1993. These and the latest data are given at table 3.

Table 1

Youth training (inc youth credits) in training TECs in England

	March 1992	*March 1993*	*November 1993*
Hampshire	5,000	6,200	6,310
Heart of England	1,880	1,690	1,790
Isle of Wight	640	570	590
Kent	6,080	5,760	5,640
Milton Keynes	1,250	1,340	1,380
Surrey	1,910	2,030	1,830
Sussex	3,970	4,500	3,760
Thames Valley	4,420	3,270	5,660
AZTEC	1,180	1,280	1,300
Central London	1,700	2,070	2,020
CILNTEC	1,910	2,250	2,290
London East	4,760	4,190	4,550
North London	1,350	1,560	1,140
North West London	1,110	930	730
SOLOTEC	2,460	3,000	2,340
South Thames	3,040	3,320	2,790
West London	2,450	2,450	2,370

	March 1992	*March 1993*	*November 1993*
Bedfordshire	1,960	2,170	2,130
Cambridgeshire	920	1,040	1,280
Essex	5,280	5,990	6,300
Greater Peterborough	1,710	1,560	1,550
Hertfordshire	3,720	3,230	4,460
Norfolk and Waveney	4,470	4,090	4,440
Suffolk	2,750	2,810	2,700
Avon	4,600	4,370	4,390
Devon and Cornwall	6,920	6,540	6,580
Dorset	2,510	2,540	2,430
Gloucestershire	2,460	2,910	2,870
Somerset	2,730	2,150	2,130
Wiltshire	2,240	2,560	2,240
Birmingham	5,340	4,630	5,080
Central England	1,590	1,590	1,660
Coventry	4,900	3,900	4,270
Dudley	2,050	1,630	1,930
Hawtec	2,120	2,040	2,010
Sandwell	1,820	1,890	1,970
Shropshire	2,630	2,430	2,320
Staffordshire	6,320	7,610	5,670
Walsall	1,410	1,330	1,420
Wolverhampton	1,770	1,780	1,660
Greater Nottinghamshire	3,210	3,950	4,170
Leicester	4,820	4,530	5,310
Lincolnshire	3,920	3,770	3,800
North Derbyshire	1,970	1,750	1,910
North Nottinghamshire	2,910	3,100	2,980
Northamptonshire	1,880	2,310	2,150
South Derbyshire	3,210	2,830	3,020
Humberside	6,620	5,780	6,230
North Yorkshire	2,470	2,720	2,760
Wakefield	1,780	1,580	1,550
Sheffield	3,010	2,730	3,060
Rotherham	1,360	1,650	1,830
Barnsley/Doncaster	3,900	4,050	4,070
Leeds	2,710	2,700	2,700
Bradford	2,920	2,250	3,380
Calderdale/Kirklees	3,280	3,050	3,480
Bolton/Bury	2,600	2,530	3,070
Manchester	6,750	6,090	6,660
Metrotec	1,820	1,89[illegible]	2,280
Oldham	1,660	1,510	1,570
Rochdale	1,210	1,530	1,690
South and East Cheshire	2,060	2,720	2,890
Stockport and High Peak	2,080	1,700	1,800
Cewtec	3,000	3,000	3,030
Cumbria	3,670	3,610	3,960
Eltec	3,750	3,860	3,840
Lawtec	4,960	5,260	5,380
Merseyside	8,170	7,900	7,340
Normidtec	2,730	2,570	2,810
Qualitec	1,790	1,630	1,710
County Durham	4,430	3,630	4,030
Northumberland	2,080	2,230	1,980
Teesside	4,610	5,410	5,160
Tyneside	5,770	6,410	6,900
Wearside	2,750	2,400	2,500

Source: Tec operating agreement (Annex J).

Table 2

Youth trainees (including youth credits) in training, England

	Number
March 1989	306,100
March 1990	279,200
March 1991	[1]191,500
March 1992	233,200
March 1993	231,800
November 1993	239,000

[1] Excluding all trainees in training with nationally contracted providers.

Sources:

YTS trainee database.

TEC operating agreement—annex J.

Youth training (including youth credits) guarantee young people waiting more than eight weeks TECs in England

	March 1993	*February 1994*
Hampshire	207	5
Heart of England	15	5
Isle of Wight	37	5
Kent	338	0
Milton Keynes	32	4
Surrey	94	5
Sussex	66	12
Thames Valley	185	12
AZTEC	156	0
Central London	136	9
CILNTEC	143	0
London East	439	0
North London	66	3
North West London	111	4
SOLOTEC	206	0
South Thames	476	0
West London	36	2
Bedfordshire	115	12
Cambs	69	1
Essex	373	0
Greater Peterborough	23	0
Hertfordshire	107	7
Norfolk and Waveney	4	9
Suffolk	13	5
Avon	88	14
Devon and Cornwall	66	1
Dorset	23	2
Gloucestershire	28	0
Somerset	97	13
Wiltshire	68	0
Birmingham	110	1
Central England	14	3
Coventry	79	4
Dudley	2	2
Hawtec	19	4
Sandwell	10	3
Shropshire	19	0
Staffordshire	4	16
Walsall	3	3
Wolverhampton	2	2
Greater Nottingham	32	0
Leicester	27	3
Lincolnshire	19	1
North Derbyshire	42	2
North Nottingham	91	2
Northants	62	0
South Derbyshire	25	0
Humberside	47	0
North Yorkshire	79	0
Wakefield	18	1
Sheffield	156	0

	March 1993	*February 1994*
Rotherham	4	0
Barnsley/Doncaster	36	1
Leeds	37	1
Bradford	15	1
Calderdale/Kirklees	18	0
Bolton/Bury	41	0
Manchester	106	0
Metrotec	21	0
Oldham	36	5
Rochdale	18	0
South and East Cheshire	0	0
Stockport and High Peak	16	0
Cewtec	18	1
Cumbria	33	0
Eltec	19	9
Lawtec	40	7
Merseyside	42	9
Normidtec	13	5
Qualitec	20	0
County Durham	62	4
Northumberland	47	2
Teesside	45	2
Tyneside	60	16
Wearside	0	0
England	5,424	240

Source: TEC returns.

Jobcentres

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy regarding the use of jobcentres to advertise for *(a)* jobs in areas of armed conflict, *(b)* mercenaries and *(c)* jobs that support military forces in areas of armed conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Dr. David Clark, dated 4 March 1994:

The Secretary of State for Employment has asked me to reply to your question about our policy on advertising for people to work in areas of military conflict.

The Employment Service (ES) aims not to handle vacancies where jobseekers would be put at risk, or where our reputation would be damaged thereby reducing our capacity to help unemployed people find jobs. Vacancies for mercenaries or those where the work actively supported a hostile military campaign would not meet these criteria and would not therefore be accepted.

All vacancies for work abroad have to be cleared with the Overseas Placing Unit within my Head Office before they can be advertised in Jobcentres. To try to protect our jobseeker clients, careful checks are made about the employer and the work offered.

It is our practice not to accept a vacancy if it is known that the job requires a person to work in an area where there is armed conflict. If, however, a job was to work in a country where there was conflict but in a part where our clients would not be at risk, we would then consider servicing the vacancy. Where there is doubt about a particular area then advice is sought from the Foreign and Commonwealth office

In recent months we have been involved in helping to recruit people in a variety of trades to work in the former Yugoslavia. The jobs were specifically to work on UN contracts to support their peacekeeping mission, and were located away from the areas of armed conflict. Advice was taken from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as described.

I hope this is helpful.

WALES

Building Renovation Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the funding by the Welsh Office of building renovation grants to *(a)* Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor, *(b)* Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Arfon and *(c)* throughout Wales in each of the last five years; and what is the money allocated to each of these three categories for this purpose for 1994-95.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is as follows:

Specific public expenditure cover provided by the Welsh Office for home renovation grants

£ million

Year	*Dwyfor*	*Arfon*	*Wales*
1990-91	1·174	2·319	101·900
1991-92	1·493	3·947	124·800
1992-93	2·377	2·960	169·300
1993-94	3·060	3·816	171·900
1994-95	2·973	3·262	177·000

Comparative figures for years prior to 1990-91 are not available because of changes in (i) the public expenditure treatment of local authority capital programmes, (ii) the arrangements for the control of local authority expenditure, and (iii) the home renovation grant system.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made as to how many of those pupils currently covered by the assisted places scheme would have entered private education without the support offered by the scheme.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No such assessment has been made. It is unlikely that numbers would be high. Over 40 per cent. of parents in Wales pay no contribution to fees because of the low level of their incomes.

Tai Cymru

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the main building contractors currently engaged in capital projects funded by Tai Cymru, Housing for Wales, through housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: This is primarily a matter for Housing for Wales. The chief executive has been asked to write to the hon. Member. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Library of the House.

Road Contractors

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the main building and engineering contractors currently engaged in road construction projects funded by the Welsh Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The building and civil engineering contractors currently employed by the Welsh Office on major motorway and trunk road contracts—those valued at over £3 million—are listed as follows:

- Morrison Construction Ltd.
- Kier/Hochtief Joint Venture
- Mowlem Construction Ltd.
- Costain Civil Engineering
- Amey Construction Ltd.
- Laing Construction Ltd.
- Alfred McAlpine Construction Ltd.
- Trafalgar House

Technology Schools Initiative

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many schools in Powys were successful in receiving grant aid under the technology schools initiative; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will set out the criteria for provision of receiving grant aid under the technology schools initiative for *(a)* grant-maintained school and *(b)* other schools; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the schools which have secured grant aid under the technology schools initiative and the amount of grant in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The criteria are set out in a Welsh Office circular letter dated 21 May 1993 which was sent to all directors of education and chairpersons of grant-maintained schools in Wales. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

The criteria apply to both grant-maintained and other schools. However, grant-maintained school strategies are funded by capital grant and LEA maintained schools by local authority capital credit approvals.

On this occasion, none of the successful schools was located in Powys. Strategies have been approved for the following schools for the amounts shown:

	£
Bedwas comprehensive school	250,000
Bishop Vaughan grant-maintained school	245,000
Cynffig comprehensive school	223,000
Morriston comprehensive school	210,000
Queen Elizabeth Maridunum school	244,000
Risca comprehensive school	245,000
Ysgol David Hughes	237,000
Ysgol Morgan Llwyd	239,000

In addition, £212,000 was approved for Denbigh technological and vocational education centre.

The technology schools initiative represents a considerable investment in improving technology teaching in the schools which submitted successful proposals. My Department is considering how best to build on the success of this initiative. This will include, in due course, a review of the criteria for receiving support under the initiative.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the basic salary, merit awards and domiciliary visit payments made to the 20 highest paid consultants working in the national health service in Wales in 1992-93; and which directly managed units and health trusts employed them.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not held centrally.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in slaughterhouses in each year since 1985.

Mr. Redwood: Levels of employment in slaughterhouses are given in the table. Figures are available only for years when a census of employment was carried out.

Year[1]	*Employees in employment*
1987	400
1989	300
1991	600

[1] As at September.

Source: Employment Department.

Abortions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many abortions in Wales were carried out because of *(a)* known or suspected foetal abnormality affecting the mother, *(b)* central nervous system malformation in the foetus since 1979 and *(c)* chromosomal abnormality in the foetus since 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on legal abortions in England and Wales, at the level of detail requested, has been published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys annually since 1984 according to area of residence—in "Abortion Statistics". To provide these data by the area in which the abortion took place would involve disproportionate cost. The numbers of residents of Wales having an abortion in the categories specified, in each year from 1984 to 1991, the most recent year available, are given in the table. Information for previous years is not readily available.

Less detailed information on the number of legal abortions carried out in Wales is published in "Health and Personal Social Services in Wales", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Residents of Wales
Principal medical condition

ICD Number and Condition		*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
655	Known or suspected foetal abnormality affecting management of mother	183	185	150	127	135	136	118	108
655.0	Central nervous system malformation in foetus	48	40	54	28	40	46	33	36
655.1	Chromosomal abnormality in foetus	25	31	19	16	22	30	19	16

Forestry Committee

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who are the present members of the committee set up for Wales under section 2(3) of the Forestry Act 1967; and if he will also list the dates and venue of the committee meetings.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the Forestry Act 1967 the Forestry Commissioners are statutorily obliged to appoint a committee for Wales. However, the role of the committee was effectively diminished in 1965 when the commissioners abolished national directorates as part of a streamlining exercise to remove a management tier. Its current members are Mr. C. R. Woosnam CBE, Mr. R. T. Bradley, Mr. M. A. McLaggan and Mr. D. M. Hughes. The committee last met in 1985.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has in relation to the incidence of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease as regards *(a)* suspected cases and *(b)* officially notified cases in Wales in the past two years; how many suspected cases notified informally to his Department are undergoing tests for the disease at present; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since May 1990 details of suspected cases of Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in the United Kingdom have been notified to the national CJD surveillance unit in Edinburgh. Suspected cases are classified as definite, probable, possible and other. Separate Welsh data on "other" cases is not easily identifiable. During the period 1 May 1991 and 30 April 1993 there were eight definite, two probable and one possible case of CJD from Wales.

The Department is aware of one patient in Wales who is currently undergoing tests. CJD cannot be confirmed in this case at this stage.

EC Committee of the Regions

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the Committee of the Welsh Districts and the Assembly of the Welsh Counties in relation to reporting-back procedures for Welsh delegates to the European Community Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Redwood: Both the Committee of Welsh Districts and the Assembly of Welsh Counties have written to me regarding various aspects of the proposed report-back body. I have also recently written to both associations inviting them to consider the establishment of a forum which could hear the reports of the Welsh members of the Committee of the Regions. I await their responses.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the health authorities in Wales concerning the disposition of the £1 million waiting list initiative funds; in which hospitals it will be spent and in which principal specialties; and what is his current estimate of its impact on waiting list levels.

Mr. Redwood: The allocation of moneys between hospitals and specialties is a matter for health authorities to decide upon in the light of local need and circumstances. Their use of the allocation will be subject to formal evaluation by my Department, in the normal way.

The funding should ensure that all of the patients charter waiting times guarantees are met by 31 March.

Hospitals

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has in relation to the numbers of *(a)* trust hospitals and *(b)* directly managed unit hospitals which are no longer able to treat (i) elective surgery cases and (ii) new out-patients referred by the purchasing side of the corresponding local health authority.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the management of individual service contracts within the NHS is not collected centrally as a matter of routine. Health authorities and NHS trusts are held to account for their overall performance against targets agreed annually with my Department. The emphasis is on the delivery of timely and effective services for patients, and the first class stewardship of resources. A judgment is also made of the skill with which the contracting process as a whole is managed in each area.

Mr. Geoff Drake

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the appointments of Mr. Geoff Drake both as a member of the board of TARGED, the training and enterprise council for north-west Wales, and also to the post of chairman designate of the Gwynedd health trust; what consultations his office made before confirming these appointments; what further investigations on consultations have been undertaken as a result of representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* I have received one letter requesting information about the chairman of the Gwynedd hospitals NHS trust, a letter from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), a letter from the clerk of Llanrug community council, in addition to two letters from the hon. Member about Mr. Geoffrey Drake.

I am confident that Mr. Drake's skills and experience in industry and his membership of the Gwynedd health authority from November 1992 to December 1993, make him eminently suitable for the post he holds.

I am not responsible for appointments to TARGED which is a private company limited by guarantee and as such elects its own directors.

Public Appointments

Mr. Wrigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether, in making appointments to *(a)* the Gwynedd health trust *(b)* TARGED and *(c)* other nominated authorities in Wales, he advertises the posts; what consultations he undertakes locally on the suitability or otherwise of such nominations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 February 1994]:* In future, my Department will make public, by means of press notices, forthcoming important vacancies on NHS and other public bodies in Wales to which I make appointments.

I am not responsible for appointments to TARGED, which is a private company limited by guarantee and as such is responsible for the appointment of its members.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Allowances

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the saving to the revenue if personal allowances were treated as tax credits and deducted from a taxpayer's tax liability after the calculation of the amount of tax due, (as for the married couple's allowance in the 1994 Finance Bill), on the assumption that the value of the personal allowance for a basic rate taxpayer remained the same as at present and a basic rate of income tax of 20 per cent.

Mr. Dorrell: The hypothetical regime specified, with the value of the personal allowance for a person aged under 65 retained at £861·25p—£3,445 at 25 per cent—but given as a deduction from tax at a rate of 20 per cent. would result in a revenue cost of over £11 billion in a full year.

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of full transferability of the personal tax allowance between married couples based on a tax rate of 25p in the pound on the basis that married couples allowance no longer existed.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 March 1994]:* There is insufficient information in the question on which to base a meaningful reply.

Family Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he arrived at his forecast that the increase in taxation on an average family would be more than offset by an increase in average earnings of £30 per week; and if he will break that figure down to show (i) the increase in earnings by median and deciles and (ii) manufacturing and non-manufacturing.

Mr. Dorrell: The figure of £30 per week is not my forecast. It is the hypothetical increase in earnings assumed by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) in the question to which I replied on 17 February 1994, *Official Report,* columns *891-96.*

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue saving of the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief, assuming present rates of interest in *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of mortgage interest relief is estimated to be £4·3 billion in 1993-94, £3·4 billion in 1994-95 and £2·8 billion in 1995-96. These estimates are based on actual mortgage interest rates throughout 1993-94 and the assumption that they remain at their current levels for the next two years. They assume relief is available at 25 per cent. in 1993-94, 20 per cent. in 1994-95 and 15 per cent. in 1995-96.

Wine, Spirits and Cigarettes

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change since the establishment of the single market in the quantity of wine, spirits and cigarettes for personal consumption imported.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise estimate that legitimate imports for personal consumption in the year to 31 December 1993 increased by approximately 40 million litres in the case of wine, 10 million litres of bottled spirits and 400 million cigarettes.

Domestic Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from environmental groups against the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope: I have received a number of representations from environmental groups on the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. Friends of the Earth, for example, have been

> "broadly supportive of Government moves to increase energy prices by imposing VAT on domestic fuel and power".

Energy Companies (Government Stores)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Her Majesty's Treasury intends to dispose of its holdings of shares in National Power and PowerGen.

Mr. Dorrell: The Treasury intends shortly to appoint a merchant bank to advise on the sale of some or all of its National Power and Powergen shares. Subject to market conditions, this will take place in 1994-95. No decisions have been taken on the precise timing, size or structure of any sale.

Convergence Programme

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to update the convergence programme produced by the United Kingdom in May 1993.

Mr. Nelson: An update of the United Kingdom's convergence programme has today been sent to the European Commission. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Private Health Insurance

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Treasury rules permit loss of revenue from business tax relief on the expense on providing private health care for employees to exceed the income derived from the tax due on the private health care given as a benefit to those same employees.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* If an employer incurs expenditure on providing health care for employees, the expenses incurred will qualify as a deduction when calculating the trading profits of the business if the expense is incurred wholly and exclusively for business purposes. A director or employee earning at the rate of £8,500 or more a year is liable to tax on the expense incurred in connection with the provision of the benefit. The reduction in tax for the employer and the additional tax charged on the employees depend on their individual circumstances.

SCOTLAND

Training

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training companies in the Inverclyde area and the sums of money paid out of public funds to each of them over the past five years; how many trainees each of them trained over the same period of time; of these trainees, how many found full-time employment when their training programmes were completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1994]:* The information requested by the hon. Member is not available for the Inverclyde area in the period before April 1991, when responsibility for the delivery of Government training programmes in lowland Scotland was transferred from the Training Agency to Scottish Enterprise and its network of local enterprise companies. Since then the allocation of funding for training, and the numbers of trainees trained in each local enterprise company area has been an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked the chairman of Scottish Enterprise to write to the hon. Member.

Campaigns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report,* columns *949-50,* if he will place in the Library the results of research conducted on the campaigns listed; and if he will publish an estimate of *(a)* the number of responses received to the children's panel recruitment campaign, *(b)* the number of responses received to the teacher recruitment campaign, *(c)* the number of requests for the right to buy information booklet and *(d)* the number of responses received to the national continence week telephone hotline.

Mr. Lang: The details requested are as follows:

(a) Children's panels. A total of 2,262 responses were received via the telephone number and advertisement coupon which featured in the Scottish national press. Weekly newspapers published a local authority telephone number; number of responses not yet available.

(b) Teacher recruitment—2,408 responses.

(c) Right to Buy—7,182 responses.

(d) National continence week from 13 to 19 March publicises the existing all-the-year round help service. The telephone number featured is that of the continence resource centre at the Southern General hospital NHS trust, Glasgow where help can be sought.

Accessibility to the Scottish Office. Data based on post campaign research have just been received and are still being analysed.

Drugs and solvent misuse. The pre-campaign qualitative research on the drugs and solvents campaign was commissioned by the Department of Health. These are working documents used to inform management decision making and are not generally made available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were employed in slaughterhouses in each year since 1985.

Mr. Tim Smith: The information requested is available from the Northern Ireland census of employment only for the years 1987, 1989 and 1991. The table provides the total employees in employment at those dates.

Year	*Employees in employment*
1987	1,031
1989	865
1991	910

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report,* column *1034,* if he will provide whatever information is available on those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Since I became Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I have signed the following public interest immunity certificates. In one certificate, signed in May 1992, I made a claim for certain members of the security forces to be screened from the public in inquest proceedings and for the protection of certain documentary and oral evidence from disclosure on grounds of national security relating to methods used to gather intelligence about terrorists. I signed a similar certificate in relation to an inquest which took place in March 1993. In another certificate, signed in February 1993, made for the purposes of criminal proceedings, I made a claim in relation to certain police files. The remaining certificates were to protect the identity of prison officers and methods of control in prisons in connection with civil proceedings by prisoners.

No other Northern Ireland Office Minister has signed any public interest immunity certificate during this time.

HEALTH

Mental Health

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the commonly held misconceptions about mental health and community care, cited in their evidence to the Health Select Committee on 9 December 1993—HC, 1993-94, 102-i—that the mental health task force aims to correct.

Mr. Bowis: I have nothing to add to the evidence given on 9 December 1993.

Ambulance Negotiating Body

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what groups are currently represented on the ambulance negotiating body;

(2) what plans she has to widen representation on the ambulance negotiating body, in particular to include ambulance officers and control room assistants.

Mr. Sackville: The staff side of the ambulance negotiating body consists of representatives of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel. The management side consists of representatives of national health service bodies and the health departments. The ANB was set up in 1989 to operate in parallel with the existing ambulance Whitley council. There are no plans to include ambulance officers and control room assistants under the purview of the ANB.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what happens to the interest which accrues from surplus sums deposited in the regional savings account by fundholding practices.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fundholders may accrue savings for up to four years. These are held by the appropriate regional health authority as part of their usual cash management programme. The question of interest does not therefore arise.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial arrangements are made with the fundholding practices which end the year in deficit.

Dr. Mawhinney: Any overspending by a general practitioner fundholder will be met from regional health authority contingencies. Where overspending is the result of mismanagement, the GP fundholders may have their fundholding status withdrawn.

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sum has been deposited as surplus by fundholding practices in the Wakefield area in the regional savings account.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the general practitioner fundholding scheme in their areas. For local information in the Yorkshire region the hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Office of Population Censuses and Statistics

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the running costs of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for the last 10 years for which figures are available; what type of projects it carries out; and how its work is monitored.

Mr. Sackville: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' net running costs from 1984-85 to 1993-94 were:

Net running costs

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	22·4
1985-86	24·2
1986-87	24·8
1987-88	26·8
1988-89	20·3
1989-90	22·7
1990-91	36·8
1991-92	88·3
1992-93	24·1
1993-94	27·7

Notes:

1. Running costs are net of receipts.
2. For comparison purposes, superannuation, which became a vote cost from April 1993, has been excluded from all the figures. The amount involved is £3 million in 1993-94.
3. Running costs decreased in 1988-89 due to the move to repayment for Social Surveys.
4. Running costs peaked 1991-92 because of expenditure on the 1991 Census.
5. Final outturn figures are given for all years except 1993-94, for which the actual Vote provision is shown.

OPCS's main functions are:

to administer the Marriage Acts and to direct and control the local registration of births, marriages and deaths in England and Wales;

to produce the estimates and projections of local and health authority populations which are used in allocating resources to them;

to produce and publish statistics on population levels, on migration, on fertility and on abortions, mortality, morbidity and other health matters;

to take the census of population in England and Wales; and to process, analyse and publish the resulting statistics;

to conduct social surveys for Government Departments and public sector bodies and to give survey advice to Departments;

to run the national health service central register for the Department of Health;

assisting in the supply of statistics and statistical analysis for particular purposes, such as the nation's health;

to provide secretarial and analytical support to the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England and Wales.

Further detail is given in OPCS's business plans and annual reports, copies of which will be placed in the Library. OPCS is a Government Department, and is accountable to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health in the normal way.

NHS Management

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of national health service management in the Huddersfield health authority area in *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: General and senior management posts were introduced in phases from 1986 before which the national health service was clearly undermanaged. The pay costs for NHS managers within Huddersfield health authority amounted to £137,537 in 1987-88 and £1,559,120 in 1992-93. Comparisons over the years are meaningless because the growth in numbers and costs is mainly due to the reclassification of staff previously included in other administrative and professional categories as managers.

Pathology

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what rules a fundholding practice is allowed to spend its money on major equipment with particular reference to pathology analysis.

Dr. Mawhinney: The rules setting out how general practitioner fundholder savings may be used are in paragraph 24 of the National Health Service (Fundholding Practices) Regulations 1993.

Prescription Medicines

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she can make of changes to the pattern of inward investment by American and Japanese pharmaceutical companies should her Department's recent proposals on changes to the system of prescribing medicines by doctors and their generic substitution be implemented;

(2) what evaluation she has made of the possible effects on pharmaceutical research and development in the United Kingdom of any introduction of a scheme or schemes of generic substitution of medicines by pharmacists when dispensing doctors' prescriptions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department has opened discussions with the medical and pharmaceutical professions about possible schemes for generic substitution and will shortly be meeting the pharmaceutical industry.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the income from prescription charges in 1993-94.

Dr. Mawhinney: The answer is £267 million.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances a community pharmacist can substitute a generic product for a branded medicine prescribed by a doctor.

Dr. Mawhinney: A pharmacist is not allowed to substitute any product, whether generic or otherwise, for a specifically named product without the approval of the prescriber, except in an emergency.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the annual rate of growth of the total real cost of national health service medicines since 1978.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Annual real terms increase in cost of national health service drugs (FHS drugs bill plus expenditure on HCHS drugs)

Year	Percentage increase in Real terms
[1]1978-79	8·1
1979-80	−0·9
1980-81	2·0
1981-82	4·5
1982-83	7·3
1983-84	6·5
1984-85	0·2
1985-86	1·2
1986-87	4·9
1987-88	5·7
1988-89	5·4
1989-90	3·7
1990-91	−0·2
1991-92	7·7
1992-93	8·4

[1] Percentage increase in 1978-79 is based on family health service drug cost as no hospital and community health services cost is available for the previous year.

Operations (Statistics)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state the most recently available average costs of *(a)* hip replacement operations, *(b)* cataract removal and *(c)* coronary artery bypass graft operations; and if she will make a further statement on the number of these operations in 1992 and in 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available information is shown in the table.

	Estimated average cost[1]	Finished Consultant Episodes 1989-90[2]	1990-91[2]
Hip replacement operations	£3,810	50,790	50,725
Cataract extraction	£1,230	[3]92,184	[3]97,894
Coronary artery bypass grafts	£5,870	10,612	12,041

[1] The estimated national average costs at 1991-92 prices—including an allowance for capital charges.

[2] *Source:* Hospital episode statistics.

[3] Eye lens operations—mainly cataracts.

Clunis Inquiry

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the findings of the health authorities' inquiry into the case of Christopher Clunis.

Mr. Bowis: The Ritchie report into the care and treatment of Christopher Clunis was published on 24 February.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has following the report of the Clunis inquiry to modify *(a)* her Department's draft circular on the discharge of psychiatric patients from hospital and their continuing care in the community and *(b)* Government policy on the reduction in the number of psychiatric beds.

Mr. Bowis: Our policy remains to encourage the development in every health district of a comprehensive range of services for mentally ill people, including sufficient in-patient facilities for those who need admission to hospital on either a short term or long term basis.

The draft guidance on the discharge of psychiatric patients is currently being considered in the light both of the comments received during the period of consultation, including the Ritchie report recommendations.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Ms. Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the accident and emergency departments in London together with the number of people treated in each year since 1989 and the number of patients they were designed to treat.

Mr. Sackville: Details of the number of accident and emergency departments in London, and their attendances during the period 1989 to 1993, will be placed in the Library. It should be noted that the London ambulance service also transport patients to 10 accident and emergency departments outside London when appropriate.

Information about the number of patients accident and emergency departments were designed to treat is not routinely collected.

Wandsworth Health Authority

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total budget for the Wandsworth health authority for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the South West Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairman, Professor Marian Hicks, for details.

Lone Parents

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a ranking by county of the percentages of families headed by a female lone parent.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not readily available precisely in the form requested. However, two closely related statistics have been derived from published 1991 census tables, and this information will be placed in the Library.

Medical Research

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are applied by her Department in making funding available for research into medical conditions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgement. The council is always willing to consider for support soundly based new scientific proposals in competition with other applications.

The purpose of the Department's centrally commissioned programme of research is to secure a scientific basis for departmental policies, with an emphasis on public health, policy on health services and personal social services rather than on medical conditions. The principles governing the commissioning of departmental research are set out in its code of practice for the commissioning and management of research and development, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

The strategic framework for the national health service research and development strategy, which is co-ordinated through the Department, is set by the central research and development committee. NHS issues, appropriate for research and development, are being identified in relation to six overlapping perspectives, one of which is disease related. Within each of these perspectives, broad areas are defined on the basis of burden of disease, service relevance, timeliness and likely benefits of research.

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the incidence of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Mr. Sackville: The incidence of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy has been estimated as 2·5 in 100,000 population per year—*The British Medical Journal*, 13 February 1993.

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what consideration she has given to research undertaken into hypertrophic cardiomyopathy outside the United Kingdom;

(2) if she will make funding available from her Department for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy research;

(3) how much money her Department has allocated for research into hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Within the Department of Health research funding is determined by priorities identified in accordance with national policy and the advice of specialist committees which take into account existing domestic and international research. Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy is not one of the Department's research priorities. The Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy Association does, however, currently receive a section 64 grant from the Department.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people, broken down into age categories, have received private eye tests in each year since the introduction of NHS sight test charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the number of eye tests carried out following the introduction of regulations on visual display unit usage.

Dr. Mawhinney: No such estimate has been made.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have received an NHS eye test in each of the last 10 years; and if she will indicate the numbers in groups *(a)* under 16, *(b)* between 16 and 40, *(c)* between 40 and 60 and *(d)* over 60 years of age for each year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of sight tests paid for by family health services authorities is shown in the table:

Sight tests – England

Millions

Year	*Total*	*Children under 16*
1983-84	9,266	—
1984-85	9,882	—
1985-86	10,246	—
1986-87	10,615	—
1987-88	11,695	—
1988-89	12,493	—
1989-90[1]	1,631	—
1989-90[2]	3,649	[3]1,541
1990-91	4,154	1,560
1991-92	4,979	1,843
1992-93	5,528	2,013

[1] Old scheme.

[2] New scheme. From 1 April 1989, national health service sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population. The sight tests paid for in this period are split between those conducted prior to 1 April and those conducted after 1 April.

[3] This figure is not comparable with those for subsequent years since there will be an additional number of sight tests paid for in this period which were conducted prior to 1 April 1989. Since everyone was then entitled to a NHS sight test, patient eligibility was not relevant.

Note: Apart from children under 16 for the years shown, information on the age of patients is not available.

Empty Hospitals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* England have been empty since 1989.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities and National Health Service trusts are responsible for disposing of surplus NHS property in accordance with Government procedures.

Dentistry

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she is planning to publish the Government's response to the Bloomfield report and the oral health strategy.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 February at column *1042*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the British Dental Association about the publication of the response to the Bloomfield report and oral health strategy; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The British Dental Association wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 9 February.

Blindness

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the three most common conditions resulting in blindness in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the causes of blindness is collected at 10 year intervals, annual information is not available.

Unpublished data from the survey "Causes of blindness and partial sight in England and Wales April 1990 to March 1991" show the most common causes of blindness are:

Degeneration macula and posterior pole
Glaucoma
Diabetic retinopathy
Optic atrophy
Cataract

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people suffer from multiple sclerosis in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire and *(c)* England.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Health Authority Directors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the method of payment to non-executive directors of health authorities to relate the amount paid more closely to the number of hours worked.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have no plans to review the current arrangements for the remuneration of non-executive directors on national health service bodies.

Nurses

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the shortest contractual period for which nurses are employed by national health service trusts.

Mr. Sackville: It is for the individual trust to decide.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to amend general practitioners' contracts so that targets are specified for the immunisation of children against TB.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 5 November 1993 at column *536*.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding is being allocated in 1994-95 to Trent regional health authority to purchase health care from other regions; and what the figures were for 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are funded to enable them to purchase health care for their resident population. There is no separate funding for care purchased from within or from outside regional boundaries and it is for health authorities themselves to determine the most appropriate place to purchase health care.

Day Cases

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many day cases were treated in the national health service in 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The answer is 1,806,859.

St. James's Hospital, Leeds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the professional qualifications of Mr. Bernard Chalk, deputy director of finance at St. James's hospital, Leeds; and when those qualifications were attained.

Dr. Mawhinney: The relevant qualifications for national health service staff are a matter for the employing authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Greetham, chairman of the St. James's university hospital NHS trust, for details.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Dementia

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many suspected and confirmed cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia have been reported to the surveillance units at Great Ormond Street, London and Edinburgh in the past 12 months; and what was the location of each case;

(2) if national health service clinicians are required to report suspected and confirmed cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia to the surveillance units based at Great Ormond Street, London and Edinburgh.

Mr. Sackville: Suspected cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in the United Kingdom are reported to the national CJD surveillance unit in Edinburgh.

In the 12-month period to 28 February 1994, 48 cases of suspected CJD were referred to the national surveillance unit. Of this number, 31 are now deceased and their cause of death have been classified as:

	Number
Definite	18
Probable	2
Possible	10
Other	1

Of the remaining 17 two are definite—CJD having been confirmed by biopsy—and four are probable.

The definite and probable cases were distributed throughout the United Kingdom reflecting population density, as shown in the table:

Number of definite and probable cases of CJD 1 March 1993 to 28 February 1994 by standard region

	Number
Scotland	4
Northern Ireland	2
North	2
North West	1
Yorks/Humberside	4
Wales	2
West Midlands	1
East Midlands	2
East Anglia	1
South West	2
South East	5
Total	26

The unit based on the Institute of Child Health—Great Ormond Street hospital—is concerned with following up and counselling patients who received human pituitary derived growth hormone and who may now be at risk of contracting CJD. It is not involved with routine surveillance of CJD.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland regarding the notification of suspected and confirmed cases of Creuzfeldt-Jakob dementia to her Department; and if she will place a copy of all related correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: Officials in the four Health Departments are in regular contact on these as on other matters of mutual interest.

Hospital Beds, London

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the survey carried out by Professor Brian Jarman for the Government in 1989 on bed numbers in London; if the results of the survey were known to Professor Tomlinson prior to publication of his report; what account she has taken of Professor Jarman's findings in her Department's policies; and if she will call a halt to hospital closures and bed reductions in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Bernard Tomlinson received evidence directly from Professor Jarman. His work was taken into account in the Government's response to the Tomlinson report.

NHS Trust Managers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 537, how many general and senior managers were employed by trusts in each year since 1991-92; and what percentage of the total number of regional senior and general managers this represented.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 28 February 1994]*: At 30 September 1991, some 1,500 whole-time equivalent staff in national health service trusts were identified as general and senior managers, representing 12·4 per cent. of the total 12,110 throughout the NHS. At 30 September 1992, the figures were 3,810 and 26·8 per cent. of the total 14,250 respectively. The growth in numbers reflects the increase in the number of trusts. Figures for September 1993 will not be available until later this year.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cross-media Ownership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what inquiry he intends to carry out before decisions are taken on the issue of cross-media ownership and its consequences; and whether he proposes to issue a Green Paper on the subject to stimulate widespread public discussion.

Mr. Brooke: I invited written representations from the industry by 25 February. These are now being considered by an inter-departmental group of officials, who will seek meetings to supplement the material they have received. I have no plans to publish a Green Paper.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which organisations have made representations concerning the review of cross-media ownership rules; and how these will be handled.

Mr. Brooke: We have received 49 representations, from those listed, and have had an indication that others may yet make late submissions. All these representations will be carefully considered by an inter-departmental group, with the aim of concluding the review by the summer. Officials will supplement the written material they have received by meetings with the industry.

Actors' Church Union
Associated Newspapers Ltd.
Association of British Editors
Association of Independent Radio Companies Ltd.
British Broadcasting Corporation
British Film Institute
British Media Industry Group
Broadcasting Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union (BECTU)
Broadcasting for Scotland Campaign
Broadcasting Standards Council
Brodies (Solicitors)
British Sky Broadcasting Ltd.
Cable Television Association
Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom
Carlton Communications plc
EMAP plc
Enterprise Radio Holdings Ltd.
Roger Gale Esq, MP
GMTV Ltd.
Guardian Media Group plc
GWR Group plc
Hammond Suddards (Solicitors)
Hooper Communications
The Incorporated Society of British Advertisers Ltd.
Independent Television Commission
Institute of Local Television
Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)

Interspace
ITN
LWT
Mercury Communications Ltd.
Midland Indepedent Newspapers Ltd.
National Union of Journalists
National Viewers' and Listeners' Association
News International plc
The Newspaper Society
Pearson plc
The Radio Authority
S4C
Scottish Newspaper Publishers' Association
Scottish Television plc
SelecTV plc
The Telegraph plc
Trinity International Holdings plc
Ulster Television plc
Virgin Radio Ltd.
Voice of the Listener and Viewer
University of Westminster (Centre for Communication and Information studies)
The Writers Guild of Great Britain

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the expenditure on the number of *(a)* repair grants under section 24 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and *(b)* management agreements under section 17 of the Act for each year since 1986.

Mr. Brooke: Grants under section 17 and 24 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 are made by English Heritage out of its grant in aid and were as follows:

£ thousands

Year	*Section 17*	*Section 24*
1986-87	115	795
1987-88	84	1,127
1988-89	107	1,213
1989-90	105	2,720
1990-91	131	1,411
1991-92	112	1,638
1992-93	105	1,689

Following the regionalisation of the Conservation Group in 1991, section 24 grants were no longer accounted for separately, but were included with grants made under section 3A of the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 for the repair or maintenance of buildings. The figures shown for section 24 grants for 1991-92 and 1992-93 therefore relate to offer levels rather than actual expenditure in those years and are the best available.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Brooke: In addition to the bodies identified in "Public Bodies 1993", I am responsible for the following public appointments:

The chairman of the South Bank board
The chairman and members of the Royal National Theatre board
One member of the council of the Royal Albert hall
Seven members of the Architectural Heritage Fund Council of Management
The chairman and members of the Treasure Trove Reviewing Committee
The members of the Public Library Development Incentive Scheme Advisory Committee
The chairman of the sportsmatch sports sponsorship scheme
The members of the Royal Parks advisory group
The members of the Historic Royal Palaces advisory group
The Director General of the Office of the National Lottery

Register of Playing Fields

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what public access there is to the register of playing fields in England and Wales; what is the cost of each inquiry for members of the public; and what is the total cost to public funds of the register of playing fields in England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: Public access to the register of recreational land is widely available through local authorities. The cost of each inquiry depends on the extent of the inquiry but in most cases it is negligible.

The cost of the register to public funds has been £600,000, of which £500,000 was to compile the database and the remainder to update and maintain the database.

Box Office Receipts

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of total box office receipts in the United Kingdom were captured by films from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the EC and *(c)* the USA in each of the last five years.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that detailed figures on box office receipts are not available from any central source.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Service

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Director General of the Prison Service will be receiving a performance-related bonus for the year 1993-94; and what criteria will be used to determine the level of payment.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the maximum performance bonus available to the chief executive of the Prison Service in 1993; and what will be the maximum bonus he can attain in 1994;

(2) what is the annual salary of the chief executive of the Prison Service for 1993, including details of performance bonuses;

(3) what is the criterion upon which a performance bonus can be paid to the chief executive of the Prison Service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The salary of the Director General of the Prison Service is £125,000 a year. In addition, he is eligible for a performance bonus of up to 35 per cent. of basic salary. For the period from his appointment on 6 January 1993 to 31 March 1993 the director general's performance was assessed solely on the basis of his personal contribution. For the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994 his performance will be assessed partly on his personal contribution and partly on the achievement by the agency of its key targets, set out in the agency's business plan for 1993-94, a copy of which is in the Library. The details of the arrangements for assessing the performance of the director general are personal to him and I have no plans to publish them. His salary, including his performance bonus, will, however, be published in the agency's annual accounts, a copy of which will also be placed in the Library. The arrangements for determining his performance bonus for 1994-95 have not yet been finalised.

Escapees

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of escapes *(a)* from prison establishments and *(b)* from escorts expressed (i) in absolute numbers and (ii) as a percentage of the average prison population in each of the last three years and for 1993-94 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for the number of escapes *(a)* from prison establishments and *(b)* from escorts expressed (i) in absolute numbers and (ii) as a percentage of the average prison population in each of the last three years and for 1993-94 to the latest available date.

The attached table lists the information you require for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and April 1993-February 1994 (inclusive), as recorded by the Incident Management Support Unit.

	Average prison population	*Escapes from establishments*[3]	*Per cent.*	*Escapes from escort*	*Per cent.*	*Totals*	*Per cent.*
1990-91	44,350	225	0·51	111	0·25	336	0·76
1991-92	45,162	308	0·68	155	0·34	463	1·03
1992-93	43,913	237	0·54	152	0·35	389	0·89
1993-94 (April to February inclusive)	45,606	179	[1]0·43	[2]130	[1]0·31	[2]309	[1]0·74

Notes:

[1] The percentage figures for 1993-94 are annualised to provide a comparison with previous years.

[2] To provide a proper basis for comparison, 1993-94 figures exclude 34 escapes from magistrates' courts and escort to and from magistrates courts which are now the responsibility of the Prison Service in Humberside-East Midlands but which were the responsibility of the police in previous years.

[3] The Prison Service's key performance indicator for escapes excludes prisoners immediately recaptured. Excluding immediate recaptures, there have been 259 escapes so far in 1993-94—0·62 per cent. annualised—compared to 347 escapes in 1992-93—0·79 per cent.

Slopping Out

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on ending slopping out since the statement by the Home Secretary contained in "Custody, Care and Justice" in September 1991.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the Prison Service, to reply to your recent Question about the progress made with the Prison Service's programme of installing integral sanitation in prison establishments.

The number of prisoners with 24 hour access to sanitation has now risen to 90 per cent. compared with 60 per cent. in 1991. The target for the Prison Service for 1993-94 is to provide through the accelerated sanitation programme 24 hour access to sanitation in at least 4,700 existing prison places. In addition a further 2,400 newly constructed and renovated places are scheduled for completion this year, all of which will have integral sanitation.

As stated by the Home Secretary in his written reply to Sir Ivan Lawrence on 2 February 1994 the December 1994 target for ending slopping out cannot now be met since this would lead to unacceptable levels of overcrowding. By the end of 1994, however, more than 95 per cent. of prisoners will have access to sanitation at all times.

The Prison Service continues to give very high priority to completing the sanitation programme as soon as possible, within the constraints imposed by the prison population and we aim to complete the programme no later than February 1996, the date recommended by Lord Woolf in his report.

Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average cost per prisoner place; and what was the average cost per prisoner place in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the current average cost per prisoner place and the average cost in each of the last three years.

The available information on current expenditure per baseline certified normal accommodation place, which is now a key performance indicator for the Prison Service, is as follows:

Year	*£*
[1]1993-94	23,164
1992-93	22,722

[1] Provisional.

Figures for the two previous years are not available in this form.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least 12 hours each weekday at the latest available date; and what steps are being taken to increase this number.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what percentage of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for a total of at least 12 hours each weekday at the latest available date; and what steps are being taken to increase this number.

On 31 January 1994, 27·1 per cent. of prisoners were held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked for at least 12 hours on weekdays. Increased time unlocked, together with increased constructive activity for prisoners, remains a key target for the Prison Service. Many establishments are working on new shift systems with a view to increasing time unlocked and to introducing 12 hour unlocking on weekdays.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were being held three to a cell in accommodation intended for one prisoner on the last day of each month from April 1992 to January 1994.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about cell sharing.

The attached table shows how many prisoners shared three to a cell intended for one prisoner at the end of the months listed. As this information was collected on a quarterly basis between September 1992 and April 1993, it is not possible to give figures for every month in the period detailed in your Question.

Month	*Number sharing three to a cell*
April 1992	1,038
May 1992	1,005
June 1992	789
July 1992	720
August 1992	543
September 1992	498
December 1992	210
March 1993	108
April 1993	114
May 1993	126
June 1993	132
July 1993	123
August 1993	114
September 1993	93
October 1993	42
November 1993	84
December 1993	57
January 1994	39

Police Cells

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held in police cells during each month from January 1993 to January 1994 and during February 1994 to the latest available date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about how many prisoners were held in police cells during each month from January 1993 to January 1994 and during February 1994 to the latest available date.

It is not possible to give a breakdown by number of those prisoners held in police custody, as some may be retained in police custody for more than one night. However, the number of prisoner nights being charged to the Prison Service are as follows:

	Number of prisoner nights
1993	
January	7,451
February	1,048
March	nil
April	nil
May	nil
June	nil
July	nil
August	nil
September	nil
October	nil
November	134
December	307
1994	
January	20
February (up to 26 February)	4,190

Prison Searches

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who was consulted prior to the announcement by the Prison Service that authorised employees would be given powers to search in Her Majesty's prisons;

(2) who he envisages will be the designated authorised employees who shall have the power to search prisoners for unauthorised property;

(3) what training authorised employees will receive to assist them with the search of prisoners for unauthorised property;

(4) what working definition he will use of reasonable force in pursuance of powers of search of prisoners by authorised employees for unauthorised property.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Because of the need to take the opportunity offered by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill to legislate, there was not time for formal consultation before the measure was announced. If the legislation is enacted, we shall be drawing up guidance to governors on how to implement the power. We shall consult the trade unions representing the staff concerned before issuing the guidance.

The guidance will cover which categories of staff may be authorised to search. At present it is envisaged that the employees concerned will be civilian staff involved in the custody or supervision of prisoners, e.g. instructors in workshops, caterers in charge of kitchen parties, night patrol staff and night custody officers. They will not be staff whose duties do not involve direct contact with prisoners. Governors will be able to choose which categories of staff within the guidelines should be authorised to conduct searches in the particular circumstances of their establishment.

The guidance will also advise governors to arrange local training for any staff who will be exercising the power. The kind of search involved is a simple "rub down" search, similar to the kind frequently conducted on passengers passing through airport security, so it is a fairly straightforward procedure.

The proposed power of search is backed by the power to use reasonable force if necessary. As at present envisaged, the guidance will make it clear that prison officers should be called in if any prisoner offers resistance to being searched. Civilian staff will not be asked forcibly to search prisoners.

Prisons (Drugs)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if the proposed drugs testing of suspected drug users in prison will be compulsory; and if participation will be linked to the granting of privileges;

(2) who will carry out the proposed drugs testing on prisoners;

(3) in what circumstances a drugs test will be authorised on a prisoner; and who will be able to authorise such a test;

(4) if the proposed drugs tests on prisoners will use urine or blood samples or both;

(5) if the results of any drugs tests carried out on prisoners will be subject to medical confidentiality;

(6) if any positive result of a drugs test on a prisoner will be used in subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Testing prisoners for drugs is a key element in our plans to control drug misuse in prisons.

The proposals for drug testing in prisons brought forward in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill will give prison officers powers to require prisoners to undertake drug tests. This will be backed up by new prison rules making the use of drugs in prison and refusal to undertake a test a disciplinary offence. Prisoners may not be compelled to undertake a test but as has been explained refusal will be a disciplinary offence.

We expect drug testing to be used in a number of different circumstances, for example:

where there is "reasonable suspicion" prisoners have misused drugs;

on a random basis as a deterrent to drug misuse;

as part of compacts with prisoners, relating, for example, to entry into drug rehabilitation units or seek privileges such as home leave. There are no plans to link participation in tests more generally to the granting of privileges, but this will be considered as detailed plans are developed.

Our current expectation is that tests will use urine samples but as technology improves we may be able to use hair samples. The proposals before Parliament specifically exclude the use of blood and other intimate samples.

Prison officers will oversee the provision of urine specimens by prisoners. We are currently considering the most appropriate arrangements for analysing the specimens and will be providing detailed guidance on this for prison governors.

Prison governors will authorise the use of drug testing in their establishments and again the Prison Service will provide detailed guidance on when testing would be appropriate and how it should be conducted. We have already explained the main circumstances in which we expect drug testing to be used.

A positive drug test which results from a specimen provided to a prison officer under these proposals could be used as evidence under the Prison Service disciplinary arrangements. As such it would not be subject to medical confidentiality.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1028*, if he will provide whatever information is available of those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Howard: Since I became Home Secretary, I have signed four public interest immunity certificates. In two certificates, signed in July and September 1993, I made a claim for protection of certain documentary and oral evidence from disclosure on grounds of national security relating to the work of the Security Service, in a criminal prosecution involving explosives and firearms charges and in civil proceedings in the High Court respectively. In the third certificate, signed in November 1993, I made a claim for protection from disclosure of an internal inquiry report into a prison riot and related documents, in connection with criminal proceedings arising out of the riot. In the fourth certificate, also signed in November 1993, a claim was made in connection with judicial review proceedings brought by a prisoner and related to the disclosure of documents considered by the category A committee when assessing what security conditions should apply to certain prisoners. No other Home Office Minister has signed any public interest immunity certificate during this time.

Whitemoor Prison

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many appointments made by legal representatives of prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Whitemoor have been incorrectly scheduled by the prison officials since 20 December 1992;

(2) how long legal representatives have to wait, on average, to see their clients in Her Majesty's prison Whitemoor when appointments have been previously made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Maclennan, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your two recent Questions about visits to prisoners at Whitemoor prison by their legal representatives.

There is no record of any incorrectly scheduled appointments at Whitemoor since 20 December 1992. The average time taken to bring a prisoner to meet his legal representative is about ten minutes, but if the prisoner has chosen to go to work or classes instead of waiting in his cell, it will take longer to bring him to the visiting area.

If you have any specific details about cases of incorrectly scheduled appointments, I would be happy to arrange to have these investigated further.

Prisoners (Legal Access)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets he has set the Prison Service to ensure efficient and convenient access to prisoners by their legal representatives; and to what degree these targets are met.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Maclennan, dated 4 March 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Prison Service targets designed to ensure efficient and convenient access by prisoners to their legal representatives.

There is at present no set target for the Prison Service in relation to legal visits. Demand for such visits varies significantly from place to place and over time. Rule 37 of the Prison Rules, a copy of which is in the Library, requires that legal advisers shall be allowed reasonable facilities for interviewing prisoners, and may do so out of the hearing but in the sight of prison staff. Governors are aware that it is important to allow advisers swift and prompt access and most prisons operate an appointment booking system specifically for legal visits.

Statistical information on legal visits is not held centrally but a review of practice at a number of prisons completed in May 1993 showed that in general legal advisers were able to visit their clients within two or three working days of a request being made. However, at times of increased demand, longer waiting periods may be unavoidable because of competing pressures on visiting facilities.

Electoral Law

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce the conclusions of the working groups set up to review electoral law and practice.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: After the last general election, the Home Office asked all the political parties and the representative groups of the local authorities for proposals to improve any aspects of the electoral system they felt were capable of improvement. Following receipt of their comments and meetings at the Home Office, five working groups were established, consisting of Home Office officials and a small number of experienced electoral administrators, with the remit of considering changes in the system, in the light of the comments which had been received.

The reports of four of the working groups have today been placed in the Library, and are being issued to the political parties and local authority associations for comment. These reports cover absent voting, automated vote counting—also including consideration of access for disabled people to the electoral process—electoral registration and forms. The report of the fifth working group, on returning officers' fees and expenses, has not yet been finalised.

Officials will meet the political parties in March to discuss the reports, and the local authority associations in June, following the completion of the local and European parliamentary elections. Following this, Ministers will consider options for change.

EC Budget (Fraud)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals the Government has to tackle the problem of fraud committed against the European Community budget.

Mr. Howard: The Government attach the highest importance to ensuring that effective action is taken to protect the financial interests in the Community. To this end, I have written to the president of the Justice and Home Affairs Council proposing the major new initiative to combat fraud against the budget, involving a legally-binding joint action by the member states of the European Union under title VI of the Maastricht treaty.

The proposal, which is designed to achieve concerted action by the Twelve to protect the Community's financial interests through member states' criminal laws, will shortly be presented for discussion at a meeting of the relevant EU judicial co-operation working group.

I will arrange for copy of the joint action proposal to be made available to the Select Committee on Home Affairs and to the Scrutiny Committees of both Houses with an explanatory memorandum.

Murder (Parole)

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions since 1985 the Parole Board has recommended release on licence of a person serving a life sentence for murder who has neither admitted responsibility for the offence nor shown contrition for the alleged offence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ethnic Minority Funding

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the schools in the London borough of Wandsworth that receive funding under section 11.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We understand that posts funded under section 11 are currently allocated to the following schools in the London borough of Wandsworth:

Primary

Albermarle
Alderbrook
Balham Nursery
Belleville
Bolingbroke
Broadwater
Chesterton
Christchurch CE
Danebury
Eardley
Earlsfield
Falconbrook
Fircroft
Franciscan
Furzedown
Granard
High View
Hillbrook
Honeywell Infants
Hotham
John Burns
John Milton
Joseph Tritton

Latchmere
Penwortham

Secondary
Battersea Technology College
Chestnut Grove
Elliott
Ernest Bevin
John Paul I
Southfields
St. Francis Xavier
Ravenstone
Riversdale
Roehampton CE
Ronald Ross
Sacred Heart
Sacred Heart Infants
Sacred Heart JMI
St. Anne's
St. Anslem's
St. Boniface
St. Faith's
St. George's
St. Joseph's
St. Mary's REC
St. Michael's
Swaffield
St. Mary's
Sellincourt
Shaftesbury Park
Sir James Barrie
Smallwood
Trinity St. Mary's
Wandle
West Hill
Wix

Special Schools
Garratt Park
Oak Lodge
Paddock

Grant-maintained Schools
Burntwood
Graveney
Salesian

Immigration Laws (Employment)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which member states of the EC currently have legislation making it a criminal offence for employers to employ foreign nationals without permission to work.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on 7 February 1994, column *17*, to his previous question on this matter.

Brecqhou

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the constitutional status of Brecqhou;

(2) what rules relating to immigration, and rights of foreigners to work, apply to Brecqhou.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Brecqhou forms part of the baliwick of Guernsey and its constitutional status in relation to the United Kingdom is the same as any other part of the bailiwick. The bailiwick is an internally self-governing dependency of the Crown, which is ultimately responsible for the bailiwick's good government. The United Kingdom is directly responsible for the bailiwick's defence and international relations. In exercising its responsibilities for the bailiwick, the Crown operates through the Privy Council and my right hon. and learned Friend is the Privy Counsellor with particular responsibility for bailiwick matters.

Immigration control from outside the common travel area to Brecqhou is the same as that to any other part of the bailiwick. Rules relating to immigration and the rights of foreigners to work are governed by the Immigration Act 1971, and the rules made thereunder, as amended and extended to the bailiwick.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Howard: I am responsible for the following public appointments which are not identified in "Public Bodies 1993":

The Firearm Consultative Committee
National Board for Crime Prevention
Civil Emergencies Adviser
Panel of advisers on deportations made at my personal direction under section 3(5) (b) of the Immigration Act 1971.
Persons appointed under schedule 2 to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 to advise me in relation to representations against exclusion orders made under the Act.
Person appointed to review the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.
Criminal Law Revision Committee.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Spratly Islands

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received from the Government of Malaysia about the Spratly islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: None, although we regularly descuss regional security issues with Malaysia and other countries in the region.

East Timor

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he discussed the situation in East Timor with the Portuguese Government during his recent visit to Portugal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs assured the Portuguese Government of our support for the continuing efforts to find a solution to East Timor through the dialogue with Indonesia under the United Nations Secretary-General's auspices. My right hon. Friend also confirmed that we would be working at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to encourage the Indonesian Government to live up to its human rights obligations.

Turkey

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 January, *Official Report*, column *459*, if he has now received from the Turkish ambassador the results of the inquiry into the maltreatment of Manchester United supporters by Turkish police officers and others; what further contacts there have been with the Turkish Government since 18 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I wrote again to the Turkish ambassador on 4 February seeking further clarification of some points. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also raised the matter with Turkish Foreign Minister Cetin during his visit to Turkey on 19 and 20 January. We will continue to press the Turkish authorities both in London and Ankara.

EC Nationals

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from EU states concerning the proposal of the Secretary of State for Social Security to introduce a test of habitual residence in the United Kingdom affecting EC nationals seeking work in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Irish Minister for Social Welfare has requested a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to discuss this proposal. We have had no representations from other European Union states.

Qayyam Abdul

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer from the Home Secretary of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *635*, whether a decision has been taken by the high commission in Islamabad on the issuing of a visa to Qayyam Abdul—Ref. TH/63011/93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: An entry clearance was issued to Abdul Qayyum on 24 February.

Wahid Akhtar

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer from the Home Secretary of 1 March, *Official Report* column *635*, whether a decision has been taken by the high commission in Islamabad on the issuing of a visa to Wahid Akhtar—Ref. TH/2480/93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: An entry clearance was issued to Wahid Akhtar on 3 February.

Public Interest Immunity Certificates

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *1036*, if he will provide whatever information is available on those occasions on which he, or other Ministers in his Department, have signed public interest immunity certificates, and for what reasons.

Mr. Goodlad: This information is not immediately available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Israel

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the procurement of defence equipment from Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Subject to the constraints of security, the Ministry of Defence has a policy of open competition for its equipment requirements. Israeli firms may respond to invitations to tender wherever they believe they can offer the best value for money.

Where such responses contain proposals for United Kingdom industrial participation in the project these would be considered only if it were possible to verify that any United Kingdom components involved which would normally be subject to the arms embargo would not ultimately be used by Israel or an unacceptable third party.

Malaysia (Defence Sales)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *146*, regarding the proposed memorandum of understanding on defence procurement, on what date in June 1988 the Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the Malaysian Minister to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* On 28 June 1988.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *124*, regarding the protocol agreed in March 1988 between the then Secretary of State for Defence and the Government of Malaysia, how the issue of the linkage of aid and defence sales was eventually taken up.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 3 March 1994]:* As I made clear in my reply of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *124*, the Secretary of State for Defence wrote to the Malaysian Minister of Finance in June 1988 to say that aid could not be linked to defence sales. As a result the issue was not taken up in the memorandum of understanding on defence procurement signed in September 1988.

DEFENCE

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the public appointments he is responsible for making in addition to those identified in "Public Bodies 1993", including non-executive agency and other departmental management boards.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mozambique

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military personnel have been assisting the armed forces of Mozambique in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe in each year since 1980.

Mr. Hanley: British military personnel have been assisting the armed forces of Mozambique since 1986. Early that year, the Mozambique training team was formed to advise and train units of the Mozambican army. This training took place at Nyanga in Zimbabwe, finally concluding in December 1993. The strength of the team was about 25, rising to 30 in 1993.

Additionally, a British Army specialist visited Mozambique in September 1988 to advise on logistics matters, and a short-term training team of five mechanical engineers was deployed between May and September 1992. This team increased to seven between September 1992 and January 1993.

Since January of this year, the Mozambique short-term training team of 14 has been engaged in supervising and monitoring the work of Mozambican instructors in Mozambique.

St. James's Palace

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who authorised the deployment of armed military personnel around St. James's palace following the recent break-in; why the civil authorities were not asked to carry out the task; what consideration was given to using civilian personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: My Department received no specific request to deploy armed military personnel around St. James's palace following the incident in question. Under a procedure agreed between the general officer commanding London district and the Metropolitan police, military sentries patrol at royal palaces as a normal part of their guard duties.

Planning Applications

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will state the number of occasions each year since 1979 when his Department has brought forward planning applications using special urgency procedure;

(2) what discussion his Department has had with Buckinghamshire county council, Hughenden Valley parish council, Lacey Green parish council and other organisations about the likely impact of the construction traffic on local roads during the building of the proposed F block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his planned timetable for the construction and completion of the proposed F block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe; and what is the planned cost;

(4) what criteria he uses to decide which planning applications by his Department use the special urgency procedure;

(5) what effect he expects the defence costs study to have on his Department's need to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe;

(6) what environmental impact assessment his Department has made of its proposals to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe;

(7) what steps he has taken to consult Hughenden Valley parish council over his Department's plans to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe;

(8) what plans he has to consult the Chiltern Society about his Department's plans to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe;

(9) how long after the completion of the proposed F block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe, his Department proposes to demolish the temporary buildings now being used;

(10) if he will state the nature of the special urgency which led his Department to invoke special urgency procedure in the case of its proposal to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe;

(11) what criteria he uses in determining the design of new Ministry of Defence buildings in areas of green belt or areas of outstanding natural beauty;

(12) if he will give the reasons why his Department decided to use special urgency procedure for consultation over its proposal to build a three-storey office block at Headquarters Strike Command, High Wycombe.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Army Redundancies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *217*, if he will now list the current locations of all those Army personnel who have been selected for redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The breakdown by theatre at the time of my answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *217*, is as follows:

Phase 3 redundancy by theatre

	Number
Great Britain	
Officers	539
Soldiers	3,621
Total	4,160
Northern Ireland	
Officers	36
Soldiers	479
Total	515
BAOR	
Officers	89
Soldiers	1,871
Total	1,960
NATO	
Officers	5
Soldiers	25
Total	30
Cyprus	
Officers	6
Soldiers	129
Total	135
Hong Kong	
Officers	16

	Number
Soldiers	44
TOTAL	60
North America	
Officers	3
Soldiers	14
TOTAL	17
Former Yugoslavia	
Officers	10
Soldiers	67
TOTAL	77
Belize	
Officers	1
Soldiers	19
TOTAL	20
Rest of world	
Officers	15
Soldiers	26
TOTAL	41
Grand total Officers	720
Grand total Soldiers	6,295
GRAND TOTAL	7,015

Note: Some 85 per cent. of these redundancies were voluntary.

Equal Opportunities

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to ask the Commission for Racial Equality to investigate equal opportunities policies in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is our policy to offer equal opportunities to all racial groups but we do consult the Commission for Racial Equality when we require advice on race relations issues.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *482*, if he will make it his policy to announce the results of his consideration of whether or not to publish a breakdown of the ethnic origins of serving personnel by regiment or unit.

Mr. Hanley: Yes, when a decision is made in due course.

Peacekeeping Manual

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *484*, what non-MOD organisations or individuals have been consulted in the course of preparing the new manual on peacekeeping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: We have consulted widely at the United Nations and the Western European Union, and among allies and academic bodies with an interest in peacekeeping.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 February, *Official Report*, column *65*, if he will place in the Library copies of all information that he has received on the subject of alleged Desert Storm syndrome from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and from the *Congressional Record;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Arrangements will be made for copies of all information relating to the alleged Desert Storm syndrome which has been received by my Department from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defence and from the *Congressional Record*, and for which their permission has been granted for release into the public domain, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Military Lawyers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *483*, if he will provide a detailed breakdown of all military lawyers employed by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: The breakdown of legal officers in the armed services is as follows:

	Number
Royal Navy	27
Army	55
Royal Air Force	20

Yugoslavia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated annual cost of Operation Grapple; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is estimated that the extra cost of Operation Grapple for financial year 1993-94 will amount to approximately £76,000,000.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the costs associated with the British contribution to United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of the British contributions to the United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia is estimated to be some £81,000,000 in financial year 1993-94. A breakdown of these costs is as follows:

£76,000,000 for Operation Grapple in Bosnia;

£1,000,000 for Operation Hanwood, the field ambulance which withdrew from Croatia in September 1993;

£3,900,000 for Operation Cheshire, the British contribution to the Sarajevo airlift.

In addition the United Kingdom assessed contributions to UNPROFOR paid by the FCO during the financial year is estimated to be between £38,000,000 and £40,000,000.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated annual cost of the British contribution to Operation Deny Flight; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The additional cost to the defence budget for financial year 1993-94 is currently estimated to be around £25,000,000.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *223*, if he will account for the difference in size of the British Army mortar locating troop deployed in Sarajevo, as given in his answer and in his Department's bulletin of 24 February on events in the former Yugoslavia and Iraq.

Mr. Hanley: Following the original decision to deploy the mortar locating troop to Bosnia, it was decided to increase its size by an additional 10 personnel. This accounts for the difference between my answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *233*, and the parliamentary bulletin of 24 February.

Landing Platform Dock Replacements

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his intention to equip the landing platform dock replacements with close-in air defence systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Pending the outcome of project definition studies for the landing platform dock replacement it is our current intention to equip the vessel with close-in air defence systems.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *217*, which company has been awarded the contract for further project definition work on the command system for the landing platform dock.

Mr. Aitken: A contract has been placed with Ferranti International plc—in administrative receivership—for further project definition in respect of the command system for the landing platform dock—replacement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his intention to purchase landing platform dock replacements with a smaller capability to accommodate troops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Project Definition studies for the landing platform dock—replacement—are still underway and are due to complete this spring. These studies are looking at, among other matters, the embarked force capability of the vessel.

Military Bands

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *33*, if he will write to *(a)* the chairman of the Conservative party and *(b)* the organisers of the Conservative party function at Ayton castle on 28 January to remind them of the regulations relating to military bands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave on 22 February, *Official Report*, column *133*.

United Nations Secretariat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *483*, if he will make it his policy to offer military personnel to be attached to the United Nations secretariat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 10 February, *Official Report*, column *483*.

Britannia Royal Naval College (Garage)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *133*, how much the new garage for the private cars of the captain of the Britannia Royal Naval college has cost.

Mr. Hanley: The cost of the garage, which has been resited as a result of a specific security recommendation, was £25,000.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 238**

SESSION 1993–94

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = ammendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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